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# Secondary physical educators' content negotiations

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**SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATORS'  
CONTENT NEGOTIATIONS**

by

**MATTHEW DANIEL FERRY**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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2011

MAJOR: KINESIOLOGY (Pedagogy)

Approved by:

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Advisor

Date

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### *Overview of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to examine how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content and curricular decisions. In chapter one, I introduce the central issues that informed this study. First, I discuss the prevalence of obesity in our youth and adult populations. Second, I talk about the negative health consequences that are correlated with obesity. Third, I explain the role physical activity can play in increasing public health. Fourth, I argue for the promising role middle school physical education (PE) can play in addressing these concerns in two parts. In the first part I will highlight how the field of physical education has responded to changing social concerns and demographics by innovating ‘how’ physical education is taught and ‘how’ curriculum is framed and organized. Second, I draw attention to the historic changes in physical activity culture and the concurrent tensions and frictions with ‘what’ is currently being taught in middle school physical education. I conclude the chapter by providing the rationale and research questions that guided this study.

In chapter two, I outline the various theoretical frameworks and literature bases that guided this study. I include: Bourdieu’s (1977, 1978, 1984, 1993) theories of field and habitus, teacher socialization theory, theory of teacher emotion, theory of teacher ideology, curriculum as a political text, and an array of critical and postmodern social theories.

In chapter three, I explain and clarify the methodology that was employed in this study. I begin by describing how the interpretive paradigm informed my ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. Next, I make clear the specific methods I used for participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, and establishment of trustworthiness. Following this, I explain how I accounted for ethical considerations that were pertinent to this study. Finally, I

share a reflexive exploration on aspects of my subjectivity that needed to be addressed throughout the research.

In chapter four, I summarize the findings of the study. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section includes a series of case studies, one for each teacher. Each case study describes the teacher's background and what specific content and physical activities they included in their curriculum. The second section is comprised of three separate themes. The first theme explains personal factors that informed the teachers' content negotiations. The second theme discusses how institutional factors affected the teachers' content negotiations. The third theme examines how student factors influenced each teacher's content negotiations.

In chapter five, I conclude the study by connecting the research findings to; my theoretical framework, previous research and implications for physical education and physical education teacher education (PETE), study limitations, and plans for future research.

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content and curricular decisions. There are four interrelated issues that supported and served as the rationale for this study. These include: (1) the increased incidence of obesity; (2) obesity and negative health consequences; (3) physical activity and public health; and (4) the promising role that middle school physical education can play. Although there is much work focused on secondary school physical education, 'how' content is taught and framed has largely been the focus of this research. Any work that has focused on the content and physical activities taught in physical education (PE) has been theoretical (Kirk, 1999, 2009; McCaughtry, 2009; McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2001), historical (Kirk, 1998; Phillips & Roper, 2006), or focused on student perspectives (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Carlson, 1995; Olafson, 2002). While

researchers have demonstrated that many students are unhappy with the content offered in physical education, no study to date has examined how teachers negotiate decisions concerned with content and curriculum. The autonomy teachers have in deciding what gets taught in physical education makes this a critical issue in light of the recent push for increasing levels of physical activity in adolescent and adult populations.

### *The Increased Incidence of Obesity*

Public health, in its various shapes and forms, has received significant attention and resources throughout history (Turner, 1996). In contemporary times, obesity is one of the most pressing concerns confronting public well-being (Ogden et al., 2006; Wang & Lobstein, 2006). In the U.S. (Ogden et al., 2006) and much of the world (Wang & Lobstein, 2006) the increasing incidence of obesity in both adults (Flegal, Carroll, Ogden, & Johnson, 2002) and youth (Dietz, 2004) over the past few decades is staggering, leading many researchers and health care professionals to call the phenomenon a ‘disease’ of ‘epidemic’ proportions (Deckelbaum & Williams, 2001).

