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## **Increasing the Participation of Girls in Physical Education : The Identification of Factors Influencing Enjoyment and Nonenjoyment of Physical Education in a Selected Primary School**

Grant R. Collins  
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**Increasing the participation of girls in physical education:  
The identification of factors influencing enjoyment and  
nonenjoyment of physical education in a selected primary  
school.**

By

Grant R. Collins - B. Arts (Education)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Education with Honours

at the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University

Date of submission : 1995

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focuses on the issue of girls' participation in physical education. One important aspect of participation is the enjoyment level of students. By identifying why girls enjoy and do not enjoy physical education, appropriate adjustments could be made within physical education to increase the participation level of girls.

Fifteen Year 7 students from one class within a metropolitan independent school took part in the study. It was descriptive-analytic in nature and used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. A short questionnaire was used to categorise students into those who enjoyed physical education, those with divided perceptions of enjoyment in physical education, and those who did not enjoy physical education. A cross-section of these Year 7 students was selected for individual interviews. In all, seven interviews were completed. Reasons behind student perceptions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education were sought through these interviews, taking into account the fact that the selected class had experience of both single sex and coeducational physical education in the primary school. The regular classroom teacher and physical education specialist teacher were also interviewed. Responses from student and teacher interviews were analysed separately, and then compared and contrasted. The major findings of this study reveal why some important aspects of physical education increase or reduce girls' enjoyment of the subject. The research uncovered a number of factors which led to increased enjoyment for girls in physical education. These included the appropriate use of fitness activities; competition; single sex

classes; the opportunity for social interaction with other students; and the chance to escape the confinement and concentration required in the classroom. The study also revealed factors which reduced the enjoyment experienced by girls in physical education. These included participating in physical education during weather extremes with no adequate provision for shelter; being forced to participate regardless of student reasoning; and the inappropriate behaviour of other students during physical education. The major findings also make two other comments. Firstly, they describe how a girl's perception of her own skill level impacts on her enjoyment. Secondly, they highlight a mixed reaction amongst students towards the influence of gender specific sports on girls' enjoyment in physical education. From these findings, recommendations have been made regarding the content and execution of physical education in the selected school in order that the participation level of girls in physical education may improve.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature

Date.....17/4/96.....

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 contains the preliminary information and direction of the study. It incorporates its background; purpose; research questions; significance; definition of terms; and the thesis outline.

#### **Background to the Study**

Following the enactment of the W.A. Equal Opportunity Act (1984), there has been continuing debate regarding the issues of equal opportunity and gender equity in physical education in Western Australian schools. This was most recently addressed in the comprehensive review of physical education in Western Australia (House, 1994).

Worldwide, the relatively low participation level of girls in physical education is a major problem (Creighton, 1992). Historical barriers have allowed relatively small numbers of women into active sports participation as players, coaches, administrators and officials (Baker-Finch, 1993). Such societal barriers in sport are reflected in physical education (Scruton, 1990).

To encourage increased participation, attitudes of girls toward physical education must be changed. Luke and Sinclair (1991) reported enjoyment as the third most important aspect in the development of positive attitudes of students to physical education. The perception of enjoyment was seen as crucial. The Australian Sports Commission (1990) directly linked this attribute with the decision of girls to participate in

physical education. Therefore, as enjoyment is an important aspect of participation, increasing the level of enjoyment within physical education could lead to an increase in the level of participation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Research has identified enjoyment as a major factor in determining the participation level of students in physical education (Luke & Sinclair, 1991). The purpose of this study is to identify what primary school aged girls believe to be the factors that influence their enjoyment and nonenjoyment of physical education. Based upon the analysis of data, recommendations will be made, if necessary, to modify the programming and/or execution of physical education to increase girls' enjoyment and participation.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions initiated and directed this research.

#### *General Research Question*

What are the factors influencing girls' enjoyment and nonenjoyment of physical education in a selected Year 7 class?

#### *Subsidiary Research Questions*

1. To what extent do these factors influence girls' enjoyment and nonenjoyment of physical education?

2. Which of these factors of enjoyment and nonenjoyment most influence girls' decisions to participate in physical education?

### **Significance of the Study**

Increasing the participation of girls in physical education is an imperative. The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls (1993-97) was developed to provide educational equity for girls in education. One of its four main objectives is to provide "equal access to participation in appropriate curriculum" (Australian Education Council, 1993, p.4). Luke & Sinclair (1991) directly link the level of participation in physical education with student enjoyment. Therefore, if equal access to participation for girls is desired in all subject areas, then researching enjoyment in physical education is important. The identification of factors influencing female enjoyment therefore is crucial in achieving this goal within a male-dominated curriculum (Spender, 1982).

The appropriate implementation of such factors in physical education could result in increased enjoyment of subject matter (Luke & Sinclair, 1991). Tinning and Fitzclarence (1992) suggested a need to attract students to physical education by making the subject more relevant and therefore more enjoyable. This study identifies those factors that make physical education enjoyable for girls, and those factors that detract from their enjoyment. It then recommends strategies to enhance girls' enjoyment and reduce girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. The significance of this study therefore lies in its potential to modify physical education so that more girls are attracted to the subject because it is perceived as enjoyable. This then also fulfils the Australian Education Council's objective to increase girls' participation in physical education.

## **Definition of Terms**

Enjoyment - a positive personal perception of benefit producing the desire and/or openness to repetition or continuation.

Nonenjoyment - a negative, or lack of positive, personal perception of benefit reducing desire and/or openness to repetition or continuation.

Enjoyment level - the measure of positive personal perception of benefit producing a desire and/or openness to repetition or continuation.

Nonenjoyment level - the measure of a negative, or lack of positive, personal perception of benefit reducing the desire and/or openness to repetition or continuation.

Participation - the involvement of an individual or group in an observable physical education activity or undertaking.

Participation level - the measure of involvement of an individual or group in an observable physical education activity or undertaking.

Gender equity in physical education - educational justice for all students of physical education in relation to issues arising from being male or being female.



Physical education - a programmed and evaluated component of the school curriculum aimed at the development of cognitive, psychomotor, and affective processes through physical activity.

## **Thesis Outline**

This study was undertaken to discover and document girls' perceptions of enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment in physical education. These perceptions were analysed and discussed, then summarised into major findings. The study is concluded with some recommendations arising from the research and a declaration of the need for more research in this area.

Chapter One of this thesis makes introductory statements about its background, purpose, research questions, significance, and definition of terms. It provides preliminary information around which the study is based.

The second chapter details other relevant research and issues impacting on this area. It divides the literature into themes of society, the teacher, the participant, and the physical education context. This chapter also details the theoretical approach and conceptual framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Three explains how the study was undertaken. It details its methodology in the design of the study, the subjects and instruments used, methods of data collection and analyses employed, and limitations identified through the use of these.

Analyses of the questionnaire and the interviews used in the study are documented in the fourth and fifth chapters respectively.

Chapter Six discusses the results of these analyses. It details differences and common elements in teacher and student perceptions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education.

The last chapter of this thesis concludes the research by documenting its major findings, giving recommendations designed to improve the practice of physical education, and citing the need for further research related to student enjoyment in physical education.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The following review of literature identifies the importance of enjoyment to the level of participation of girls in physical education, and explores relevant influences upon participants. The study was conducted in a Year 7 class in Western Australia and as such marks the end of the primary programme in this state. Due to the low level of research available into this topic in Australia, some international and secondary school-related literature has been used. However, caution was exercised upon incorporating findings from other countries into this Australian context.

In focusing on participation of girls in physical education, four important categories of influence need to be considered. These are society, the teacher, the participant, and the physical education context. All impact on girls' desire and capability to participate, and their access to participation in physical education.

#### **Society**

The influence of societal expectations on education is marked. Over time society has specified appropriate behaviours for males and for females. Mitchell (1992) suggested that these behaviours, which usually restrict females, apply directly to the school institution as it exists within society. They reflect cultural and societal norms that influence most women to lead less active lives than most men.

In her research in 1992, Chalmers found that girls do not have access to the benefits of quality physical education to the same extent as boys. This disadvantage arises from male and female socialisation and encompasses all actions and processes through which sex role

stereotyping is guaranteed, for example language, media, culture, history, tradition, peer group, and family (Stothart, 1993; White, 1993).

Girls are socialised into the belief that skilled performance in physical activity is the domain of males (Ey, 1993). They are dissuaded from participating because of these expectations even before they reach school age. Such strong early forces impact on the provision of equitable opportunities within the school context (Bunton, 1993).

Stereotypic sex roles are a powerful influence. They create double standards in education where girls are given inferior opportunities and experiences with diminished rewards, punishments, coaching, variety, and encouragement (Dyer, 1986a; Feigler, 1993). The entrenchment of sex roles is so deep that many boys are often unaware of the sexist behaviour they are exhibiting (Kruse, 1992).

Another societal problem facing females in physical education, explored by Sands (1991), is the perception of conflict between femininity and activity. Societal pressure is placed on all women participating in physical activity. There is a fear of success and achievement arising from the negative consequences they will incur, such as social rejection and the loss of one's perceived femininity (Monaco & Gaier, 1992).

### **The Teacher**

A teacher's influence on participation patterns in class is substantial. This was noted by Leaman (1984) in the assignment of lower status to girls' games and the reduction of opportunity to participate in them. Pollard (1988) also noted that teachers were prone to give preference to interactions with boys, subtly supporting sex role stereotypes.

Teachers should ensure that they do not reinforce the submissive behaviours expected of girls, as this further supports

stereotypic sex roles (Bain, 1989; Macdonald, 1990). There is also a tendency for teachers to have a double standard when dealing with protest or challenge. Boys are often met with respect and reward, but girls in the same situation are given punishment and rebuke. Further developing this differential treatment, teachers often treat boys as individuals, but girls as a group. Spender (1982) stated that this sends subtle messages of the differing importance of males and females.

The expectations of teachers towards boys and girls in coeducational classes have also come under scrutiny. Expectations are based upon societal sex stereotypes and indirectly favour males. This results in males becoming more active and females more passive in physical education (Browne, 1993). Bain (1989) pointed out that teachers gave less attention, praise and content-related information, but more criticism to students of lower teacher expectation. In physical education, these students are often girls.

The sex of the teacher influences student satisfaction with a subject. "Both male and female students were more satisfied with their class if they were taught by teachers of the same sex" (Ward, 1982, p.27).

In research completed in 1984, Harvey found a high correlation between liking a teacher and liking the subject in which the student is involved. Encouragement given by teachers to girls is essential if participation and performance of girls are to increase (Chalmers, 1992).

A teacher's assessment in physical education often relies on effort and participation, rather than achievement, skill, and ability (Bain, 1989). If this is the case, and the involvement level of girls in physical education is lower than that of boys, then assessment methods may also be biased towards males.

## **The Participant**

The participant has a large bearing on his/her educational experience. Aspects of sex differences between male and females play an important role in understanding participation in physical education. Linn and Hyde (1989) suggested that males tend to be more aggressive, more confident, and less conforming than females. A difference in motor ability was also confirmed between the sexes when males increase in height and muscle size more than females during adolescence. Pollard (1988) noted that males place more value on competition as a necessary part of physical education than do females. These differences are often significant within the physical education context.

Males and females also use different learning styles in physical education. Males show a stronger tendency towards goal setting and independence, whilst females prefer the social and qualitative aspects of peer and teacher affiliation (Pettigrew, 1988). These variances in learning styles tend to advantage boys and disadvantage girls in achievement within physical education. Spender (1982) proposed that the relative lack of achievement by girls within coeducational classes attests to this.

A crucial issue in physical education is addressing the low self-concept of females. A report prepared for the Australian Sports Commission (1991) found that girls perceive themselves as markedly less fit than boys, less capable at games and sport, less inclined to be the "outdoors" type of person, and less satisfied with the way they looked. Girls were also found to be more often depressed, more scared of new things, and more often afraid than boys. Macdonald (1989) suggested that these self-perceptions reflect societal expectations and point towards a relatively low self-esteem and concept, leading towards feelings of anxiety and inferiority.

Increasing the self-concept of females in physical education is essential. Dyer (1986b) found that girls who are actively involved in sport have a more positive self-concept than those who are not. This demonstrates a potentially important role that physical education can fulfil in raising the self-concept of females.

Low self-concept leads to the development of low personal expectations. This can then be exacerbated by teachers' low expectations of girls in physical education classes. Evidence suggests an apparent higher expectation of girls in single sex physical education classes (Macdonald, 1990; Sands, 1991).

Encouragement, praise and assistance given by teachers has been linked to lifting self-concept, which in turn can aid in raising the participation and performance of girls. The level of self-concept is directly related to their participation in the physical education setting (Chalmers, 1992; 1993). To lift female involvement in physical education, consideration must be given to providing significant female role models (Bunton, 1993; Sands, 1991), catering for different skill levels (Macdonald, 1990), and providing challenging but enjoyable experiences (Allinson, 1993).

Ward (1982) stated that "student perception of the classroom environment is a critical factor in education" (p.19). Student perception of enjoyment within the physical education experience is a significant factor in determining the level of student participation (Feigler, 1993; Luke & Sinclair, 1991). An individual's level of self-confidence depends, in part, on the enjoyment and interest in the activity (Chalmers, 1993).

Regan (1993) found that enjoyment for females was enhanced in mathematics and science when they were conducted as single sex classes. Girls perceived that their work had improved, they had more chance to ask questions, more teacher time, more equipment sharing, and less

disruptions. These aspects of mathematics and science are also relevant to physical education, and therefore may have some transference in the development of student enjoyment within physical education.

### **The Physical Education Context**

The context of physical education influences the participation patterns of students and can be viewed in terms of curriculum, attire, competition, and sex groupings.

The curriculum can be a major obstacle affecting participation in physical education. It has been established by a male-dominated society in the interests of its male members (Spender, 1982). Female drop-out from physical activity can be directly attributed to curriculum content, organisation, and teaching strategies favouring males. If real change for females in physical education is to occur, then fundamental curriculum reforms must take place. Physical education programmes have potential in addressing these concerns (Bain, 1989; Macdonald, 1989).

The hidden curriculum is also important in understanding this context. The physical education experience of students differs between boys and girls. Research into the hidden curriculum reveals that powerful messages about the interrelationship between the sexes are consciously and/or subconsciously transferred by the teacher in the physical education context (Bain, 1985). This can be seen in differing teacher expectations of effort relative to the sex of a student, inequitable sharing of discourse with the teacher by the male students, and restricted activity choice for girls (Australian Sports Commission, 1991; Bain, 1989; Dyer, 1986a; Macdonald, 1990; Wright & King, 1990).

The influence of gender roles in the home impact upon the physical education context. Girls are often inappropriately attired for



physical education upon arrival at school, or are without a change of clothes. This impacts upon them not only in the physical education class, but also in the playground. Mitchell (1992) stated that girls are often dressed in ways that restrict activity during breaks, further extending the female passivity stereotype.