### *Obesity and Negative Health Consequences*

Researchers have increasingly demonstrated links between obesity and a variety of biophysical and psychosocial conditions detrimental to one’s health. These diseases have had a catastrophic impact on the larger economy through the role they play in soaring health care costs. Researchers are increasingly finding that excess adipose tissue at the obese and overweight levels correlates with a variety of biomedical conditions, including Type 2 diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome, Blount’s disease, sleep apnea, exacerbation of asthma, particular types of cancer (colon and breast), nonalcoholic liver disease, nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, proteinuria, and a variety of cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension, dyslipidemia, atherosclerosis, and



left ventricular hypertrophy (Daniels et al., 2005; Dietz, 1998). Researchers are also finding that youth who are overweight and obese are subject to significant social stigma (Pearce, Boergers, & Prinstein, 2002; Puhl & Latner, 2007) and are more likely to experience daily interpersonal discrimination than non-obese peers (Car & Friedman, 2005). Documented results of this stigmatization include lowered self esteem, depression, body dissatisfaction, suicidal ideation, decreased academic success, lowered economic success later in life (Puhl & Latner, 2007), and fewer opportunities to develop intimate and romantic relationships with peers (Pearce, Boergers, & Prinstein, 2002). Furthermore, and of particular concern, obese or overweight people tend to internalize the moral and ideological stigmas, evidenced by overweight individuals demonstrating a morally laden anti-fat bias, as well as their reporting “that fat people were significantly lazier and less motivated than thin people” (Wang, Brownell, & Wadden, 2004, p.1335).

The convergence of the biomedical and psychosocial conditions linked with obesity has many pointing to the resultant economic costs placed on society. For instance, the macroeconomic burden of obesity and diabetes in the United States alone has been estimated at 1.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or when converted to 2000 constant U.S. dollars, equals roughly 132 billion dollars (Oxford Health Alliance Working Group, 2005). Of this expense, the medical and health care costs have received the most direct attention. Depending on methodology, and over time, the direct annual health care costs in the United States have been estimated between 39 billion in 1986 (Colditz, 1992) and 51 billion in 1994 (Wolf & Colditz, 1998), with Finklestein, Ruhm and Kosa (2004) estimating this number to double when indirect costs such as daily care, restricted activity, and lost productivity are factored in.

*Physical Activity and Public Health*

Researchers have presented a variety of reasons for the current ‘crisis’, with one of the most regularly cited explanations being a lack of regular physical activity (Trost, 2006; United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1996). It appears that this explanation holds some power, as researchers are increasingly finding an inverse relationship between excess adipose tissue and regular physical activity (Hill & Wyatt, 2005; Trost, 2006).

Professionals concerned about health and obesity are advocating the preventative and protective qualities that regular physical activity holds in relation to many of the costly biomedical and psychosocial diseases listed above. Researchers are progressively finding that regular physical activity has an inverse relationship with cardiovascular disease, thromboembolic stroke, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes mellitus, osteoporosis, obesity, colon cancer, breast cancer, anxiety, perceived stress, and depression (Bauman, 2004; Cowan & Adams, 2004; Dunn, Trivedi, & O’Neal, 2001; Goodwin, 2003; Haskell et al., 2007; Hill & Wyatt, 2005; Phillips, Kiernan, & King, 2003; Wartburn, Nicol, & Brendin, 2006). As a result of the health enhancing qualities provided by regular physical activity and the aforementioned increase in incidence of obesity, many experts and agencies are calling on all citizens to engage in regular physical activity.

Unfortunately, and for a number of reasons, large portions of the population appear to live predominantly sedentary lifestyles (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2005; Ham, Kruger, Tudor-Locke, 2009; Haskell et al., 2007). More and more, researchers are finding that physical activity levels among adults are far below the recommendations published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) (Ham, et al., 2009; Haskell, et al., 2007; CDC, 2006). While children have been shown to be the most active

portion of the population, there is much concern over the precipitous drop in physical activity as they enter adolescence (Le Masurier et al., 2005; Welk, Eisenmann, & Dollman, 2006). In a large cross sectional data set of over 2000 children and adolescents, Le Masurier and his colleagues (2005) found that between grades 6 and 12 the mean daily steps for males drops from just over 14,000 to just over 10,000, and drops from 11,427 to just over 9,000 for girls, during the same time range. This is of specific concern for a number of reasons. First, descriptive studies show that adolescents tend to become less active as they move into adulthood (Le Masurier et al., 2005). Second, Malina (2001) presented evidence that inactive adolescents are likely to become inactive adults. Third, Engeland, Bjorge, Tverdal, and Sogaard (2004) have demonstrated that youth who are overweight and obese will likely remain overweight and obese as adults. The confluence of all these trends (that physical activity is inversely related to obesity, that youth become inactive as they move into adolescence, and obese adolescents are likely to become obese adults) is further complicated when viewed in light of the larger public health concerns discussed previously.

### *The Role of Secondary School Physical Education*

In response to the outcry declaring a public health crisis, a variety of organizations have published documents and action plans detailing how governments and agencies can move forward in increasing the health and physical activity of today's youth. In particular, school physical education has been pegged as a central front in battling this crisis (National Association for Sport and Physical Education/American Heart Association, 2006; USDHHS, 1996; World Health Organization, 2004). Given the ready access to youth, and the proposed focus on providing adolescents with a wide variety of physical activity experiences, it makes logical sense to assume that secondary school physical education holds potential to impact their physical

activity practices and lifestyles in a positive manner. In fact, some large scale interventions have shown positive results in increasing the physical activity of youth and adolescents (Gortmaker, Cheung, Peterson., 1999; Luepker et al., 1996; Sallis et al., 1997). Despite the promising role physical education might play in increasing the health and physical activity of adolescents, there is research literature that should provide some perspective and caution to this optimism. Researchers who have studied student voices and perspectives have revealed physical education to be a place many adolescents find irrelevant and painful, and as such, has been failing to fulfill this promise.

*Student voices and 'how' physical education is taught.* Physical education as a field has had to adapt to changing climates throughout its history. Over previous decades changes in economics and work life; technological innovations; cultural norms informing physicality, gender, race and ethnicity, marriage, sexuality, and religious discourse; political ideology and the actions and policies of governments, have all had complex implications for how people view and interact with various forms of human movement and physical activity. The changes in society and the populations that we serve have forced the field of physical education to periodically come to grips with the reality that traditional and popular pedagogies have become inadequate for dealing with present day contexts. These periodic moments in our field's history have resulted in a range of innovations aimed at improving teaching practices and the educational experiences of youth.

Early research on students' perspectives revealed physical education to be a space rife with the discrimination, stratification, and segregation of individuals, and where many of the experiences were meaningless and boring (Dyson, 2006). More recently, researchers are finding that the instructional styles teachers use, the management protocols they employ, and the manner

in which they address social dynamics all have had a significantly negative impact for some students. Physical education has been found to be a place where many students do not understand the purpose or goals of what they are doing (Cothran & Ennis, 1999); management of curricular and social events is inconsistent and confusing (Cothran, Kulinna, & Garrahy, 2003); students desire instructional styles other than direct and command (Cothran & Kulinna, 2006); girls are forced and relegated to the sidelines due to male domination of activity (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010); unskilled boys who do not display hegemonic forms of masculinity are ridiculed by both teachers and “fellow” students for their lack of competency in aggressive and hyper-competitive sport (Portman, 1995; Tischler & McCaughtry, in press); students are physically and emotionally dominated by aggressive and skilled males (Ennis, 1999); sexuality (highly informed by heteronormative and homophobic norms) is used as a device of oppressive control (Connell, 1995; Clarke, 2006); students are forced to participate in unsafe environments (Portman, 1995); and subject to demeaning and humiliating teaching practices (Thompson et al., 2003).

In response to these realities, physical educators created a number of instructional approaches and curricular models aimed at fomenting a more beneficial space for children to learn about movement and physical activity. For example, Muska Mosston created a ‘spectrum’ of instructional teaching styles due to the “outrage” he felt when children were denied opportunities to learn and move in meaningful ways (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002, p.v). Mosston’s creation of the ‘spectrum’ was an acknowledgement to the diversity of the ways physical activity is experienced (physically, mentally, emotionally, socially), and also of the range of abilities and backgrounds that learners brought with them to the learning environment (Byra, 2006).

Likewise, Siedentop developed the Sport Education model because of his dissatisfaction with the heavily dominant multi-activity curriculum model (Siedentop, Hastie, & van der Mars, 2004). He saw the multi-activity method of organizing curriculum resulted in, “short unit[s] dominated by isolated skill drills followed by poorly played games. Less-skilled kids were often overshadowed by more-skilled students who dominated play, and many students were left frustrated and plain bored” (Siedentop et al., 2004, p.2). While the Sport Education model is primarily concerned with creating competent and literate sports people, others have sought to create physical education curriculum that dealt with wider and more pervasive social circumstances. Hellison (1995) developed his *Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility* (TPSR) model as a way to help students who he saw as suffering from a variety of ‘social pathologies’ to “take more responsibility for their well-being and helping them to be more sensitive and responsive to the well-being of others” (Hellison, 1995, p.4).