Competition in physical education influences girls' and boys' desire to participate in physical education. Boys highly value this aspect of physical education, whereas girls tend to view it less favourably. Girls saw competition as less important than the achievement of personal or team goals (Australian Sports Commission, 1991; Feigler, 1993; Pollard, 1988). Browne (1993) suggested that in competitive coeducational physical education, the majority of girls were the losers. The boys dominated the game, effectively forcing most girls out. If girls are not able to successfully participate in physical education, then this could reduce their enjoyment of the subject. Therefore competition potentially has a substantial influence over the enjoyment level girls experience in physical education.

The issue of sex groupings in the physical education setting is one which has initiated much debate, opponents arguing that either single sex or coeducational physical education is more equitable than the other. The following discussion synthesises some of the research findings in this area.

Advocates of single sex physical education argue that the absence of boys from the class removes the potential for inequity. It provides the opportunity for gender role expectations and sex discrimination in participation and assessment to be eradicated from the context. It also allows teacher expectations to be realistic and avoids concerns of physicality in physical education (Browne, 1993). This allows girls to be less self-conscious and more able to dependably rely on peer acceptance (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1983).

Single sex classes increase participation levels of girls in physical education. Some research has proposed that academic success also benefits (Bunton, 1993; Feigler, 1993; Jones, Kyle, & Black, 1987; Lee & Bryk, 1986). For girls, sex segregation avoids the harassment, "put downs", and discomfort often experienced in coeducational settings arising from medical reasons (Allinson, 1993; Browne, 1993). This research has been conducted in secondary schools, but is also relevant to upper primary classes where the initial onset of puberty usually occurs.

Single sex physical education is able to avoid the trivialisation of women's sport and the bias towards male sports that often occurs within a coeducational class (Feigler, 1993; Jones et al., 1987). Sex segregation can also allow more effective development of leadership skills and opportunities for girls to lead (Monaco & Gaier, 1992). These are seen as important aspects of single sex physical education.

Advocates of coeducational physical education argue that the implementation of single sex classes will not provide educational equity. The main argument for coeducation is based upon social development. If girls and boys are to develop the social side of their personalities, then interaction between the sexes is essential. Within physical education, participants of both sexes are able to observe and recognise the achievements of the opposite sex. Respect and encouragement are encouraged through coeducational physical education (Allinson, 1993; Chalmers, 1993; Jones et al., 1987).

Jones et al. (1987) argued that single sex physical education reproduces existing sex divisions. It was proposed that single sex classes further segregated the sexes, making integration more difficult. Hore (1992) found that males realised females were disadvantaged through a coeducational setting, though both sexes still enjoyed this social style of class.

However, the issue of sex groupings must also be viewed in the light of community sport, where mixed sex activities are usually considered more socially-oriented than single sex activities. This often leads to mixed sex activities being viewed less seriously by both participants and spectators, and therefore carrying less importance. Except for doubles in some traditional sports (for example, tennis and badminton) and the more recently developed social sports (for example, indoor cricket), the majority of community sport, even at junior level, is based on single sex groupings.

### **Theoretical Approach**

Socialisation theory underpins the preceding literature review. It views the formation of gender as the "acquisition and internalisation of social norms" (Connell, 1987, p.191). Children are born with a biological sex, but no concept of social gender. Connell (1987) suggested that this concept is prescribed and modelled by external influences until it is seen by the child as the normal social perception of gender. These influences are notably that of family, school, peer group, and media. Behaviour and attitudes that conflict with this perception are seen as deviant.

According to Connell (1987), socialisation of an individual child continues throughout the whole life span. The importance and style of message may vary across individuals, but the aim of social conformity remains. Both men and women are continually socialised, to a greater or lesser degree in each individual, into conforming to the social expectations and gender roles for their sex.

The impact of socialisation on teachers and students is important. All subject areas, including physical education, are strongly influenced by this process. As previously mentioned in the literature

review, educational equity for girls in physical education often is not provided. On this premise, it becomes important for educational research to be instrumental in modifying the present state of physical education, so that inequities arising from the socialisation process are reduced, and ultimately eliminated. Therefore this study has adopted a critical theory approach to educational research as proposed by Carr and Kemmis (1986).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The study's conceptual framework links together the significant influences on student enjoyment level and participation in physical education referred to in the literature. Figure 1 demonstrates such a relationship.

This study was concerned with analysing student enjoyment level in physical education. The level of enjoyment impacted on participation and could be positive or negative. It was therefore important to identify factors that influenced the enjoyment level of girls in physical education. Once identified, strategies could then be suggested that incorporate these enjoyment factors into physical education lessons.

From the literature four other influences were identified which directly impacted on the enjoyment level and participation level of girls in physical education. These were society; the teacher; the participant; and the physical education context. The sum effect of these directly influence the enjoyment level of students in physical education.

The level of enjoyment in physical education and the level of participation in physical education are interlocked and mutually influence each other. That is, the level of enjoyment will influence the level of participation, and the level of participation will influence the level of

enjoyment. The interplay between these should also be a concern for physical education teachers.

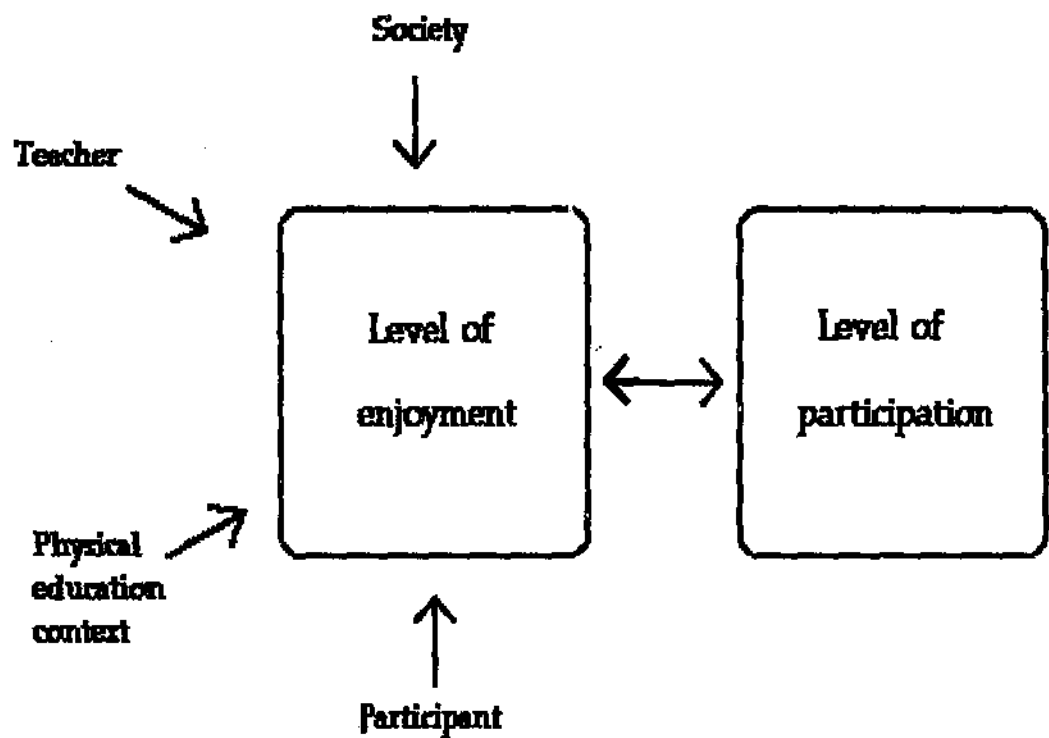


Figure 1 - Influences upon girls' enjoyment of physical education.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Chapter 3 is a description of the manner in which this study was undertaken. It details the design of the study; its subjects; the instruments used; how the data was collected; and its limitations.

#### **Design of Study**

This study is descriptive in nature. It is a case study describing students' perceptions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment, and the context in which they occurred. Student reasoning behind these perceptions was sought and analysed. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods of data collection and analysis were chosen as appropriate. A descriptive analytical framework of analysis was used (Patton, 1990).

The critical theory research paradigm was chosen as most suitable for this study. In its simplest form, the aim of critical theory is to make sense of an individual's interpretations and actions as shaped by his or her own social reality, then recommend changes to practice that may lead to a more equitable environment through personal or social transformation (Candy, 1989). Critical theory is therefore committed to a theory-practice view of research. Embedding research results in practice to institute social change is central to this theory (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

In relation to educational research, Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.130) stated that:

Educational theory must always be orientated towards the ways in which teachers see themselves and their situation so that the factors frustrating their educational goals and purposes can be recognised and eliminated. Equally, it must be orientated towards transforming the situations which place obstacles in the way of achieving educational goals, perpetuate ideological distortions, and impede rational and critical work in educational situations.

The emancipatory thrust of critical theory fulfils these criteria and is therefore well suited to educational research and to this study. Critical theory is seen as the product of the process of critique (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This research will follow critical theory by critiquing student perceptions of enjoyment in physical education, then recommending changes to transform any apparent inequitable practices. The ultimate aim of this study is to facilitate increased enjoyment of girls in physical education.

## **Subjects**

Subjects for this study were drawn from one Year 7 class in a selected school within the Perth metropolitan area. The class contained 16 females and 16 males, with only the girls targeted for this research. The school is a private college with enrolment spanning from kindergarten to Year 12. It was selected because of its physical education policy in which

physical education is taught in single sex groupings after Year 3 by two physical education specialists - one male and one female. It is timetabled for both boys and girls simultaneously; girls are taken by the female specialist and boys by the male specialist. However, physical education also occurs at other times within the class programme when it is taken by the regular class teacher. This has given these children exposure to both single sex and coeducational physical education. Awareness of both these contexts will enable students to answer questions from a wider experience base within physical education.

This sample was chosen to enable a detailed analysis of girls' perceptions. Results obtained will be specific to the study and will not be generalised across physical education contexts. They are designed, however, to give insight into one specific circumstance, which may have transference to other practitioners within their own unique situation.

Two female teachers also took part in this study. Both the specialist physical education teacher and the regular classroom teacher were interviewed. Each had direct contact with the students during physical education. The regular classroom teacher has had a number of years' teaching experience at the school and values physical education as an important facet of her educational programme. She was also committed to her own recreational pursuits, and encouraged her students to be the same. The specialist physical education teacher was completing her first year of teaching after graduating from University. She was motivated in her position and was concerned for the welfare of the girls she taught. Interviewing both of these staff members enabled a teacher's perspective on girls' enjoyment in physical education to be examined.



## **Instruments**

Two instruments were used in the study. Firstly, a questionnaire was administered and secondly, selected students were interviewed.

### **a) Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was used as a research tool to develop the student interview guide. It was chosen for this purpose because it was able to uniformly survey student sentiment. It also provided a relatively simple method of coding and extracting desired information from data. The questionnaire was useful in finding representative samples for interviewing, and helped verify interview findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For these reasons, although being a quantitative research instrument, the questionnaire's convenience and value justified the use of a mixed-mode research model.

The questionnaire was designed to elicit student perceptions of physical education and provide relevant information to include in the interview guide. It was initially refined by expert comment from the classroom teacher and Dr. Jennifer Browne, Head of School (Physical Education) at Edith Cowan University in W.A.. The questionnaire was then given to another Year 7 class for student comment. Students tested its appropriateness in respect to language and format.

The questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given to girls in one Year 7 class to identify student perceptions in two areas. Firstly, a personal perception of the extent to which each girl enjoyed or did not enjoy physical education was identified. To achieve this, girls selected one of five categories provided within the questionnaire: I enjoy physical education all the time; I enjoy physical education most of the time; Sometimes I enjoy physical education and sometimes I do not enjoy

physical education; I do not enjoy physical education most of the time; I never enjoy physical education. This classified students into three groups: those who enjoyed physical education at least most of the time; those who had divided perceptions of enjoyment in physical education; and those who did not enjoy physical education at least most of the time. These groups were established so that a broad spectrum of perceptions of enjoyment was available in the interviews by selecting girls from each category.

Secondly, reasons for student enjoyment or nonenjoyment of physical education were sought via open responses. This allowed students to identify important reasons for their own enjoyment or nonenjoyment. Students took approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

#### b) Interviews

Interviews were the qualitative aspect of this mixed mode research. The interview process was seen to be the most appropriate research method to elicit perceptions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education because it obtained rich data by the probing of student responses. Also, interviews often reveal unexpected responses, and permit the interviewer to recognise the influence of nonverbal comments and gestures in data collection (Patton, 1990).

Individual interviews were chosen so that the perceptions of each student were more easily expressed. Group interviews often reveal a group consensus, eliminating individual perspectives. A nonbiased interviewer enables the interviewee freedom from social pressures to conform to peer pressure, and therefore respond more openly to questioning (Patton, 1990).

Interviews were conducted using a semistructured interview guide developed from the student questionnaire. The last two items of the

questionnaire were designed to be free response for students to proffer reasons why they enjoyed, or did not enjoy physical education. These responses, along with insight gained from the literature, were used to develop the interview guide. This provided context-specific content for the interviews to draw upon. This was coupled with the relevant literature-based content to allow comprehensive data collection. The interview guide (Appendix G) was used as a checklist to ensure that all relevant content was covered during the interview (Patton, 1990).

The interviews focused on student perceptions of factors influencing enjoyment or nonenjoyment in physical education. Students were asked to rate the level of influence they believed each factor exerted on their enjoyment or nonenjoyment. Students were then required to justify their responses and provide reasons behind their perceptions. Interview questions were directly related to the general and subsidiary research questions.

The students who took part in the interviews were selected using information from the questionnaire. Students were grouped into three categories of those who enjoyed physical education; those who had divided perceptions of enjoyment in physical education; and those who did not enjoy physical education. The students who selected the questionnaire options of "I enjoy physical education all the time" or "I enjoy physical education most of the time" were assigned to the first category. Girls who selected the option of "Sometimes I enjoy physical education and sometimes I do not enjoy physical education" comprised the second category. Those who selected the questionnaire options of "I do not enjoy physical education most of the time" or "I never enjoy physical education" were assigned to the third category. Girls were selected for interviewing from these three categories in the following way: three girls from category 1, another three from the second category, and the only girl

that was classified as category 3 was included. The number of girls selected for interviewing was dependent on the categories chosen in the questionnaire rating scale. Interviewing girls from the spectrum of responses to the questionnaire provided a cross-section of classroom perceptions.

Both teachers involved in the girls' physical education were also interviewed using questions directly related to the general and subsidiary research questions. Teacher interviews were not as structured as student interviews. Broader interview questions were used to allow teachers the opportunity for more free ranging responses (see Appendix H). In this way, those issues teachers believed to most influence girls' enjoyment in physical education were elicited, rather than receiving preempted responses due to the specific nature of questioning. The interviewing of teachers provided a wider perspective in discovering factors of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. A comparison of student and teacher perceptions then aided in the triangulation of data.