Some physical educators have sought to adapt or blend particular curricular approaches as a way to focus on more specific social circumstances. Hastie and Buchanan (2000) blended TPSR with Sport Education into what they called “empowering sport” as a way to help a group of sixth grade boys address their struggles with fair play. Ennis and her colleagues (1999) framed elements of the Sport Education model with elements of peace education as a way to address many of the challenging realities experienced by youth living in urban environments. Kinchin and O’Sullivan (2003) developed a unit on volleyball that combined elements of Sport Education with a cultural studies approach that focused on social issues such as gender, body image, and participatory discrimination. Perhaps the most pressing social issue facing our field today is obesity, with a number of the aforementioned large scale school based interventions having been implemented with the hopes of increasing the health of today’s youth (Trost, 2006). The theme

that cuts across all of these efforts to improve physical education for more students is the focus on ‘how’ curriculum is framed and instruction is delivered. While these innovations have been and continue to be important resources for teachers working with children, there are some who are suggesting that this is only one part of making physical education more relevant for today’s youth.

*Student voices and ‘what’ is taught in physical education.* Researchers are increasingly recognizing that the experiences of students in physical education will be impacted not only by ‘how’ it is taught, but that ‘what’ is taught plays an equally important role in how students engage with movement and physical activity. Currently, adolescent students find the content and curriculum provided in secondary physical education holds little relevance to their worlds (Carlson, 1995; Chen, 1999; Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Many adolescents have expressed a desire for less competitive activities and more lifetime-oriented physical activities (Carlson, 1995; Olafson, 2002); that they do not like participating in team sports (Carlson, 1995; Olafson, 2002; Streaan, 2009); and are presented with activities to which they have no access in or out of school (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). Furthermore, researchers have documented girls as having less equitable opportunities to engage with activities that are relevant for them (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Vertinsky, 1992) and that ethnic minorities are funneled into activities stereotyped as being for ‘them’ (Chappell, 2002; Harrison, 2006).

Sanford and Rich (2006) speculate that the historically narrow range of content offered in physical education curriculum has led some researchers to position students’ apathy toward the curricular offerings as *their* problem. There is evidence to refute the claims that position students as inactive or lazy, as research is showing adolescents are active, and specifically, with activities outside those offered in the school curriculum (Flintoff & Scranton, 2001; Green, 2004; Olafson,

2002; Tinning and Fitzclarence, 1992). This reality has led some to call for a significant shift in the kinds of physical activities we present to our students (Kirk, 2009; McCaughtry, 2009). If we are looking to increase the physical activity levels of adolescents as they move into adulthood, with the hope that they continue to regularly participate in physical activity, then it makes logical sense to me that we provide them with activities that they are eager to engage. One way to do this is by creating more congruence between contemporary physical culture and secondary physical education curriculum.

Over the past few decades we have witnessed a significant increase and diversification of physical culture. Kirk (2009) describes physical culture as “a specialized form of corporeal discourse concerned with the meaning-making centered on the bodily practices that constitute organized and institutionalized activities such as sport, exercise, dance, outdoor and adventurous activities, and so on” (p.141). People produce and reproduce physical culture by engaging in physical activities that are “highly codified” and “embedded in beliefs, knowledge, and broader individual and social practices” (Kirk, 1999, p.65). Drawing on the work of Marcel Mauss (1973), Kirk helps us see that the various talents, gifts, language, and techniques associated with a range of physical activities are contextually based social constructs (Shilling, 2005). It is the selection of particular gifts, talents, techniques, and physical activities that give particular physical cultures and sub-cultures their distinctive features, foment platforms where deep affect is experienced (McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2001), and become sources where members derive powerful kinds of meaning (Kretchmar, 2000, 2005).

What ‘counts’ as a legitimate physical activity has become near limitless. In fact, Ham, Kruger, and Tudor-Locke (2009) found that U.S. adults engage in a wide variety of physical activities. Twenty-five different physical activities were reported by at least one percent of



respondents from two national surveys, with another 19 activities reported by less than one percent of the respondents. Of these activities those that were most popular, in order from most to least, included: walking, running and jogging, yard work, biking, weight training, dancing, being active on a treadmill, basketball, golf, and swimming. Many of these activities could be considered ‘lifetime activities’ as they can be engaged in through the majority of one’s lifespan and require less social and material resources (time, money, other people, space, etc.).

Kirk (1999) contends that it would make sense for school physical education to inform and be informed by larger physical culture, and, as such, we should see a level of congruence between the two fields. In some ways there is, given the dominance of large-sided team sport in both society (Coakley, 2007; Mechikoff, 2010) and secondary school physical education programs (Fairclough & Stratton, 1997; Fairclough, Stratton, & Baldwin, 2002; Mechikoff, 2010; Napper-Owen, Kovar, Ermler, Mehrhof, 1999; Phillips & Roper, 2006; Trost, 2006). While on the surface, sports may seem innocuous enough, neither sport nor curriculum are value free (Apple, 2004; Chen, 1999). The reality is that schools are political spaces where particular forms of culture and ideology are produced and reproduced and function to privilege and marginalize particular knowledge and values (Apple, 2003; Giroux, 1997). The dominance of sport in the secondary curriculum sits in contrast to the very diverse patterns of larger physical activity culture and the desires of many of today’s adolescents. As a result there appears to be an increasing friction and tension between secondary school physical education content and what is popular in a variety of adolescent physical cultures and sub-cultures. It is possible and likely that something will need to give.

Kirk (1998, 1999, 2009) notes that the field has had one “seismic” shift in its history between the 1880’s and 1990’s (from a focus on gymnastics to sports related skills) and

speculates that we are heading for another one. Furthermore, it is likely that this upcoming shift will be predicated by a 'crisis' moment heavily informed by the previously discussed tensions and frictions that appear to exist between the types of physical activities to which adolescents are attracted and what gets offered in secondary physical education (Kirk, 1999; McCaughtry, 2009). While this moment may be a cause for concern to those in our profession, Kirk (2009) and McCaughtry (2009) see it as an opportunity for the renewal of physical education.

In recent times, McCaughtry (2009) and his colleagues (McCaughtry, Tischler, & Barnard-Flory, 2008) have provided a strong call and comprehensive framework for revamping physical education curriculum. McCaughtry's ideas (grounded in Deweyan philosophy) serve as a foundation for creating culturally relevant physical education curriculum by choosing and framing content in ways students find fun, relevant, meaningful and "cool." Their call includes a radical shift in the content offered, positioning outdoor and adventure education, Yoga, Pilates, martial arts, hip-hop dance, stepping, Tai-Chi, Latin dance, skateboarding, hiking, rock-climbing, cycling, biking, running, triathlons, and child-designed games as just a sampling of the activities that have gained prominence in youth physical activity culture in recent times and thus, should have a greater presence in the curriculum (Dyson & O'Sullivan, 1998; Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006; Humberstone, 1990, McCaughtry, 2006; Wall, 2005). McCaughtry and his colleagues see this as a powerful way to increase the physical activity and resultant health of adolescents, while at the same time aligning the curriculum with what is relevant in physical culture.

The idea of creating secondary physical education curriculum that shows congruence with larger physical culture and youth culture holds promising implications for the health and well-being of youth. Curricular experiences that are created solely with a technological and

rationalistic perspective, however, are likely to ignore the cultural and humanistic elements of movement and physical activity (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997). In physical education, Azzarito (2009) has documented the increased presence of “corporate curriculum” as one response to the obesity crisis. Here, well intentioned researchers use technological rationality to create and implement “top-down,” “business minded,” “bottom line” approaches to school health curriculum (p.184). These approaches are narrowly conceived, position ethnic minorities as racialized ‘others’, and strip “culturally sensitive” approaches to being active of the very elements that make them attractive and relevant (Azzarito, 2009, p.185). These researchers have focused on creating curriculum that can be “implemented” in a variety of settings and, using objective measurements, demonstrate its ability to increase the physical activity of students, for no other reason than to simply move. Imagine cultural and ethnic dances with which students are eager to engage being stripped of the history, context, beliefs, and traditions that make them meaningful and attractive, as well as being taught in scripted ways that require minimal skill and understanding. Regardless of the position one might hold, it should give us pause to think of any physical education professional seeing these outcomes as acceptable, let alone desirable.

The Fahlbergs (1997) make clear that technological rationality is not the problem, per se, rather, to use only this form of rationality when emancipatory reason is also required is what becomes problematic. They explain,

A technical process and a experimental research method can help determine what type of exercise facilitates body fat reduction, but an emancipatory interest can help explicate the social and psychological dynamics that compel many people in our culture to have an unhealthy obsession with exercise as a means of weight control or attaining the “perfect” body—an obsession that limits health and freedom. (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997, p. 66)

By emancipatory reason, the Fahlbergs “simply mean the rational process in which emancipation can be realized by bringing critical scrutiny to bear on unquestioned and limiting assumptions, as well as bringing self-reflection to bear on unconscious process and content” (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997, p. 66).