### **Data Collection**

This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data. These methods enabled a detailed study of student and teacher perceptions and reasoning. The data collection consisted of a student questionnaire and individual interviews. These were used to elicit reasons for girls' enjoyment or nonenjoyment of physical education. Written permission was received from parents, teachers, and the school before the commencement of data collection (see Appendices A, B, & C). Verbal permission was received from students.

Multiple sources of data provided a more reliable picture of the phenomenon under study and therefore led to a more valid interpretation of data. Triangulation of both student and teacher perceptions of girls' enjoyment in physical education and the use of varied instruments enabled the researcher to identify consistencies and inconsistencies in subjects and their responses.

a) Questionnaire

Class enrolment numbered 32 students, and all those present on the day completed the questionnaire. Of the 16 girls in the class, 15 completed the questionnaire as one girl was absent. Before commencement, clear instructions of how to complete the document were given to the whole class. Both the boys and the girls took part in this first stage of data collection, but only the girls' responses were analysed. At no stage were the students aware of this. The questionnaire data were collected in this manner to minimise changes to the girls' regular class environment. With the boys present, the likelihood of girls reacting to the researcher questioning only girls would be reduced. The girls would be less likely to modify their responses to fit what they believed the researcher was attempting to discover.

b) Interviews

Analyses of responses listed in questions two and three of the questionnaire were utilised in the development of a pilot interview. Appendix E lists and categorises factors drawn from the questionnaire as those influencing enjoyment; those influencing nonenjoyment; and those influencing both enjoyment and nonenjoyment.

Two students were selected for pilot interviews. The first interviewee classified herself in the questionnaire as one who enjoyed

physical education most of the time. The second classified herself as enjoying physical education sometimes, and not enjoying physical education sometimes. They were questioned on what influence, if any, each factor had on their enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment of physical education. Both girls were required to rate the influence of each factor by using a given rating scale (see Appendix F), then asked to justify their response.

These interviews were audiotaped, replayed, and listened to immediately after each interview for analysis purposes. This enabled prompt and accurate processing of data. Analysis consisted of documenting and comparing student factor ratings and their justifications. It was discovered through this analysis that the factors included in Appendix E were perceived by the girls in the pilot interviews to be significant to their enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment of physical education. Every factor was considered by at least one of the pilot interviewees as having a high or very high effect on the enjoyment level of girls. This supported data obtained from the questionnaire.

The main student interviews used a modified form of the pilot interview guide. A semistructured approach to the main student interviews was followed. The interview guide (see Appendix G) directed discussion, but still allowed the interviewer to probe relevant responses. The relaxed manner in which the interviews were undertaken reduced student nervousness and helped students respond to questioning more freely. Interviews were conducted in a vacant and private room adjacent to the students' regular classroom. They were approximately 20-30 minutes in length and scheduled consecutively over two days.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with both teachers using the interview schedule found in Appendix H. The questions were closely linked to the research questions and were designed to elicit

teacher thoughts of girls' enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. The teacher interviews were recorded in the same manner as the student interviews. The classroom teacher's and the specialist physical education teacher's interviews took approximately 30 minutes and 45 minutes respectively to complete.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was descriptive in nature. The results of the questionnaire and the pilot interviews were examined, and from them a student interview guide was developed. Student interviews were then conducted, audio recordings transcribed, and the data analysed.

All interviews were audiotaped and subsequently transcribed verbatim. This enabled detailed analysis of each interview, substantially increasing the reliability of data analysis (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Content analysis was used to analyse the interviews. This required "identifying, coding, and categorising the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 381). Attention was given to interpreting what interviewees were saying behind their responses. Individual interviews were coded thematically to link responses within and between interviews. Student responses to each interview question were analysed for variations and similarities within the data. Through this, the general sentiment of the three categories of student enjoyment in physical education was generated (Patton, 1990).

Data from teacher interviews were also analysed, and used to triangulate with data gained from student interviews. Each teacher interview was analysed separately because the context of their involvement with the girls in physical education was different. This

allowed both teachers' perspectives to be appropriately analysed and incorporated into the body of research.

Once these comparisons had been made, emergent trends were identified. These were placed within this study's conceptual framework to speculate their effect on increased participation for girls in physical education. Recommendations were then made in order to increase the role of enjoyment factors, and decrease the influence of nonenjoyment factors of girls in physical education. These recommendations involved changes to the programming and execution of physical education.

### **Limitations**

1. The possibility of the interviewer developing bias through interaction with an interviewee.
2. Reactivity of interviewees to the interviewer may have affected the accuracy and detail of given responses.
3. Individual interviews allowed for freedom of expression, but did not provide insight into how individual perceptions would have been reshaped within a group context.
4. Generalisability was limited by the small sample size, the nature of the selected sample, and the lack of corroborative research.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

This chapter analyses girls' perceptions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education as stated in the questionnaire. It also gives a summary of factors perceived by the girls as influencing their enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education.

The results of question one of the questionnaire revealed some interesting results about how girls in this class felt about physical education (see Table 1). There was general agreement in the girls' sentiment towards factors of enjoyment in physical education, but responses to some factors varied enough to warrant further attention. As the numbers contained in Table 1 are more meaningful upon consideration of Table 2, this discussion is subsequently included in the discussion of Table 2.

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Table 1

Girls' perceptions of enjoyment in physical education

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| Perception of enjoyment                                    | n | Percentage(%) |
|--|---|---------------|
| <hr/>  |   |               |
| "I enjoy p.e. all the time"                                | 0 | 0             |
| "I enjoy p.e. most of the time"                            | 8 | 53            |
| "Sometimes I enjoy p.e. and sometimes I do not enjoy p.e." | 6 | 40            |
| "I do not enjoy p.e. most of the time"                     | 1 | 7             |
| "I never enjoy p.e."                                       | 0 | 0             |

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From their responses to question 1 of the questionnaire, the girls were then categorised as those who enjoyed physical education; those who had divided perceptions of enjoyment in physical education; and those who did not enjoy physical education. These results, as displayed in Table 2, indicate that more girls enjoyed physical education than did not enjoy physical education at least most of the time.

Table 2

Girls' perceptions of enjoyment in physical education when grouped into three categories of enjoyment.

| Category  | n | Percentage(%) |
|---|---|---------------|
| Those who enjoyed p.e.                              | 8 | 53            |
| Those with divided perceptions of enjoyment in p.e. | 6 | 40            |
| Those who did not enjoy p.e.                        | 1 | 7             |

The majority of girls enjoyed physical education at least most of the time. So although the perceptions of the majority of girls was that their physical education experience was a positive one, on at least some occasions, each girl did not enjoy physical education. Therefore, if every girl has had experiences when physical education was not enjoyable, then some changes are necessary in physical education to increase the enjoyment of girls.

Question 2 of the questionnaire was designed to elicit those factors that girls considered influenced their enjoyment of physical education. Responses to this open ended questionnaire item were collated and categorised under broad thematic headings. Table 3 displays the factors given by girls as those which influenced their enjoyment of physical education.

Table 3

Girls' perceptions of factors which influence their enjoyment of physical education

| Factors of enjoyment                                | n |
|---|---|
| Learning new sports                                 | 6 |
| Choice/range of sports                              | 6 |
| Fitness activities                                  | 6 |
| Social involvement with other students              | 6 |
| Enjoyment from participation                        | 5 |
| Break from class                                    | 5 |
| Competition   | 4 |
| Teacher   | 3 |
| Improvement of skills                               | 3 |
| Team selection/ choosing partners                   | 3 |
| Inappropriate behaviour in physical education       | 2 |
| Having both mixed and single sex physical education | 2 |
| Team affiliation                                    | 2 |
| Location of physical education                      | 2 |
| Single sex physical education                       | 1 |
| Mixed sex physical education.                       | 1 |
| Timetabling of physical education                   | 1 |
| Relaxing qualities of physical education            | 1 |
| Perception of personal skill level                  | 1 |

Factors considered by the girls to be most important to their enjoyment were the learning of new sports, the range of sports available, fitness activities, and social involvement with other students during physical education. These factors were each separately mentioned by six of the 15 girls who completed the questionnaire.

Six other factors were stated by the girls often enough to indicate their importance to enjoyment in physical education. These were the break from class, the competition, the teacher, skill improvement, team selection and the choosing of partners, and the enjoyment gained from participation in physical education. The remaining factors identified by this question were still considered as being important to girls' enjoyment because they were elicited through free response.

Question 3 of the questionnaire elicited those factors girls considered negatively influenced their enjoyment of physical education. Responses to this questionnaire item were collated and categorised under broad thematic headings. Table 4 displays the factors which influenced girls' nonenjoyment of physical education.

Table 4

Girls' perceptions of factors which influence their nonenjoyment of physical education

| Factors of nonenjoyment                            | n |
|--|---|
| Choice/ range of sports                            | 8 |
| Perception of personal skill level                 | 6 |
| Teacher  | 5 |
| Forced inclusion in physical education             | 5 |
| Rigid physical education programme                 | 5 |
| Weather extremes                                   | 4 |
| Inappropriate behaviour in physical education      | 3 |
| Fitness activities                                 | 3 |
| Timetabling of physical education                  | 3 |
| Embarrassment due to physical development          | 3 |
| Social involvement with other students             | 2 |
| Team selection/ choosing partners                  | 2 |
| Single sex physical education                      | 2 |
| Injury/ illness                                    | 2 |
| Gender specific sports                             | 2 |
| Discrimination against girls in physical education | 2 |
| Competition  | 1 |
| Mixed sex physical education                       | 1 |

The range of sports available to girls in physical education stands out as a crucial factor for girls not enjoying physical education. More than half of the 15 girls who completed the questionnaire believed this led to them not enjoying physical education. Other factors considered by girls to be important were their perception of personal skill level, the

teacher, forced inclusion in physical education, aspects of a rigid physical education programme, extremes in weather, inappropriate behaviour, fitness activities, the timetabling of physical education, and feelings of embarrassment due to physical development. The remaining factors, having been mentioned in a free response format, were also considered important enough to include in interviews.

Both Tables 3 and 4 display a wide range of factors influencing girls' enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. Interestingly though, a number of these factors were stated as influencing both the enjoyment and the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. These factors were the choice/ range of sports; fitness activities; social involvement with other students; competition; the teacher; team selection/ choosing partners; inappropriate student behaviour during physical education; timetabling of physical education; the perception of personal skill level; and whether physical education is single sex or mixed sex. Some students categorised these factors as influencing enjoyment, others as influencing nonenjoyment. This unexpectedly created a third category, that being factors influencing enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. The reasons for this were teased out during student interviews.

The stated factors of girls' enjoyment were likely to impact on girls' perceptions of enjoyment in physical education. It was therefore necessary to include these in pilot interviews to ensure that all important factors were addressed during student interviews.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYSES OF INTERVIEWS**

This chapter analyses and discusses the interviews with the class teacher, the specialist physical education teacher, and the students. Each analysis identifies what was perceived to most influence student enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education, and why this was so.

#### **Class Teacher**

By using the teacher interview guide, two main areas of enjoyment and nonenjoyment were addressed. The class teacher was first asked to identify what she believed influenced girls' enjoyment in physical education, and which of these factors were most influential. Secondly, she was asked to identify what she believed influenced girls' nonenjoyment in physical education, and which of those factors had most influence.

When asked what she believed to be the factors that most influenced girls' enjoyment of physical education, the class teacher highlighted 10 factors. These were an opportunity to use their skills; team aspects of physical education; encouragement; the perception of individual skill level; the physical nature of physical education; self-concept; improving fitness levels; mild competitiveness mixed with humour; physical education with a purpose; and single sex classes.

The opportunity for girls to use their skills was important to their enjoyment of physical education, and this opportunity helped girls to be more confident in, and proud of, their skills in physical education.

If you give them [the students] enough exposure [to physical education], like running every morning, then the confidence of the girls in their running skills [will] improve no end.

The team aspect of physical education was seen as influential. Girls were believed to enjoy physical education more and feel less insecure when participating in a team, rather than individually. The team also provided a means of hiding from spectators and therefore disguising any perceived personal inadequacies in physical education.

I think they enjoy the team aspect of it. Girls tend to be more team -orientated than boys. The boys tend to like doing things by themselves, whereas the girls like to have everyone else around them. It makes them feel more secure.

They [the girls] can hide away in the team. They don't have to be the one on display - they can do their part and not be singled out. I think (that) because girls are not as naturally competitive as boys, the team suits them because it is not as threatening.

Girls participating in a team situation made physical education more conducive to a positive class atmosphere. They were able to work



together in a team and accept one another regardless of individual ability differences. This acceptance was very important to them.

If everyone is secure in their own ability then the team spirit is even stronger.

Encouragement of girls in physical education was mentioned as a crucial area for teachers and spectators to monitor. From a teacher's perspective, encouragement played an important role in motivating students to participate in physical education to the best of their ability.

When you are alienated, and then someone encourages you, you feel so good. You just want to show them that you can do it. You want to be there and make them proud of you.

In addition, encouragement was perceived to motivate the participation of girls in physical education because of the expectation of further encouragement. If girls knew they were going to be encouraged, then they were more willing to be involved.

Girls enjoy being encouraged. If they know they are going to play sport and they know they're going to be encouraged in what they have done or how they have performed, they will go further and further in exhibiting their skills.

A girl's perception of her individual skill level was seen to influence her enjoyment of physical education. The recognition and acceptance of this skill level was important. Performing well at a sport could also have a carry-over effect into other activities.

If they can't accept the level that they are at, they'll never enjoy it. Once they get to the stage where they accept their physical skills and say 'Right, these are the skills I've been endowed with', then they are fine and they go out and enjoy it.

If they know that they are good at some kind of sport..., then there is potential or the possibility for them to excel somewhere else.

Such benefits were not solely restricted to the physical education setting, but were also viewed as having the potential to increase girls' participation in community sport.

The physical nature of physical education could and should influence girls' enjoyment. The value of physical education to each individual and its inherent opportunity to be physical were seen as important.

I tell the kids that there is enjoyment in being physical and to just get out there and enjoy the facilities that you have, like your legs and your arms, and your ability to move.

The class teacher believed that the whole area of self-concept was as an integral factor influencing girls' enjoyment of physical education. Enjoyment of physical education was seen as less likely for an individual with a low self-concept.

If you can accept where you are at, then you can just enjoy what you are doing.

Influencing a girl's self-concept was the perception of her own figure. Physical education provided a means by which a girl could possess the power to control her own figure, therefore providing motivation and enjoyment in physical education.

Some girls think that they need to keep themselves trim. They really enjoy [physical education] because of this.

The self-concept of girls was reported to have received a boost through improving fitness levels. The initial motivation of weight loss and rising self-esteem was maintained by a desire to continue the improvement in their fitness levels.