This broader and more empowering conception of health does not treat the body as an “absolute material entity” (p.66), positions “any concept of health [as] context dependent” (p.68) and as such, requires us to develop “a broader conceptualization of health” (p. 69), one that includes the partial truths offered by contemporary physical culture. The Fahlbergs (1997) advocate for human movement as a way to increase human health, freedom, consciousness, and development by framing these experiences through emancipatory reason, or put more simply, “to emphasize those aspects of movement that are *human* rather than the merely biological or mechanistic” and to focus “on the *human* moving rather than on the movement of the human” (p.70). In fact, many scholars have suggested that it is the ‘meaning’ humans derive from physical activity that we should focus on when designing physical education curriculum (Kretchmar, 2000, 2005; Loland, 2006; McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2001; Tjeerdsma-Blankenship & Ayers, 2010). Providing adolescents with exposure to physical activities which retain the contextual elements that make them attractive and meaningful, increases the likelihood they will engage more regularly in physical activity and in ways that increase their biological and psychosocial health. It is also possible this engagement may result in an increased sense of belonging, a bonding with one’s culture, community, and peers; as well as an increased sense of empowerment, fulfillment, and joy.

A couple of caveats exist pertaining to the work that has focused on the content and physical activities offered in secondary physical education. First, the study of content has largely

been a historical treatment (Kirk, 1998; Phillips & Roper, 2006). Second, this work has been largely theoretical in nature (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997; Kirk, 2009; McCaughtry, 2009, McCaughtry et al., 2008). Third, this research has often been focused on the perspective of students (Azzarito et al., 2006; Carlson, 1995; Chen, 1999; Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Olafson, 2002; Portman, 1995; Tischler & McCaughtry, in press). While scholars have examined content from these important and crucial angles, one critical factor has been absent in the research literature and the conversation at large. Collectively, this work has all but ignored the role that teachers play in ‘what’ gets taught in secondary physical education.

Understanding the teacher’s role in choosing content and curriculum is important for a couple of reasons. First, in the U.S. teachers have a considerable degree of freedom and control over their curricula (Ennis, 1994). While bounded by various policies, most teachers have significant autonomy to teach whatever physical activities and content they desire and deem most appropriate. Second, the sport-minded dispositions characteristic of many teachers (Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Green, 1998, 2000, 2002; Placek et al., 1995; Tsangaridou, 2006) should provide some perspective as to why the tension between physical culture and secondary physical education currently exists. Creating a secondary school physical education curriculum that is more in line with contemporary physical culture and adolescent physical activity desires, holds much promise for increasing the physical activity levels and health of all students, especially those previously underserved and marginalized. This reality has been slow to emerge, and a key dynamic to fulfilling the promise secondary physical education holds has yet to be studied. Developing a nuanced understanding of how the dispositions and autonomy many secondary physical education teachers possess affect their content decisions will be crucial in

working towards the inclusion of physical activities with which adolescents are eager to engage, as well as helping to address current public health concerns.

### Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions during curriculum construction. The research questions that guided this study are:

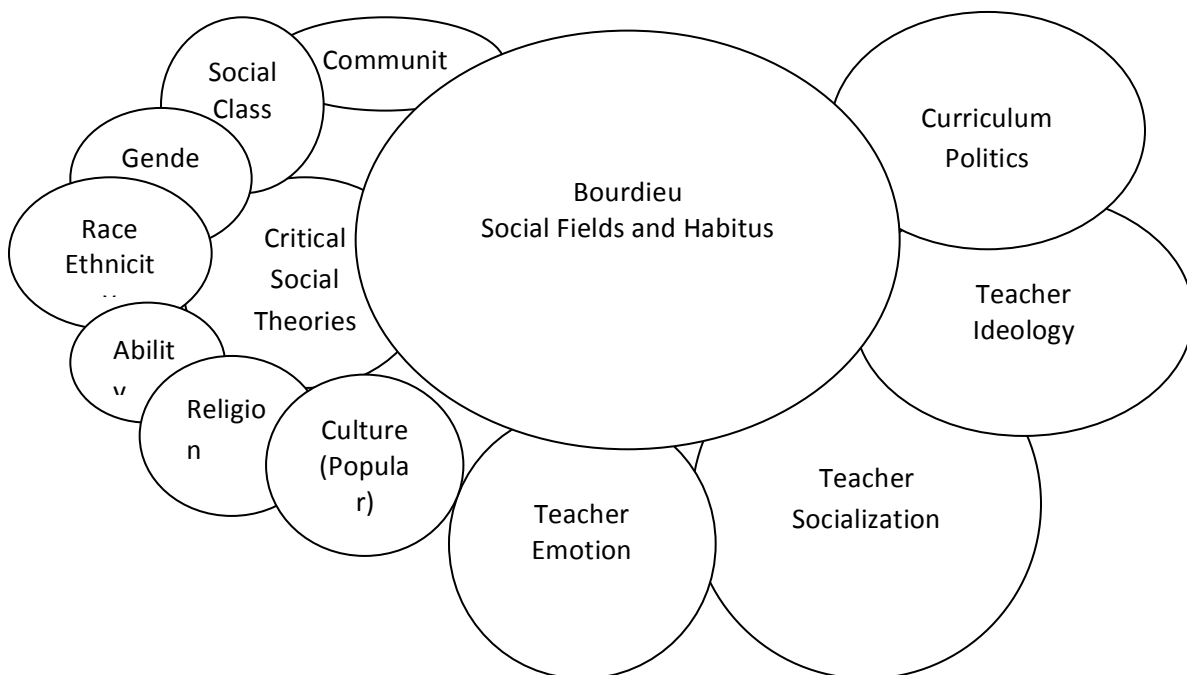
1. How do teachers' personal characteristics (e.g. physical activity biographies and expertise, undergraduate experience, graduate work, gender, emotions, values, beliefs, general dispositions) influence their thinking and decisions about selecting particular physical activities for their middle school physical education curriculum?
2. How do the institutional structures (e.g. national standards, state standards, district curriculum, school ethos, collegial culture) that affect teachers' work, influence their thinking and decisions about selecting particular physical activities for their middle school physical education curriculum?
3. How do teachers' perceptions of their students (e.g. social class, gender, race/ethnicity, ability, peer affiliations, interests) inform their thinking and decisions about selecting particular physical activities for their middle school physical education curriculum?