Since we have taken up the running programme, some of the girls have lost a fair bit of weight and they feel good about themselves. You can see (it) and they like to think (or) prove that they can keep on going - not to lose weight, but to improve their fitness levels.

Girls' enjoyment of physical education could also be enhanced by the introduction of a small competitive aspect mixed with humour. In commenting on her informal class fitness programme, the class teacher believed that decreasing the perceived importance of high performance through the use of humour was an effective way to increase enjoyment in physical education.

We do an individual run and sometimes we make it mildly competitive and we mess around and joke about who will get back first or last, and what the punishment will be if you come in first or last or whatever. The kids like that.

The class fitness programme is driven by two major objectives. Its recognised and definite purposes are believed to positively influence girls' enjoyment of physical education. Firstly, it is used as a tension breaker from school work. This allows students to break a prolonged session of concentration, provides a stress release, then gives the opportunity for them to return refreshed to continue working.

We use ours (fitness programme) as a tension breaker. When we have been sitting around for ages, we get up and go for a run. They do it and they enjoy and appreciate it.

Secondly, it is used as fitness training in preparation for the substantial walking requirements of their class' trip to Sydney and Canberra later in the year.

We are going on our Sydney / Canberra trip where we walk around for three days and we tell the kids that 'You won't cope with the walking unless you are fit'. This is their fitness goal... Quite a few of them take it seriously.

The use of single sex classes was the final area that the class teacher believed enhanced girls' enjoyment of physical education. It was seen to bypass some problems associated with coeducational physical education for two reasons. Firstly, without the distracting influence of the boys, the girls were more able to concentrate on their own participation in physical education.

They [girls] are more focused when they are by themselves [without the boys].

Secondly, potential problems were avoided with a teacher of the same sex because the girls feel comfortable interacting with a woman.

The girls have a good relationship with their physical education teacher, they respect her, they like to be with her. They have a good time in physical education.

A female teacher was seen as more likely to understand issues from a girl's perspective, and therefore more able to make appropriate changes when dealing solely with girls.

Well, I'm not saying that any given woman would be more in tune than any given man, but in terms of understanding where girls are at, having been in that position herself, she should have a good understanding.

The class teacher perceived the areas of encouragement and self-concept as the most influential factors of enjoyment for girls in physical education. Firstly, encouragement was seen to have a great impact on participation. When asked what she thought most influenced a girl's decision to participate in physical education, the class teacher saw encouragement as a prerequisite. Without encouragement, participation was likely to diminish, or even cease.

It is the encouragement factor. It really is. It is same across the board- physically, academically, emotionally. You encourage someone to do it and give them all the positive feedback you can.

A positive self-concept was the second most important factor influencing the enjoyment of girls in physical education. Students must have the belief that personal success is both possible and achievable.

It (self-concept) has a lot to do with it (enjoyment in physical education). If a kid thinks they're a failure and you have not convinced them otherwise by being encouraging, they lose the plot.

Encouragement and a positive self-concept were integral to the enjoyment of girls in physical education. The other areas were important, but rated as secondary to encouragement and a positive self-concept.

If you delete those two areas [of encouragement and positive self concept], then that is going to have a major impact [on enjoyment].

When asked what she believed to be the factors that most influenced girls' nonenjoyment of physical education, the class teacher highlighted nine factors. These were discouragement; parents; embarrassment relating to physical development; a dislike of being physical; lack of role models; the teacher; individual skill displays; the physical education programme; and extremes in weather.

Discouragement was viewed as a central factor influencing girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. It was most influential when coming from significant others, such as parents and teachers. The class teacher was actively aware of her language towards students because of its potential to negatively influence them. Discouraging words from a teacher were very damaging.

Sometimes you can say one negative word and you can turn that kid off for a week, if not longer. Words are so powerful.

Discouragement was only one area where parents had a major negative impact on girls' enjoyment of physical education. Parents were also seen to influence nonenjoyment by their own ideas on gender specific sports, parental control over physical activity, and excessively high expectations.

Sometimes it (nonenjoyment) is a parental thing.

Some parents have views... that sport is for the boys and cross-stitch is for the girls. Some of them can unwittingly force that opinion on their girls. When it comes to carnivals and things, they will discourage them from being in too many events. It is not a normal attitude, but it still does exist.

Parental control over the amount of physical activity that children were allowed to experience negatively influenced their enjoyment negatively. This in turn will restrict these children's skill development, and therefore their enjoyment in physical education.

Some parents are paranoid their kids are going to get killed in the streets and they have them inside watching television. That is their parents' safety net which therefore affects their (children's) physical development limitation.

High parental expectations on children to perform in physical education and sport also can lead to a reduced level of enjoyment. This is most acute when both parents are orientated towards sporting pursuits.



Some children choose not to be involved in overt physical displays because of the pressure from parental expectations.

It is a really big issue for some kids. (They feel that) 'No, I don't want to do it because Mum and Dad will see me coming last, or see that I am uncoordinated, or I can't do it.'

Embarrassment due to the onset of physical development was an important issue influencing the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. As puberty began, girls became more conscious of their bodies and the changing roles of boys and girls. This altered the way in which situations were perceived. For example,

For most girls, the fact that their skirt flies up and their underwear might be exposed is a major issue.

The embarrassment accompanying such an event for the more developed girls strongly influenced their nonenjoyment of physical education. This led to some girls not wanting to participate in physical education. These girls were then tempted to use their physical development as justification of this.

Because of their development, they are embarrassed about their bodies. Some of them will wear jumpers all the way through summer because of their breast development, and they just can't handle it.

[Some] use their periods as an excuse. If they are overweight, uncoordinated, or embarrassed you can have an excuse at least once a month. It is amazing actually.

To avoid embarrassment due to nonperformance or lack of skill, girls learned a form of voluntary helplessness. They were so conscious of their nonperformance that they would be coy and purposely look stupid in the presence of the boys.

I have one classic point in case of this in my class. She was quite a good sportsperson, but this issue with the boys watching and observing and making comment is a big thing for her.

Some girls simply have a dislike of being physical because it "ruffles" them up. Girls did not like being "ruffled" as much as boys because they were conscious of the way they looked and acted at all times.

They are going through the stage of identifying themselves as young women and they have this concept that women, or young women, do not throw themselves around and get into a big mess because someone might see them like that.

The class teacher thought that this concept came from the media. She stated that it came from television shows like 'Beverley Hills 90210' or similar programmes where nobody sweats.

A lack of positive female role models further added to the reasons for girls not enjoying physical education. This deficiency was seen to be especially evident in the minimal promotion and television coverage of women's sport.

If there is something they watch enough and like enough, then they might dare to get out there and try it.

Because of the dominance of male sport on television, participation in boys' sports was being promoted more than girls' sports. This was seen as more advantageous to the enjoyment of boys in physical education than for girls.

As role models, physical education teachers also represented aspects of nonenjoyment for girls. The stereotyped image of physical educators being slim, young, and attractive creates problems.

Children think that to be physical you have got to be slim, young, and attractive. Obviously, not all of the kids fit into those categories.

The sex and teaching style of the teacher are also factors influencing girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. The choice of a male or a female physical education teacher was an issue because "girls at

the age of 12 still affiliate more strongly with a female figure than a male figure".

For some girls a male teacher would very definitely be a total disadvantage and would put them off sport - just the thought that a male might be looking at them.

Teaching style was also seen as influencing the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. The teacher should be highly competent and flexible with a wide knowledge of various teaching strategies. The introduction of other variables, such as music, was also seen as important.

The teacher should be well organised... and enthusiastic with a variety of approaches. Some physical education classes are all the same.

A major influence of nonenjoyment for girls came from individual displays of skill. If an audience was present, girls were more comfortable performing in a team situation than on an individual basis.

You will find that at athletic carnivals when it comes to team games they (girls) are fine, but if you have got to run down a 100 metre track in full view of a couple of hundred people, they will just about die over it.

Programming also contributed to the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. It was important that there was some congruence

between the sports programmed in physical education and the recreational sports played by students out of school.

School-based physical education should be directing children into recreational personal pursuits or team pursuits. We need to give our kids the option of trying different activities that require different skills.

Weather extremes were seen as an important influence on girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. Extremes in weather affected girls' desire to participate in physical education more than boys'.

Girls complain if it is rainy, too hot, or windy and ask 'Can we go inside'. This really is a girls' thing. The boys don't care what kind of weather it is.

The class teacher perceived the areas of discouragement, physical development, and individual displays as the factors most influencing the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. The influence of these three aspects was seen as significant.

The other influences still impacted on girls' nonenjoyment in physical education, but comparatively less than those of discouragement, physical development, and individual displays.

In conclusion, the class teacher emphasised that enjoyment was an essential ingredient in physical education. So much so that she believed if they didn't enjoy it, they would not be motivated to participate fully.

If they didn't enjoy it and they did do it, it would be a grudging effort. You would not get their best. You would get their half best- if that. Enjoyment is everything to kids.

Therefore, according to the class teacher, if enjoyment is everything to children, and children do not fully participate in physical education if they do not enjoy it, then appropriate implementation of enjoyment factors and avoidance of nonenjoyment factors is paramount. The class teacher felt that the combined effect of these factors had an ultimate influence over the enjoyment and nonenjoyment of girls in physical education.

### **Specialist Physical Education Teacher**

By using the teacher interview guide, two main areas of enjoyment and nonenjoyment were addressed. The specialist physical education teacher was firstly asked to identify what she believed influenced girls' enjoyment in physical education, and which of these factors were most influential. Secondly, she was asked to identify what she believed influenced girls' nonenjoyment in physical education, and which of those factors had most influence.

When asked what she believed to be the factors that most influenced girls' enjoyment of physical education, the specialist physical education teacher highlighted five factors. These were the opportunity to escape from the classroom; teacher style; the current athletics programme; single sex physical education; and social involvement with other students.

The opportunity to escape the regular classroom environment provided by physical education was an important factor in girls' enjoyment. Moving to a location outside of school buildings was motivational for girls because of the large amount of time usually spent within the classroom. Being outdoors and active was seen to enhance the health and enjoyment of girls in physical education.

I think that a lot of girls like getting outside to do things... I know some of them enjoy it because of the health aspect of being outside [and] being active. [It doesn't] compare to being in a classroom most of the day.

As part of the total physical education programme, the athletics schedule taught by the specialist physical education teacher was also felt to stimulate girls' enjoyment in physical education. The wide range of track and field sports available was believed to be motivational and a factor of enjoyment for girls in physical education.

I think that most of them [the girls] enjoy our fairly comprehensive athletics programme.

The teaching style of individual teachers was an important factor in girls' enjoyment of physical education. The specialist physical education teacher believed her approach differed from the teaching style used by teachers in previous years. Although the specifics of these differences were not known, the students have noticeably responded to the changes she has initiated in a positive manner.

I think that I approach it [physical education] in a different way to what they [the students] have had in previous years. I have had some students [positively] comment to me about it. I don't know what they did in previous years.

One aspect of the physical education specialist's teaching style that she believed led to girls' enjoyment was her concern and care for less able students in physical education. An extended teaching focus that encouraged and remediated these students helped them to enjoy their physical education more. Spending extra time with them gave them better skills and more confidence to participate.

I tended to work with the ones that weren't good, rather than the ones that were good. I think most people work with the ones that are good, but I tried to change that.



[This helped them] in their confidence because someone was there who was going to tell them "You did this wrong, [therefore] you need to do this to improve next time". Generally, they are just left to their own devices, and no-one is ever going to improve like that.

The reduced use of expository, up-front teacher talk was another aspect of the teacher's style which increased girls' enjoyment in physical education. Priority was taken away from teacher instruction and given to high levels of student activity. This was achieved by installing student routines and constantly being aware of the level of teacher talk occurring.

At the beginning of the year we spent a lot of time getting into routines... I have tried to concentrate on not talking as much at the beginning [of the lesson], rather letting them go out and do it.

Single sex physical education was believed to increase girls' enjoyment levels in physical education. Segregating the sexes for physical education benefited the girls because there was no need for them to contend with the inevitable taunts from the boys. This was a major distraction for girls during physical education, detracting from their enjoyment.

Getting outside as a group of girls has been good because they haven't had to worry about what the boys are thinking or teasing them about.

Social involvement with other students was also believed to be a factor of girls' enjoyment in physical education. The opportunity for girls to positively interact with each other and develop friendships was seen as very important. This would not only allow meaningful relationships to grow, but clustering students into friendship groups also provided a means by which students could be kept task-orientated.

Group dynamics can work positively. If you are working with your friends, you are more likely to be on task. I have actually found that putting kids with their friends in friendship groups has kept them on task.

The specialist teacher was asked to identify those factors of enjoyment which most influence a girl's decision to participate in physical education. The factors of social involvement with other students, and teaching style were perceived as the most influential. Firstly, the social involvement of girls with other girls and the chance for them to participate with their friends was seen as the most important factor of girls' enjoyment. If social interaction was possible on an ongoing basis, then girls would be more likely to be involved in physical education despite their enjoyment or nonenjoyment of an activity.

If they [the students] didn't enjoy what they were doing at the time, then this [interaction with their friends] would be important. Even if they didn't feel like doing it at the time, they would [still] join in.

Of all the enjoyment and nonenjoyment factors identified by the specialist physical education teacher, social involvement with other students was believed to be the most important factor in influencing a girl's decision to participate in physical education.

Secondly, the conscious restraint of instruction by the teacher in favour of student participation was seen as the second most important factor of girls' enjoyment in physical education.

They [the students] have been able to spend a lot of time doing things rather than sitting listening to it [teacher talk]. I see that as the one [factor] that would affect their enjoyment.

When asked what she believed to be the factors that most influenced girls' nonenjoyment of physical education, the specialist physical education teacher highlighted eight factors. These were injury or illness; embarrassment due to audience; self-concept; peer pressure; inappropriate behaviour by other students during physical education; the programming of physical education; extremes in weather; and the wearing of hats during physical education.

If students were affected by an injury or illness, this would impact on their nonenjoyment of physical education. The difficulties arising from these conditions could lead to girls experiencing less enjoyment in physical education and therefore reduce their desire to participate.

Quite a few of the girls in this class don't enjoy the illnesses that have affected them... If they are injured or sick, they do not enjoy it [physical education].

Difficulty then arose when students were forced by the teacher to be included in physical education despite their injury or illness. This caused high levels of dissatisfaction for girls. Since a parental note was needed to guarantee an individual's exclusion from participation in physical education, the specialist teacher must make a personal judgement when deciding whether to include or exclude a student from class. There had not been an instance when she had excused a girl from physical education due to injury or illness without a parental note.

[Without a parental note] I would make them [the student] do it. I make them start and do certain things. If they look like they are [struggling], or if they keep complaining, then I'll excuse them. But [for] most of the kids, once they get out [there], they're alright anyway.

The embarrassment of girls during physical education was also seen as an important factor of nonenjoyment. This embarrassment was most acute for girls when others were observing their physical education. Embarrassment levels would vary along with who comprised this audience, and be most worrisome when the boys were watching.