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

### *Introduction*

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical frameworks that guided my study on how secondary school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions. It is divided in six sections, each of which explains the theories and research associated with the specific framework that I utilized in this study. Below I will discuss: Bourdieu's theories of habitus and field (1977, 1978, 1984, 1993, 1999), teacher socialization theory (Lawson, 1983; 1988), teacher ideology (Apple, 2004), teacher emotion (Hargreaves, 1998; McCaughtry, 2004), curriculum as a political text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004), and critical and postmodern/poststructural social theory (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1991), and how each informed the study. While Bourdieu's work sat at the center of my thinking as I conducted the inquiry, the additional literature cited above was instrumental in further informing this research. Figure 1 (seen below) is a visual representation of how each area of work informed my theoretical conceptualization and framework.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



*Bourdieu: Habitus and Field*

Bourdieu's (1977) work on social fields helped me understand the vast array of social spaces that physical education teachers participated in across their lives, and how these spaces informed their content negotiations when developing curriculum. Likewise, his theory of habitus aided my recognition of how these fields produced, and were reproduced by, an embodied subjectivity. Understanding each teacher's habitus assisted my identification of the powerful role it played in their content decisions. Together, these two theories supported my awareness of how these teachers' embodied dispositions informed, and were informed by, surrounding social fields, and specifically, how their content negotiations were informed by this lived reality.

*Habitus.* While the term habitus is largely associated with Bourdieu's work, the term has an extensive tradition in scholarly work (Bennett, 1984; Bourdieu, 1993). It was used by the Scholastics to translate Aristotle's *hexis*, played a significant role in Max Weber's scholarship, and was extensively worked by Marcel Mauss in his theory on techniques of the body (Bennett, 1984; Bourdieu, 1993). Shilling (2005) notes Bourdieu's resurrection of the term was his attempt to transcend the binaries of subject/object and structure/agency. Bourdieu himself notes his attraction to the idea of habitus was due to its potential to expansively explain social phenomena in a way that transcended strict distinctions. It was his way of encompassing both the spirit and expression of a culture within one idea. He said, "the practical principles of classification which constitute the *habitus* are *inseparably* logical and axiological, theoretical and practical. Because practical logic is turned towards practice, it inevitably implements values" (Bourdieu, 1993, p.86).