Some of the girls haven't liked it [physical education] just because the boys have been out there watching them..., so it might be a bit off-putting because of that.

The perceived low self-concept of girls strongly influenced their nonenjoyment of physical education. Self-concept was seen to influence and link into many different aspects of physical education. Depending on the girl's perception of her self-concept, it had the power to positively or negatively influence enjoyment in physical education. However, girls' self-concept was seen to be low at this age, therefore more often resulting in nonenjoyment.

There are always going to be factors that are going to affect your performance, your enjoyment, [and] your confidence in things unless you are a totally self-confident person - which I don't think is likely at this age.

Peer pressure in physical education could also cause anxiety and therefore result in nonenjoyment for girls. There was pressure from peers not to take risks or jeopardise their portrayed self-image to those observing. The teacher felt that "the peer pressure would affect [their enjoyment] negatively".

I see it a lot more in the year sevens than in any of the other years in the primary school. The peer pressure kind of stuff... Some of them are too afraid to try new things if others are watching. If they know they can't do it, they are less likely to take risks because of the peer pressure.

Other students' inappropriate behaviour during physical education had a large impact on the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. The inappropriate behaviour of some girls was perceived to negatively affect the enjoyment of other girls because of the inevitable teacher disciplining that would result. Time would then be spent on discipline rather than physical education, therefore reducing enjoyment in physical education. This also becomes a factor of nonenjoyment for the teacher.

There are a couple of girls in this class who really muck around a lot and I haven't been able to put my finger on it to stamp it out. I'm sure that this would affect [the enjoyment of]... the majority of them because some days it has been more disciplining than any enjoyable activities. I'm sure the kids don't enjoy that - I don't enjoy it!

The way physical education was programmed in 1994 was also perceived to have resulted in lower levels of enjoyment for girls. Circumstances arose during the year that did not allow the original physical education programme to be followed. For example, a programmed series of lessons in a particular sport was begun, and then later the specialist physical education teacher was informed of a need for special training for a school netball team. It was then decided to suspend the originally programmed sport in favour of the netball training. In hindsight, the teacher felt that this had troubled the girls.

It [the programme] just didn't have a continuous carry on... You'd get up to a certain level, then it [the sport] would stop. So then you would have to go right back to the beginning again because there was two terms in between [starting and finishing the sport]. That makes a big difference.

It happened more often than I would have liked it to, but I don't think that you ever get done all that you would have liked to.

Extremes in weather was the final factor given for girls' nonenjoyment. There was a lack of facilities to cater for physical education during rain or excessively high temperature. Facilities were needed that allowed physical education to continue during these sessions.

If it is raining we can't get out and we don't have anywhere else to go. If it is really hot you don't feel like going out and doing it. You won't enjoy it as much.

When it is raining we don't have any undercover areas. When it is really hot we don't have many shaded areas.

In addition, extremes in weather directly affected the participation of girls in physical education. It also tended to decrease the teacher's expectation of student participation, resulting in both teacher and students just going through the motions of physical education. This may

itself result in nonenjoyment and the cheapening of the whole physical education experience.

It [hot weather] affects their participation. I don't expect them to [get involved]. Basically I am forced to take them out.

Students being forced to wear hats in summer during physical education also irritated girls and reduced their enjoyment. This was a school rule to avoid exposure to the sun and reduce the risk of skin cancer.

It is a school rule that if a student does not have a hat, then they must be in the shade. There are no shade areas here, so basically they sit out of physical education.

This rule concerning hats also has the potential to provide an escape for girls who do not want to participate in physical education. If they do not want to be involved, then they will conveniently not have their hat. The teacher's answer to this dilemma may also lessen enjoyment levels in physical education for those students with a reasonable excuse.

I have rule that if they... leave their hat at home, in their bag, or something... more than three times, they go to the principal.

When asked which of these factors of nonenjoyment most influence a girl's decision to participate in physical education, the specialist physical education teacher identified the interrupted



programming of physical education to be most important. Ranking second was the inappropriate behaviour of other students, and third most important was the peer pressure exerted by others in physical education. These rankings were solely the teacher's impression of their importance to the students. No verbal justification for these was given.

The specialist physical education teacher made special comment on one factor that influenced both the enjoyment and nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. This factor was using sports considered to be boys' sports in an all-girls' physical education programme. Using these sports received a mixed reaction from the students. Some girls did not enjoy participation in any sport they considered to be a boys' sport. Other girls felt that participation in these sports was enjoyable.

I have been trying to introduce them [the girls] to traditionally boys' sports like football. At the beginning a lot of the girls said "No, we are not playing it. It is a boys' sport, we are not playing it!"

Some of the girls really enjoy doing the boys' sports, [even] the more traditional boys' sports.

Girls have social barriers impeding their enjoyment of sports traditionally viewed as boys' sports and such barriers need to be overcome if enjoyment from these sports is to be possible.

I believe that if you start them early [in experiencing traditionally boys' sports], you can break down these barriers.

Girls who performed well in boys' sports were the ones who enjoyed them, and girls who performed less ably did not enjoy them. It appeared that a girl's personal perception of her own performance could often be linked to her enjoyment level.

Basically, it has been the girls who have been good at it [the boys' sports] who have enjoyed it.

## **Students**

The following section incorporates the combined sentiments of the seven female students interviewed for this study. It summarises these sentiments and divides the stated factors into those that influenced students' enjoyment; those that influenced students' nonenjoyment; those producing mixed reactions amongst individual students that were not collectively possible to classify as influencing either enjoyment or nonenjoyment; and those which potentially influenced both enjoyment and nonenjoyment depending on a given situation.

Firstly, the girls were individually asked a series of questions about their enjoyment of physical education and those factors which enhanced this. The girls collectively highlighted nine factors they believed influenced their enjoyment of physical education. These factors were learning new sports; skill improvement; competition; participation in physical education; the opportunity to escape from the classroom; the relaxing dimension of physical education; fitness activities; social involvement with other students; and single sex physical education.

Learning new sports was seen to play an important role in influencing girls' enjoyment of physical education. The variety of sports learned, played, and practised was believed to provide a useful general knowledge of sports, and also reduced the likelihood of physical education becoming predictable and boring.

If we stayed on one game it would get very boring after a while and we wouldn't learn anything new.

Some of the things that we learn ... [are] much more fun than the ones we've already been playing.

The improvement of skills was seen by the girls to have a positive effect on their enjoyment in physical education for two main reasons. Firstly, physical education was more enjoyable with a higher level of competency in game skills because a valuable team contribution could then be made.

If you get chosen ... to shoot a goal or something like that [and you are successful], suddenly it is fun.

Secondly, if an individual was able to improve her skill level, she and her team were more competitive, and therefore more likely to win.

[Improving my skills helps me enjoy physical education] because I can improve and we can beat other teams.

The girls interviewed generally viewed competition as conducive to their enjoyment of physical education. They felt that competition gave participants an incentive to be involved in physical education and increased their degree of effort. Winning provided very high levels of enjoyment, but losing produced very high levels of nonenjoyment. Despite this, enjoyment was seen to complement the use of competition in physical education. Enjoyment was maximised by incorporating all students in the competition, not solely those considered elite athletes.

If you compete with others it makes you try harder  
[in physical education].

If everybody was involved in it [competition], then I think it would... [lead to] enjoyment. But if it is like an interschool carnival or something, then I don't think it is fair that only the good people should do it. I think that everyone should get a chance because it is just fun and nothing serious.

The students felt that they enjoyed their participation in physical education because it involved physical activity. Physical education provided students with a needed break from sitting for long periods in the classroom.

It is not much fun sitting down working all the time because you get really stiff.

The girls also enjoyed their participation in physical education because they were given the opportunity to be physical. Being physical was considered important to their enjoyment in physical education.

Physical education is fun and you get to do [the physical] stuff that you want to do.

Physical education provided an opportunity for students to escape the rigours of the classroom. This was important to girls for two reasons. Firstly, the break allowed the release of stored up energy, enabling students to return to the classroom feeling refreshed and ready to continue their work.

You have got to get away from the work for a while... [so] you can come back refreshed... [It helps] because you can get your mind off it for a while, then come back... ready to start again.

Secondly, the break from regular, sitting down classwork induced enjoyment for the girls interviewed. In essence it did not matter what the break consisted of, but more importantly, it was a change from the usual that caused enjoyment. Physical education was seen to fit this criterion.

It is good to be away from the classroom because if you are going to be in the classroom all day, it is good to be able to get away for a while to do something else, something different.

The relaxing dimension of physical education was also believed to enhance the enjoyment of girls in the subject. Most students felt that physical education was relaxing and provided a needed change from the classroom to reduce tension.

When you are in class you might be all tensioned up and you can't really do much about it. But out there [during physical education] you can relax and you can enjoy it.

One student felt that relaxing during physical education was important because "you will enjoy sport a lot more if you are relaxed". This had a cyclic effect where an increase in relaxation through physical education increased enjoyment of physical education, which in turn helped participants to relax.

If implemented appropriately, fitness activities were also believed to be a source of girls' enjoyment in physical education. Some students felt that if a fitness activity was solely going for a run it would be boring, but could be enjoyable if games or challenges were used.

If they [the fitness activities] are fun but also fitness [orientated], then they are enjoyable. But if they are just fitness [orientated] and they work you too hard, then [physical education] won't be very enjoyable.

An increased level of fitness was also a significant factor in girls' enjoyment of physical education. This was due to an acute awareness of

the amount of personal body fat carried by girls. It was evident some girls believed that by performing fitness activities their fitness would increase, their weight would decrease, and an improved figure would result. The pursuit of a better figure, driven by a low self-concept and the perceived link between figure and peer acceptance, proved to be a motivational force in fitness activities. One student explained that she enjoyed fitness activities "because if I didn't exercise... I would just go to fat".

Social involvement with other students during physical education strongly impacted on girls' enjoyment. Physical education provided the opportunity for the girls to talk freely with one another which was not possible in other classroom subjects. Through this, students were able to build friendships, enjoy themselves, practise their skills, and provide encouragement for each other.

It wouldn't be much fun [without your friends]  
because you would have nobody to talk to or to  
practise [your] skills with. I don't really like it when  
I am without my friends [in physical education]  
because there is no-one to encourage me... because  
I am not very good at sport.

Single sex physical education was emphasised as important to the enhancement of enjoyment for girls in physical education. The girls believed that in single sex physical education they were able to release more energy without fear of embarrassment. This was possible because they personally knew the girls better than the boys and would not receive such disparaging comments in solely female company.

I would say... [single sex physical education] had a very high effect on [my] enjoyment because you can let out more of your energy without getting embarrassed about it.

Say if your skirt flies up it doesn't really matter with the girls, but with the boys it does.

You know them [the girls] and you know that it is okay if you get out [playing the game].

Girls perceived themselves as less likely to behave foolishly than boys in single sex physical education, and more likely to share similar views on issues. (They were able to base this assumption on their prior experience of coeducational physical education.)

[Single sex physical education gives me] enjoyment because we [the girls] all have the same opinion about stuff and it is... fun.

Single sex physical education was enjoyable for girls because they were able to learn and participate without being intimidated by the boys.

I enjoy it [single sex physical education] more because the boys can't show you how to do it and things like that.



The girls were also asked a series of questions about their nonenjoyment of physical education and those factors that decreased enjoyment levels. The students collectively highlighted six factors they believed influenced girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. These factors were forced participation in physical education; weather extremes; discrimination; team selection or choosing partners; the range of sports; and fooling around in physical education.

Forced participation was viewed as a significant factor in girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. Some students felt that teachers often forced them to be involved in physical education even if they had a perceived valid excuse. This was seen as unfair to students. Inevitably, this would then result in strained relationships between teacher and students during that session, and also an unwillingness to fully participate on the next occasion.

If they force me to do physical education... [I] end up feeling really bad about it and wouldn't want to do it next time because I'd be angry at the teacher.

Because if you are sick and... you have to join in, it makes you miserable.

[If] you have a stomach ache or something, then I don't think you should be made to do it [physical education] because it is not fair.

If you have to do it [physical education], you just plod around after the ball and don't really get into it.

Poor weather was perceived to detrimentally affect girls' enjoyment in physical education. All but one student expressed a dislike of participating in physical education in extreme weather conditions. The students felt that this should not be required because it was not enjoyable and exposed them to possible physical repercussions, for example, getting sunburnt or a cold, despite what teachers would usually say about playing outside.

I don't think that we should have to do physical education in really hot weather or really cold weather, because it is not really fair. You... have to go out there and get a cold or get sunburnt. It kind of contradicts what the teachers always say.

You run around and get really sweaty and you start to stink [in hot weather]. You just get really hot and you don't want to run around because you start getting a headache.

Discrimination against girls in physical education in favour of boys was also believed to be unfair. It was felt that the choice of sports in physical education should not be based on sex, as this would be sexist and inequitable. Alternatively, girls should have the freedom to choose whatever sport they wanted to play.

We should be able to learn all sports [in physical education], not only girls' sports.

I just reckon that it [physical education] should be nonsexist.

Even though discrimination was seen to be occurring, some girls were still keen to be involved in physical education. Other girls were not interested in participating in activities considered to be boys' sports.

I still enjoy it [physical education] even if I can't do what the boys are doing.

There are some games that you really don't want to learn that the boys [enjoy], like rugby... because it is not fun and you get bashed up when you don't really want to.

The selection of teams and the choosing of partners was a contentious issue. The team selection process was seen as socially damaging resulting in nonenjoyment because students were regularly split from their friends, and were embarrassed if selected last due to a perceived lack of skill. Further, teams were seen as often unfairly balanced.

If you get with who you want to be with it [results in] enjoyment and if you don't it [results in] nonenjoyment.

When people are picking teams, ... [and] if you're not good at it, you'll be picked last and that can be embarrassing.

You don't really enjoy it [when] you are the last person and everybody is fighting over not having you on their team.

Choosing partners also caused problems for girls when they were already in a group of three, then instructed to change to a group of two. The decision to remove one member of the group, then relocate into another group, concerned some girls.

Sometimes you have three in your group and you are only allowed two, then the other one gets left out.

[Even] if you don't want to go with someone else you have to, you have to go because you are in a three.

The range of sports available was an important factor in girls' nonenjoyment of physical education. All those interviewed said they would like a greater variety of sports in physical education, although this did not mean that the girls did not enjoy the sports already being played. They felt that an increased range of sports would lead to increased enjoyment in physical education. The converse of this was also seen to be true.

[I would like a greater range of sports] because half the time we spend half the term doing the same sport.

[Physical education provides] enjoyment if you have a big range of sports and [provides] nonenjoyment if you don't [have a large range].

Other students fooling around in physical education was a major cause of concern for many of the girls interviewed. It was felt that precious time was wasted by students fooling around in physical education because it annoyed the teacher, and took longer to complete given tasks. This led to decreased participation time in physical education and also to the possibility of punishment.

When you are supposed to be doing something fun... in sport and they start mucking around, then you aren't allowed to do it.

They [those who fool around] are wasting our time so we can't get more sport done.

[Those who fool around] can spoil the whole sport day because they can make the teacher crabby and they [the teachers] can make us do extra things, like laps, that we don't want to do.

The fooling around of other students can also make hearing instructions difficult. This was not only frustrating for some, but had the potential to get all students disciplined.

Say I wanted to hear something of what the teacher said, then I won't be able to hear it well. Then our whole class might get in trouble for it.

There were some aspects of physical education that received a mixed reaction from the girls regarding enjoyment and nonenjoyment. These were not able to be collectively classified as influencing either enjoyment or nonenjoyment.

A rigid physical education programme was seen by some to provide enjoyment, but by others to be of concern . The programme provided enjoyment because students thought it to be beneficial not only to have continuity and some predictability in physical education, but because it also provided the opportunity for students to improve their skills.

It is good to have a programme schedule of what you are going to do [in physical education].

Everybody may know the skills,... [but] you are able to perfect them.

However, the rigid programme led to nonenjoyment for some students because the weather may not be suitable to a given sport on a given day. Programme flexibility was also important because continually doing the same activities caused boredom amongst students. Difficulty could be experienced by students who miss lessons when programmes are systematic and cumulative.

[If] you were doing swimming on a freezing [cold] day, then that would lead to nonenjoyment.

Some of the things [programmed activities] can be boring.

If you do a sport in a series of weeks [and you miss a lesson], then you have missed out on something and they won't go back and tell you what has happened and how to play.

Embarrassment in physical education also received a mixed reaction from students. Some said that they felt little or no embarrassment in physical education. Upon experiencing a potentially embarrassing situation, these students were easily able to shrug off any of its effects. This therefore was not a negative experience for these girls in physical education.

It doesn't really matter because it is not like you do it [have your skirt fly up] on purpose. It doesn't really have anything to do with sport, so you may as well keep on enjoying yourself.

But other students have felt acute embarrassment during physical education. Some of them participate in fear of another compromising event occurring and the inevitable comments from the boys.

You are scared that next time you go out that it [the embarrassing event] will happen again.

[After an embarrassing event] you feel embarrassed for the rest of the game and the boys call out to you and say something. [I] just don't enjoy it at all after that.

The designation of gender specific sports led to both enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. It was seen by some students to enhance enjoyment because it allowed both the girls and the boys to participate in the sports they wanted to be involved in. It was assumed that the sports chosen by boys and girls would naturally align themselves in a traditionally gender specific manner.

[I] don't like cricket, like most girls don't like playing cricket or watching cricket. The boys do because that is their sport- it is boring for girls. Girls like netball.

Gender specific sports also reduced enjoyment for girls in physical education. Some of the girls interviewed believed that all students should be able to participate in all sports regardless of sex.

We should be able to learn all sports [in physical education], not only girls' sports. We should be able to have a wide range.



Coeducational physical education was also a factor that evoked mixed reactions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment for girls. It was viewed to enhance enjoyment because it gave both girls and boys the opportunity to interact with one another, allowing social skills to develop. Some students also saw coeducational physical education as providing a challenge for girls, and therefore the opportunity to prove themselves capable in competition against boys.

You have to learn to mix with guys and girls at the same time because if you don't... then you won't get a good view of them and [you will] think they are a pain in the rear end most of the time.

[Physical education provides] enjoyment because you get to... show the boys that you can do sport as well as they can.

On the converse side, coeducational physical education was viewed negatively. It evoked nonenjoyment for some girls because they believed that boys' ability in physical education was far greater than girls'. This would lead to unbalanced competition. The girls also believed that boys are more likely to behave inappropriately during physical education. This would then increase their own chances of being disciplined by the teacher through whole class discipline or being falsely accused. Having the boys in the class was also embarrassing at times for the girls.

They get you in trouble,... and they could get you in trouble for anything. [The girls] don't muck around as much as the boys in class.

The boys are... better than the girls at everything,  
and although we always go out to bat [in softball],...  
we get out all the time... Then the boys hit home  
runs... and that's quite embarrassing.

[Coeducational physical education causes]  
nonenjoyment because your skirt might blow up or  
something [resulting in embarrassment].

There were some aspects of physical education that evoked reactions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment. The following factors were identified as those which evoked a common reaction of enjoyment and nonenjoyment from the students depending on circumstance. These factors differ from those classified as having a mixed reaction where individual opinion was divided, because those interviewed mutually agreed that these factors had the potential to influence both enjoyment and nonenjoyment depending on the situation.

The first of these factors influencing both enjoyment and nonenjoyment was the teacher. Enjoyment or nonenjoyment for girls in physical education was dependent on the individual teaching style and personality of a teacher. If these were palatable to the student, then she would enjoy physical education. If not, nonenjoyment would result.

The teacher makes a very big difference to whether  
you're enjoying or not enjoying physical education.

I think it [enjoyment] would vary a lot with what teacher you had. If he or she was mean then probably nonenjoyment, if he or she was nice then probably enjoyment.

If you had quite a mean teacher who made you do things... exactly perfect, and made fun of you when you weren't doing it right, [then] that would have a lot of effect on it [nonenjoyment].

The students also agreed that the timetabling of physical education could affect both enjoyment and nonenjoyment. Ensuring that physical education was timetabled to avoid the hottest part of the day was seen as a priority. Avoiding this time would enhance enjoyment, but participating in physical education during this period would negatively influence girls' enjoyment. Flexibility in timetabling to allow physical education to cater for changes in weather conditions could decrease the level of nonenjoyment experienced by students.

I don't think it [physical education] should be around the 12 o'clock mark because that is the hottest hour of the day. I think it should be around 9 or 10 o'clock, or at 2.30 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

[Physical education] should be done on one day in the morning and on one day in the afternoon because if it was raining or something in the morning, then

you should be able to do it another day in the afternoon.

The location of the physical education lesson was also viewed to affect both enjoyment and nonenjoyment for girls. Some students believed that no matter what the location of physical education, they would still feel a sense of enjoyment from it. Enhancing this enjoyment could be achieved through regular changes in venue to provide a varied learning environment.

It is good to go to different places and do physical education... you get to... learn a lot of different things.

Nonenjoyment could also result from the location of physical education. If the venue is not varied, then physical education has the potential to become boring. Other factors such as the weather and available refreshments also impact on girls' nonenjoyment.

If you do it [physical education] in the same place all the time it might become boring.

It depends on the weather- if it is hot then it is not very enjoyable on the oval.

When we are on the oval it is hot and dry, and most of the time we are not allowed to go for a drink.

The perception of one's own personal skill level also affected both the enjoyment and nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. It

was concluded that students who were considered to be skilled at physical education would enjoy participating, but students who did not fit this category would usually not perceive physical education as enjoyable. Interestingly though, upon being asked to rate their own personal skill level, most girls rated themselves as average.

If you are bad at it [physical education], it affects  
your nonenjoyment. Average doesn't really matter.  
If you are good at it, then you enjoy it.

I'm not the best at sport, but I am O.K. at it and I'm  
not the worst. So I enjoy it and try to make the most  
of it... If I was a person who wasn't very good at  
sport, then it wouldn't be much fun because I couldn't  
really do anything of it.

The girls were then asked which of these factors of enjoyment most influence their decision to participate in physical education. The majority of students stated that a wide choice of sports would most influence a girl's decision to participate in physical education. This was a key factor in determining the level of enjoyment or nonenjoyment in physical education. The range of available choice for girls appears to be directly related to the level of enjoyment experienced by the participant.

I would most probably say choice of sports [most  
influences my decision to be involved] because if we  
were allowed only a small range of sports,... I  
wouldn't enjoy it.

Learning new sports also highly influenced each girl's decision to participate in physical education. Being able to obtain a general understanding of many sports for use in later life was seen as important. Learning new sports also helped in avoiding boredom experienced through a predictable programme.

You get to learn how to do things overall. So if you want to play a sport when you grow up..., you know how to basically do it.

Most of the things [sports] we do, we always repeat them every week... [Then] we might do netball again, then tennis twice, three times.

Other factors that were considered influential in a girl's decision to be involved in physical education were the social aspect of physical education and the enjoyment of physically participating in physical education.

On the converse side, the girls were asked which of these factors of nonenjoyment most influence their decision not to participate in physical education. The majority of students stated that the teacher would most influence a girl's decision to participate in physical education. This was perceived to be a central consideration in determining a female student's enjoyment or nonenjoyment in physical education. The extent to which the teacher facilitates enjoyment for a girl in physical education

appears to be related to the likelihood of that girl desiring to participate in physical education.

If you didn't have a very good teacher, then you wouldn't really want to participate in physical education.

[Teachers] can make it [physical education] not very different to [regular] school because they can make you not talk, she can make you do nonenjoyable things that you don't want to do. They can make you do laps and stuff.

The weather was an important influence on each girl's decision to participate in physical education. This was for two reasons. Firstly, very hot or very cold weather raised the level of personal discomfort for students. Secondly, poor weather could make a game less enjoyable because of the adverse conditions.

Hot/cold weather [makes me not want to participate in physical education] because I am the sort of person who can get really hot really quickly.

If it is not a nice day then the sport is not going to be very good, unless it is particularly for that kind of weather, like swimming.

Other factors that were considered influential in a girl's decision to be involved in physical education were the selection of teams and choosing partners, and forced participation in physical education.

Finally, the importance of enjoyment in a girl's decision to participate in physical education was explored. Every student interviewed rated enjoyment as a very important consideration in their decision to participate in physical education or not. Enjoyment was seen as an essential part of physical education, and without it, physical education lacked some of its intended meaning.

If you are not enjoying yourself, you may as well not even be doing it because it is supposed to be enjoyable.

Interestingly, one student believed that enjoyment was not a prerequisite to participation in physical education, but a result of it. Her view was that enjoyment was achieved during and after a physical education experience had occurred, and not before. This would mean that the perception of enjoyment in physical education held by a student before activity was directly related to his/her previous, and most likely recent, physical education experience.

[Physical education is] very important because if you exercise your body it makes you feel happy...  
[because] you are getting out there, doing something, and meeting people.



The general opinion of students was that if they did not enjoy their involvement in physical education, and had the option of not being involved, they would not participate. Realising physical education is compulsory, the level of involvement would be markedly diminished in a nonenjoyable environment. This demonstrates the importance that enjoyment has on girls' participation patterns in physical education.

Enjoyment is really important because if I did not enjoy it [physical education] and I had a choice not to do it, I definitely wouldn't do it.

I wouldn't participate as much as I would want to [if I didn't enjoy physical education].

Continuing this theme, there was also some sentiment that being involved in physical education is an expected necessity for all students. This is so despite one's perception of enjoyment or nonenjoyment of the subject. Students seem to be conditioned to comply with the assumed intrinsic value of physical education and participate regardless of nonenjoyment. The implication of this is that physical education may have become a habit or a hope of something enjoyable to come, rather than an enjoyable experience for girls.

I think you should be involved if you don't enjoy it or you do [enjoy it] because you need the exercise whether you like it or not really.

{I would still participate in physical education despite nonenjoyment} because we would only be doing that [sport] for a couple of weeks and then you would go onto another sport.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

This chapter compares and contrasts teacher and student perceptions of factors affecting enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. Those factors receiving both student and teacher comment will be analysed. Firstly, those factors with either a common teacher and student perception of enjoyment or nonenjoyment will be discussed. Secondly, factors evoking divergent perceptions from teachers and students will be outlined.

#### **Commonalities in teacher and student perceptions of enjoyment in physical education.**

In comparing interview data from the class teacher, the specialist physical education teacher, and the students, five factors were seen to evoke common perceptions of enjoyment in physical education. These commonalities were fitness activities; competition; single sex classes; social involvement with other students; and the opportunity to escape from the classroom.

Both the class teacher and students agreed that fitness activities would enhance girls' enjoyment of physical education. It was not the activities themselves that caused enjoyment, but their perceived effect on the individual. The class teacher and students felt that through performance of fitness activities in physical education, weight loss would result. This in turn would provide the impetus for girls to view themselves as more socially acceptable than they had previously considered. Due to

the possibility of a more favourable self-concept, fitness activities were seen to hold implicit value to the enjoyment of physical education.

The reasons given for enjoyment of fitness activities in physical education strongly align themselves with messages contained in other relevant research literature. Macdonald (1989) suggested that in relation to boys, girls have a low self-concept. This discrepancy was fuelled by societal expectations placed upon females to conform to unrealistic body ideals, including the amount of body weight carried by girls. The Australian Sports Commission (1991) stated that girls were less satisfied with the way they physically looked than boys. The modification of body shape through fitness activities in physical education gave girls the opportunity to control their figures and therefore feel more satisfied with their physical appearance.

Both the class teacher and students thought that competition in physical education led to girls' enjoyment. Students felt that competition provided an incentive for them to perform at their best. The possibility of winning stimulated enjoyment for the girls during physical education. The involvement of all students in competition was viewed as important. The class teacher also used competition in her fitness programme. She felt that mild competition could be appropriately blended with humour to facilitate enjoyment for girls in physical education. Humour was used to reduce the perceived importance of the competition, therefore lessening the damage caused by failure in a competitive environment. Girls' enjoyment of competition in physical education provided them with motivation to participate.

The research literature suggests that competition in physical education is not as important to girls as it is to boys. Boys value this aspect of physical education highly, whereas girls tend to view it less favourably. Browne (1993) suggested that the majority of girls were losers when

placed in a competitive situation with boys. Most girls saw the challenge of achieving personal or team targets in physical education as more important than competing against other girls (Australian Sports Commission, 1991; Feigler, 1993; Pollard, 1988). Competitive games in coeducational physical education are usually dominated by the boys, forcing many girls out of serious participation (Browne, 1993). The literature suggests these notions of the role of competition in physical education. However, these are challenged by the girls' responses to the question of competition. The students believed that competition was an important and enjoyable part of their physical education. This is a significant finding of the study. The class teacher, in attempting to explain this, suggested that the humorous element integrated into competition in her class was successful because it provided the chance to compete for those interested, but also the opportunity for others to participate in an enjoyable, jocular manner. Further research into the discrepancy between student perceptions and the literature in regard to competition is obviously needed.

According to the students and both teachers, single sex classes were more enjoyable for girls in physical education. The class teacher, specialist physical education teacher, and the students believed that the most important reason single sex physical education was enjoyable for girls was due to the absence of boys. All agreed that boys were a distraction for girls in physical education. The comments and taunts of boys during coeducational physical education caused embarrassment for girls. The students felt that, in the absence of boys, they were able to be more physical and release more energy during physical education, allowing a higher level of participation. The class teacher believed that the empathy and intrinsic understanding of a female teacher towards her female students was a positive feature of a single sex environment. The

needs of girls were therefore more likely to be met, facilitating the development of girls' enjoyment in physical education.

Research into the sex composition of classes in physical education indicated that single sex education provided an opportunity for girls to avoid the nonenjoyable aspects of coeducational physical education. Allinson (1993) pointed out that single sex physical education enabled girls to dodge harassment often given to girls by boys. This harassment was purported to be a major factor of girls' nonenjoyment in physical education. Browne (1991) stated that with the onset of menstruation, the practical difficulties of pain, discomfort, inconvenience and embarrassment ensured this was a traumatic time for many girls. Due to the physical and overt nature of physical education, these difficulties are more obvious than in other subjects, therefore increasing the likelihood of girls' nonenjoyment. Reducing the stress of this time can be achieved by removing the boys, therefore allowing only a female perspective and understanding to be present in the physical education class.

Social involvement with other students was seen by both the specialist teacher and the students as significant to the enjoyment of girls in physical education. This enjoyment was derived from the opportunity physical education provided for students to spend time talking, developing friendships, practising skills, and encouraging one another. These aspects of enjoyment were such that they were readily catered for within the physical education context. They also gave some insight into the potential that physical education possesses for community building.

The research literature cites the social involvement of girls as a significant motivating factor for girls in physical education (Feigler, 1993; Weiss, 1993). This peer affiliation and preference for qualitative aspects of physical education are important to girls' participation in physical education (Pettigrew, 1988). As a result of his research, Dyer (1986b)

recommended that a greater emphasis should be given to the social, fun, and friendship aspects of girls' sport. Such a change was likely to increase the participation of girls in physical education.

Both the specialist physical education teacher and the students agreed that the opportunity to escape the rigours of the classroom resulted in enjoyment for girls in physical education. They believed that physical education provided an ideal opportunity for the students' learning environment to be radically changed from a regular classroom with its chairs, tables, and restrictive walls, to a place where freedom and space are available. Both the change in environment and the nature of this change were believed to encourage enjoyment in physical education. The students also felt this variation allowed them to break from their usual classroom mode of learning, release stored up energy, then return refreshed with a renewed ability to concentrate. In a questionnaire of high school aged girls, Browne (1991) found that this break from the classroom ranked as their third most important reason for choosing physical education as a subject.

### **Commonalities in teacher and student perceptions of nonenjoyment in physical education.**

In comparing interview data from the class teacher, the specialist physical education teacher, and the students, five factors were seen to evoke common perceptions of nonenjoyment in physical education. These commonalities were weather extremes; forced participation in physical education; inappropriate behaviour of other students during physical education; embarrassment due to physical development; and the physical education programme.

Participating in physical education during extremes of weather was unanimously stated as being a significant factor of girls' nonenjoyment. Both the students and teachers agreed that difficult weather conditions were unpalatable and required more effort and a greater commitment to result in enjoyment. The boys were seen by the class teacher as more committed to physical education than the girls and therefore less affected by extremes in weather. The students felt that such conditions were not enjoyable because of an increased chance of illness or injury from overexposure to high or low temperatures. The specialist physical education teacher believed that the need for more facilities capable of catering for weather extremes, and the obligation to perform physical education with the girls despite weather conditions, combined to elicit feelings of nonenjoyment among the girls.

Both the specialist physical education teacher and the students agreed that the forced participation of students in physical education resulted in nonenjoyment for girls. The specialist teacher's physical education policy expected all students to participate in physical education unless accompanied by a parental note requesting exclusion. Verbal reasoning was insufficient evidence to warrant exclusion from activity. Without a note, students were always included in a lesson unless they were obviously incapacitated, and were then excused. The specialist saw this as a possible contributing factor to girls' nonenjoyment in physical education. The students agreed with this because the validity of their verbal excuses were not recognised, or only heeded after they were forced to prove themselves through participation. The result usually was nonenjoyment and reduced effort during participation.

Inappropriate behaviour from students was seen by both the specialist teacher and the students as significant to the nonenjoyment of girls and teachers in physical education. The behaviour was not a factor in



itself, but its consequences directly impacted on those girls not involved in the behaviour. When inappropriate behaviour occurred during a physical education class, all students were penalised because of the time wasted waiting for the behaviour to cease. It also opened the possibility of the whole class being disciplined for the actions of a minority. For these reasons, fooling around by other class members decreased the enjoyment level for girls in physical education. This phenomenon does not occur solely in physical education, but has the same potential in other subject areas.

Generally, both students and teachers agreed that embarrassment due to physical development caused lower levels of enjoyment for girls in physical education. Only a minority of students believed that a potentially embarrassing situation, such as the wind exposing a girl's underwear, would not be an issue. The overwhelming majority felt that it was a significant issue because embarrassment could be caused by the obvious nature of the onset of physical development, or by unexpected situations exposing this physical change. Some girls have tried to hide these changes, others have lived in fear of being exposed. Whether an audience was present, and if so, who it comprised, was seen by the specialist teacher as having the potential to dramatically affect the level of nonenjoyment experienced by girls in physical education.

The research literature agrees with the general sentiments of the students and teachers. Physical development during puberty is a traumatic time for girls, with insecurity and low self-concept seen as hallmarks of this transition period. Low self-concept leads towards feelings of anxiety and inferiority, therefore increasing the likelihood and extent of embarrassment experienced by girls (Browne, 1991; Macdonald, 1989). The physical development of girls significantly influences their desire to participate as there is always an audience in physical education.

The likelihood of a girl's poor perception of body image needs to be taken into consideration by teachers in the programming of physical education (Dyer, 1986b).

The content of the physical education programme was generally considered by the students and both teachers to not promote enjoyment for girls. The class teacher felt this was true because the sports played in physical education did not accurately reflect the range and type of sports undertaken in the community. This made the physical education programme less relevant to the students than it should be. Physical education was not seen as motivating children to lead active lives during and after they leave school.

The students believed that it was important and practical to have a programme of activities in physical education, but if the programme was too inflexible, then it did not promote enjoyment. Interestingly though, the specialist teacher felt that lower enjoyment levels had resulted from unforeseen interruptions to the physical education programme in 1994. The programme's flexibility was therefore viewed by the students as a factor increasing enjoyment, but by the specialist teacher as decreasing enjoyment for students.

The research literature suggests that the physical education programme should be widened to make the range of sports available to girls in physical education the same as is available to boys (Dyer, 1986b). Traditionally, boys have had more and varied experiences of different sports than girls. In their programming, teachers have often catered more for boys' interests than girls' interests, continuing this inequity (Browne, 1993). Dyer (1986b) called for a change of focus in physical education, highlighting the need for physical education to complement the recreational sport available in the community. Barriers between schools and local community groups should be broken down and links developed

in order to make physical education relevant to participants. A programme having the flexibility to cope with these necessary changes was essential (Dyer, 1986b; Laventure, 1993).

### **Commonalities in teacher and student perceptions of factors leading to both enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education.**

In comparing interview data from the class teacher, the specialist physical education teacher, and the students, two factors were seen to evoke common perceptions of both enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. These commonalities were the perception of individual skill level and gender specific sports.

A student's perception of her own skill level was believed by both the class teacher and the students to influence both the enjoyment and nonenjoyment of girls in physical education. The class teacher thought it important for students to determine their own perceived level of skill in physical education. No matter how positive or negative this may be they needed to accept it, to enable them to enjoy physical education to the greatest extent possible. The students felt that if a girl perceived herself as skilled in physical education, then she certainly would enjoy it. However, the students were also quick to point out that a negative perception of skill level would inevitably lead to nonenjoyment. Therefore, the perception of one's own skill level determined whether enjoyment or nonenjoyment was experienced.

The research literature suggests that girls generally perceive themselves as less fit and less capable than boys at games and sports in physical education (Australian Sports Commission, 1991). Macdonald (1989) suggested that these perceptions were a result of societal

expectations imposed upon girls and did not need to be the case. In a single sex class such comparisons became irrelevant and girls were able to establish their own skill level that was not relative to the boys.

The specialist teacher and the students agreed that the designation of sports as gender specific led to both enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education. The specialist teacher felt that social barriers were seen to reinforce in some students the value of gender specified sports. These students enjoyed playing girls' sports more, and believed they should not be forced to participate in boys' sports. Other students felt that all sports should be available to both girls and boys. Participating only in girls' sports was deemed to be restrictive for girls and led to nonenjoyment.

The research literature agrees that social barriers and gender roles have a marked influence upon physical education. From birth, many girls are conditioned into a stereotyped female role, characterised by images of femininity and passivity. These attitudes flow over into physical education, where sports are categorised as either more or less appropriate for girls or boys depending on their congruence with these perceived feminine requirements. Realising that some sports fail these tests of suitability, girls in physical education often have restricted sporting options to choose from (Chalmers, 1993; Girls and Physical Activity Project, 1985; Griffin, 1989; Jobling & Macdonald, 1987).

### **Differences in teacher and student perceptions of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in physical education**

In comparing interview data from the class teacher, the specialist physical education teacher, and the students, four areas were seen to

evoke divergent perceptions of enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment in physical education. These differences were the teacher; factors considered to most influence enjoyment; factors considered to most influence nonenjoyment; and the link between enjoyment and participation in physical education.

The perception of enjoyment resulting from the teacher of physical education evoked varying reactions from the class teacher, the specialist teacher, and the students. The class teacher felt that a teacher's sex and his/her teaching style had significant potential to cause nonenjoyment for girls in physical education. If the teacher's sex did not match that of the students', or the teacher was unorganised and did not use varied teaching strategies, nonenjoyment would result. The students agreed that the teaching style and the personality of the teacher would impact on their enjoyment in physical education. If these were palatable to the students, then enjoyment would result. If not, nonenjoyment would occur. The specialist teacher also agreed that teaching style was significant. She felt that her style of caring for nonperformers and increasing student activity time was an example of a teaching style that led to girls' enjoyment in physical education.

Although both teachers and the students agreed teaching style was important to girls' enjoyment in physical education, they all differed in their perception of how enjoyment would be affected. The class teacher believed that teaching style could easily lead towards lower levels of enjoyment. The specialist physical education teacher felt her style would lead to higher levels of enjoyment for the girls. The students themselves judged individual styles of teachers on their merits. It therefore becomes obvious that more research is needed to determine what students believe to be appropriate teaching qualities, and therefore test the accuracy of the teachers' perceptions.

The research literature suggests that teaching style is significantly influenced by social expectations placed upon the teacher and students to conform to stereotypic norms. The individual teacher's own style is influenced by his/her perception of how physical education for girls should be approached and organised. Choices made by the teacher will reflect this socialisation effect. It will dictate his/her stance and also determine the level of enjoyment experienced by girls in physical education (Bain, 1989; Griffin, 1989; Macdonald, 1990). As mentioned by the class teacher, the literature also agreed that students felt more satisfied if the gender of their teacher was congruent with their own (Ward, 1982).

Discrepancy was found between the class teacher, the specialist, and the students about which factors most influenced enjoyment in physical education. Despite generally agreeing upon the factors that led to enjoyment, there was a marked difference in which were seen as most influential. There was no congruence between the teachers and students in the factors they believed to be the two most influential factors leading to enjoyment in physical education. Only the factor of social involvement was mentioned in all of the stated preferences. This was the specialist teacher's first choice and the students' third. A significant difference is obvious between teachers and students in assessing the importance of enjoyment factors in physical education. Rectifying this discrepancy may provide the needed insight for teachers to execute physical education in such a way as to increase girls' enjoyment.

A discrepancy was also found between those interviewed about which factors they considered to most influence nonenjoyment in physical education. None of the factors perceived by the teachers to most influence nonenjoyment in physical education were congruent with those the students believed to be most influential. Therefore the priorities teachers implement to avoid girls' nonenjoyment of physical education are not

those seen as most important by the girls themselves. Hence, factors of nonenjoyment could currently be used in physical education under the unintentional guise of factors that do not significantly affect nonenjoyment, or even seen as factors possibly leading to enjoyment. Obviously this would not benefit girls' motivation to participate in physical education.

A difference was also noticed in the perception of the class teacher and students concerning the link between enjoyment and participation in physical education. The class teacher believed that if students did not enjoy physical education, they would not participate in it. Also if they were forced to participate, then only a feigned half effort would result. Although the students agreed that they would not fully participate in physical education if they did not enjoy it, there was also a sense that the perceived intrinsic value of physical education would override any temporary experience of nonenjoyment. They would therefore participate despite their nonenjoyment. This discrepancy in the perception of enjoyment's link with participation could be misleading if the participation of students in physical education is cited as proof of enjoyment in the subject. Obviously this cannot be assumed.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

It is apparent from this research that a number of factors significantly impact on girls' enjoyment of physical education. This is congruent with the conceptual framework presented for the study. It was proposed that, depending on each individual situation, the factors identified may increase or decrease the enjoyment experienced by girls in physical education. The major findings of this research specify these influencing factors. Reliability of these findings is demonstrated in the congruency of responses to the questions in the questionnaire with those given in the interviews. The results of the interviews largely reflected responses to the questionnaire. Also in agreement with the conceptual framework, it was found that enjoyment plays an important role in promoting girls' desire to participate in physical education. It is therefore essential that practitioners of physical education are informed of the relevant research and means by which they can adapt to meet their participants' needs.

This chapter comprises the major findings of this research, coupled with recommendations related to the current practice of physical education. A copy of this research and its findings will be distributed to those teachers involved in the study and to the school. Teachers in the school concerned could relate these findings and recommendations to their own practice, identifying the relevance and applicability to their own context. They would then be able to implement those recommendations seen as appropriate. It is hoped that other teachers involved in similar teaching contexts may also benefit from the findings of this study. Finally,



teaching contexts may also benefit from the findings of this study. Finally, the conclusion gives suggestions for further research in student enjoyment.

### **Major Findings**

Fitness activities were viewed by the participants as increasing girls' enjoyment of physical education. The major reason for this was its perceived benefit to weight loss and body shape. It allowed girls to develop a more positive self-concept because the perception of their own self-worth was significantly influenced by the perception of their figure. Therefore, participating in fitness activities was enjoyable because of its cumulative effect, rather than its intrinsic interest.

Competition was generally found in this study to be a factor of motivation for girls participating in physical education. Most girls were motivated by competition because it gave them the opportunity to test themselves against others and provided the chance to win. This is contrary to what is suggested in the research literature. Enjoyment levels were at their peak upon winning, but upon losing, the reverse would occur. Competition motivated participation during activity, but upon unsuccessful completion, an unsavoury impression of the activity would remain with the participant.

The key to successful use of competition in physical education is obviously to utilise its motivational aspects, whilst eliminating the negative effects of losing in a competitive environment. This may be achieved by instituting a less formal, lower reward style of competition. To diminish the importance of competition, humorous prizes and anecdotal comments could be utilised by the teacher. These would undermine the significance, but not the motivation of the competition. The

perceived need for teachers to shy away from competition to avoid its negative effects on students is thus avoided.

The use of single sex physical education was overwhelmingly stated as increasing girls' enjoyment. The absence of the boys gave the girls more freedom to express themselves physically, and also avoided the inevitable taunts and distractions when boys were present. Single sex classes also allowed girls to feel less embarrassed about their physical development during puberty and more able to continue to participate in physical education despite these physical changes.

The capacity of single sex physical education to avoid factors that reduce enjoyment for girls is significant. It is therefore recommended that single sex physical education be started in the primary school when the first of the girls begin to show signs of the onset of puberty. The upper primary years (Years 6 and 7) would be the most likely time to begin sex segregated physical education. Apart from providing a more enjoyable physical education environment, this could also help in avoiding later problems of low self-concept.

Social involvement with other students was perceived by girls as important to their enjoyment of physical education. The social aspects of talking with others, developing friendships, practising skills together and encouraging one another were all seen as significant. Since this is motivational for girls in physical education, it needs to be encouraged by teachers in a constructive way. This can be done by giving more emphasis to team-orientated games and sports when programming for physical education. Apart from being more comfortable when participating in a team situation, girls are also more able to benefit from these important social considerations.

The opportunity that physical education provides students to escape the rigours of the classroom was stated as important to girls'

enjoyment. The change from the regular class environment and the opportunity to physically express stored up energy provided girls with a needed break from long periods of concentration. Students were then able to return to class after physical education with a renewed capacity to concentrate. The time spent in physical activity is time well spent by teachers. Behaviour problems most often occur when students are bored and are not able to concentrate on their given work. Instituting short breaks of physical activity will allow students to more easily concentrate, and therefore they are more likely to be on-task. This should lead to a reduced incidence of student misbehaviour.

Participating in physical education during extremes in weather conditions significantly reduced the girls' enjoyment level. They did not enjoy participating because they perceived an increased risk of illness and injury during weather extremes. To remove this perceived risk, physical education should be provided with school facilities or adequate access to community facilities to enable necessary shelter for programme continuity. Another way of avoiding weather difficulties is through flexible teacher programmes. Physical education can be either changed to another day or to a different time during the day. The physical education programme itself should also be diverse enough in nature to accommodate adverse weather conditions if retimetabling is not possible.

The forced participation of girls in physical education against their will, due to injury or illness, significantly decreased their enjoyment. Without a parental note to excuse a student, exclusion from physical education was unlikely, if not impossible. Verbal excuses were rarely heeded unless a student showed she was obviously incapacitated by participating. It is important for teachers to place more trust in students, and to be more willing to take students at their word. If girls enjoy physical education, then there should not be problems associated with

students abusing this trust. They will want to be involved in physical education, and only sit out if absolutely necessary.

Inappropriate behaviour by class members during physical education led to lower levels of enjoyment for girls. This behaviour impacted on all the students in the class, regardless of whether they were involved or not. The whole class was often punished by the transgressions of a few through corporate discipline, or by the wasted time of disciplining those individuals involved. Teachers need to aim to reduce the incidence of inappropriate behaviour in physical education by gaining greater class control. One way of doing this would be to implement effective class management techniques. These should be individually-orientated and not performed during valuable class activity time, therefore disadvantaging only those misbehaving. The incidence of misbehaviour should decrease if teachers are able to implement those factors leading to enjoyment and avoid those leading to nonenjoyment.

From the interviews it appears that a girl's perception of her own skill level is important in her deciding if she does or does not enjoy physical education. If a girl has a positive perception of her skill level, then she is more likely to enjoy physical education. If she has a negative perception, then she is more likely not to enjoy physical education. It is therefore important for the practice of physical education to provide appropriate experiences to maintain those girls with a positive perception of their own skill level, whilst at the same time providing encouragement for those of a lower perceived skill level. To do this, teachers should use physical education activities that can be participated in at varied skill levels with success. This will allow all girls to proceed at their own skill level and more easily notice personal skill improvement. This is more likely to occur in a single sex class where the negative effects of boys are avoided.

The use of gender specific sports had mixed reactions from the girls interviewed. Some enjoyed playing those sports traditionally considered to be girls' sports more than those considered to be boys' sports. Others, who also had some experience of participating in boys' sports, believed that all sports should be available to girls, for if they were able to play them, they would enjoy them. There is an obvious need for physical education to increase the scope of sports played by incorporating traditionally boys' sports into the girls' physical education programme. This will please those girls wanting to play boys' sports, and will initially disappoint the others. Those disappointed should begin to enjoy the boys' sports once the suggestion that these sports should be associated only with boys is lost. Using both boys' and girls' sports in the physical education programme should begin to break down social barriers. It should reduce the gender specificity of individual sports, allowing broad-based participation in all sports regardless of sex.

### **Recommendations**

Given the delimitations and nature of this study, these recommendations are specific to the school in which it took place. Transferability of these recommendations to other contexts is encouraged, but should be made with careful consideration.

Recommendation 1 - That curriculum planners and individual teachers be proactive in developing programmes that sensitively deal with issues of self-concept in relation to body image, societal pressures, and the physical education environment.

Recommendation 2 - That teachers use competition to motivate girls in physical education, but reduce its formality and focus on "winner takes all" attitude through alternate strategies such as humorous prizes, and anecdotal teacher comment.

Recommendation 3 - That single sex physical education classes be instituted into the upper primary school programme.

Recommendation 4 - That the importance of social interaction be recognised by an increased emphasis on the programming of team-oriented games and sports in girls' physical education

Recommendation 5 - That long periods of student concentration in classroom activity be interspersed with short segments of physical education or fitness activities.

Recommendation 6 - That these short breaks of physical education not be withheld as a punishment for misbehaviour.

Recommendation 7 - That indoor and outdoor facilities for physical education be provided to ensure quality physical education despite weather conditions or any other interruptions.

Recommendation 8 - That teachers have flexible daily timetables to reduce or avoid the effects of adverse weather conditions on physical education.

Recommendation 9 - That physical education be taken in varied locations to continually provide a change of learning environment.

**Recommendation 10** - That teachers be more willing to believe verbal reasons for not wanting to participate in physical education and allow exclusion when deemed necessary.

**Recommendation 11** - That discipline in physical education be on an individual basis and conducted at a time when other participants are not disadvantaged from lost activity time.

**Recommendation 12** - That teachers use activities that are capable of providing participation and success for all levels of student skill in a single sex environment.

**Recommendation 13** - That physical education programmes discourage sex role differentiation by exposing both girls and boys to sports traditionally considered to be the domain of the other sex.

### **Further Research**

The significance of the teacher to the enjoyment of girls in physical education is difficult to understate. The teacher is the one who sets the tone of the class by teaching style and personality. Student enjoyment is directly affected by the interaction between teacher and student. If this relationship is compatible, then student enjoyment should result. If not, then problems will be difficult to remedy.

More research is needed to determine exactly which teacher attributes are perceived by students to be most compatible with student enjoyment. Teachers also need to take note and implement action on other

factors which students believe to most influence enjoyment, nonenjoyment, and participation in physical education. These may not necessarily be in the interests of teachers, but they will serve those they teach.



## APPENDIX A

### Request for Principal permission to conduct the study.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

c/o \_\_\_\_\_ College

Address

15/9/94

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The purpose of this correspondence is to seek your permission to conduct study in Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ Year 7 class at your school. The data will form the basis of my thesis presentation for the degree of Bachelor of Education with Honours.

The intent of the study is to identify and recommend changes to areas of physical education to improve the participation level of girls in physical education. This is an important area of study as girls' participation in physical education has traditionally been lower than that of boys.

The study will involve a short questionnaire (15 minutes) of the whole class, and further questioning of 7 individual students (approximately 20 minutes each). Denise's class is ideal to investigate as the students have experience of sex segregated physical education with specialist teachers, and also knowledge of coeducational physical education with the class teacher.

Enclosed is the abstract of my research proposal for your interest. A copy of the full research proposal is also available on your request. Confidentiality of names and places within the study will be treated most seriously.

I hope that this request meets with your approval. Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ has indicated to me that if your permission is granted, then she is most willing to offer her class for the study. Parental permission of all students will then be sought before commencement. Thankyou for your time and ensuing reply.

Yours sincerely,

Grant Collins

## APPENDIX B

### Request for teacher permission to conduct the study.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I seek your cooperation in a University research project. The study will be recognised as a partial requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Education with Honours which I am currently completing at Edith Cowan University. The purpose of the study is to discover why students do and do not enjoy physical education, so that necessary changes can be made to increase the level and quality of participation of students in physical education.

Your participation in the study will involve one interview of approximately 25 minutes duration. The interview will focus on your perceptions why students do or do not enjoy physical education and the issues involved.

Confidentiality of names and places within the study will be assured with individual responses only being viewed by me.

Any questions you may have about this study on physical education can be directed to me on \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the form below indicating whether you do or do not give your permission to participate in the study. The completed form should be forwarded to \_\_\_\_\_ no later than the **7th November**. Thank you for your time,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Grant Collins

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above information and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I do / do not agree to participate in this study, with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time. I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C

### Request for parental permission to conduct the study.

Dear Parent,

I seek permission for your child to be involved in a University research project. The study will be recognised as a partial requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Education with Honours which I am currently completing at Edith Cowan University. The purpose of the study is to discover why students do and do not enjoy physical education, so that necessary changes can be made to increase the level and quality of participation of all students in physical education.

The participation of your child will involve a 15 minute questionnaire to be completed by the whole class. It will focus on the aspects your child enjoys or does not enjoy about physical education. This will be followed by a 20 minute interview of selected children within the class, with the possibility of a second confirmatory interview if necessary. Interviews will be used to ascertain details of why students enjoy or do not enjoy physical education. Interviewing will be completed in consultation with the class teacher to ensure minimal disruption to the class.

Confidentiality of names and places within the study is assured. Individual responses will only be viewed by me. Any questions you may have about this study on physical education can be directed to me on [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Please complete the form below indicating whether you do or do not give permission for your child to participate in the study. Completed forms should be forwarded to \_\_\_\_\_ (relieving for \_\_\_\_\_ on long service leave) no later than the 7th November. Thank you for your time,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Grant Collins

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above information and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I do / do not give permission for my child, \_\_\_\_\_, to participate in this study, with the understanding that he/she may withdraw at any time. I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided my child is not identifiable.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX D

### Physical Education Questionnaire.

I am interested in how you feel about physical education and wish to find out why you enjoy or do not enjoy physical education. Please answer as accurately as possible so that students in the future may benefit from your comments. All responses are confidential, and will only be viewed by me. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please enter your code number here \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTION 1** - Circle the option which most accurately describes the way you feel about physical education (P.E.).

|          |           |                |            |         |
|----------|-----------|----------------|------------|---------|
| I ENJOY  | I ENJOY   | SOMETIMES I    | I DO NOT   | I NEVER |
| P.E. ALL | P.E. MOST | ENJOY P.E. AND | ENJOY P.E. | ENJOY   |
| THE TIME | OF THE    | SOMETIMES I DO | MOST OF    | P.E.    |
|          | TIME      | NOT ENJOY P.E. | THE TIME   |         |

**QUESTIONS 2 & 3** - Make your comments about physical education classes in the spaces provided below (answer both questions if they are appropriate to you)

2. I enjoy physical education because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. I do not enjoy physical education because\_\_\_\_\_

YOU HAVE NOW FINISHED. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Pilot Interview Guide.**

#### **a) Factors resulting in enjoyment in physical education.**

- learning new sports
- improving skills
- participating in physical activity.
- physical education location
- getting out of class
- relaxing

#### **b) Factors resulting in nonenjoyment in physical education**

- forced inclusion
- rigid programme
- hot/ cold weather
- embarrassment
- discrimination
- gender specific sports

#### **c) Factors resulting in enjoyment and nonenjoyment**

- choice of sports
- fitness activities
- social aspects
- competition
- teacher
- team selection/ choosing partners
- mucking around
- timetabling of physical education
- perception of personal skill level
- sex composition of class

## APPENDIX F

### Student Rating Scales for Pilot Interview Guide.

Rate the given issues on **how much** effect they have on enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment in physical education.

a) Enjoyment

|                        |                |               |                       |                     |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Very<br>High<br>Effect | High<br>Effect | Low<br>Effect | Very<br>Low<br>Effect | No Effect<br>At All |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|

b) Nonenjoyment

|                        |                |               |                       |                     |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Very<br>High<br>Effect | High<br>Effect | Low<br>Effect | Very<br>Low<br>Effect | No Effect<br>At All |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|

c) Both enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment

|                        |                |               |                       |                     |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Very<br>High<br>Effect | High<br>Effect | Low<br>Effect | Very<br>Low<br>Effect | No Effect<br>At All |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|

## APPENDIX G

### Student Interview Guide

#### 1. Enjoyment

a) What do you most enjoy about physical education? Why?

b) What about \_\_\_\_\_? Does this help you enjoy physical education?  
Can you rate its effect on your enjoyment in physical education?

- learning new sports
- improving skills
- participating in physical activity.
- physical education location
- getting out of class
- relaxing

c) Which of these would most make you want to participate in physical education?

d) Do other things besides enjoyment affect your decision to participate in p.e.?

How important is enjoyment in your decision to participate in p.e.?

#### 2) Nonenjoyment

a) What do you most not enjoy about physical education? Why?

b) What about \_\_\_\_\_? Does this help you not enjoy physical education?  
Can you rate its effect on your nonenjoyment in physical education?

- forced inclusion
- rigid programme
- hot/ cold weather
- embarrassment
- discrimination
- gender specific sports



c) Which of these would most make you not want to participate in physical education?

d) Do other things besides nonenjoyment affect your decision not to participate in p.e.?

How important is nonenjoyment in your decision not to participate in p.e.?

### 3) Enjoyment and/or Nonenjoyment.

a) Do you think that \_\_\_\_\_ results in enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment in p.e.?

Why?

Can you rate its effect on your enjoyment and/or nonenjoyment in physical education?

- choice of sports
- fitness activities
- social aspects
- competition
- teacher
- team selection/ choosing partners
- mucking around
- timetabling of physical education
- perception of personal skill level
- sex composition of class
- self-concept
- encouragement
- fitness activities
- team aspects

b) Which of these would most make you want to participate in physical education?

c) Which of these would most make you not want to participate in physical education?

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Teacher Interview Guide.**

1. What do you think girls enjoy about physical education? Why?
2. To what extent do each of these affect the enjoyment of girls in physical education?
3. What do you think girls do not enjoy about physical education? Why?
4. To what extent do each of these affect the nonenjoyment of girls in physical education?
5. Thinking broadly about the influences on physical education. Do you think there are any other contributing factors to the enjoyment or nonenjoyment of girls in physical education? For example, uniform, weather, periods.
6. Which of these factors of enjoyment and nonenjoyment most influence girls' decisions to participate in physical education?

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