In his attempt to transcend binaries and create a more holistic explanation for the social origins and dimensions of human habits, Bourdieu attempted to create a concept that rose above the continuum of extreme determinism and free will. He said,

The habitus is the product of conditionings which tend to reproduce the objective logic of those conditions while transforming it. It's a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products. (Bourdieu, 1993, p.87)

He goes on,

Why did I revive that old word? With the notion of *habitus* you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit while differing from it in one important respect. The *habitus*, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it is something historical, linked to individual history...indeed, the habitus is a capital, but one which, because it is embodied, appears as innate. (Bourdieu, 1993, p.86)

For Bourdieu (1977), the habitus begins at birth, where the "early experiences" within the family "produce the structures of the habitus which become in turn the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experience" (p.78). In terms of family life, and its role in forming habitus, Bourdieu places particular importance on history. This is because family life is heavily informed by previous generations, and the habitus is continuously being structured by, and

reproducing the effects of, these histories (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu (1977) sees these early experiences as setting people up for living life towards a particular “social trajectory” where,

the habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and appreciation. (p.78)

Hence, the habitus, a form of deeply installed “schemes” and “worldviews”, is continuously being reconstituted as individuals perceive and interact with social phenomena (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Habitus is most visibly seen as a person’s durable and deeply familiar material dispositions and tastes (Bourdieu, 1984). These tastes and dispositions will guide and structure the perceptions of people as they encounter experiences and spaces that are both familiar and novel. In respect to the familiar, Bourdieu’s habitus results in dispositions that are friendly to aspirations that are congruent with the contexts out of which they were born (Bourdieu, 1977). This can seriously limit creative maneuvering, as “the most improbable practices are excluded, either totally without examination, as unthinkable, or at the cost of double negation which inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.77). I see this as meaning that the habitus tends to guide people to aspirations that are congruent with the contexts in which they are comfortable and the practices with which they are adept. While the habitus is durable, Bourdieu (1993) notes it is not deterministic,

The adjustments that are constantly required by the necessities of adaptation to new and unforeseen situations may bring about durable transformations of the *habitus*, but these will remain within certain limits, not least because the *habitus* defines the perception of the situation that determines it. (p.87)

From Bourdieu's (1977) standpoint, change is possible, and is a process that is social and dialectical,

The conjuncture capable of transforming practices...into collective action (e.g. revolutionary action) is constituted in a dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, a *habitus*...and on the other an *objective event*...[where] the corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry...cannot succeed without a minimum of concordance between the habitus of the mobilizing agents. (p.81, 82)

Thus, change is possible, but only to the extent the agents involved can communicate clearly and share common enough worldviews relating to the issue at hand.

In reference to all actions, the habitus, and the dispositions and tastes it gives form to, will often structure perceptions and evaluations in ways that are practical, that is, evaluations where the likelihood of success, comfort, pleasure, approval, etc. are weighed against the costs of action (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). When agents make practical considerations, the habitus that filters these negotiations will draw on a worldview that is experienced by an agent as "common sense." Here, common sense is born out of the "consensus on the meaning of practices and the world" as experienced by people from a shared social space, resulting in *habitus*es that are homogenous in nature (Bourdieu, 1977, p.80). While each individual may appear to be unique and have different views, likes, dislikes, abilities, politics, etc., these are often "deviations" encapsulated by larger boundaries of class, style, culture, etc. (Bourdieu, 1977, p.86). For Bourdieu (1984), everyone has a habitus, and their habitus structures all decisions, including those concerned with physical activity.

*Habitus and physical activity.* For Bourdieu (1984),

The universe of sporting activities presents itself to each new entrant as a set of ready-made choices, objectively instituted possibilities, traditions, rules, values, equipment, symbols, which receive their social significance from the system they constitute and which derive a proportion of their properties, at each moment, from history. (p.206)

How exactly do the tastes and dispositions that are born out of the habitus influence what physical activities people engage with? Or, “more precisely, according to what principles do agents choose between the different sports activities or entertainments which, at a given moment in time, are offered to them as being possible?” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.117). Bourdieu offers two sets of answers to these questions. The first concerns ‘how’ different physical activities are chosen and experienced, and the second concerns how one’s habitus leads to ‘what’ physical activities are pursued by agents.

First, the habitus will position people to engage in physical activities ‘in ways’ that hold congruence with one’s tastes and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1984). This means that people from different social, cultural, and gendered backgrounds can claim to be avid enthusiasts in the same physical activity. How they ‘experience’ the activity and the values they afford to it, however, will be structured differently by their habitus. For instance, Bourdieu (1984) discusses the difference in how tennis can be experienced,

The members of private clubs, long-standing practitioners, who are more than ever attached to strict standards of dress (a Lacoste shirt, white shorts or skirt, special shoes) and all that this implies, are opposed in every respect to the new practitioners in municipal clubs...Tennis played in Bermuda shorts and a tee shirt, in a track suit or even

swimming trunks, and Adidas running-shoes, is indeed another tennis, both in the way it is played and in the satisfaction it gives. (p.209)

From this we see that “legitimate” ways of engaging in activity is structured from the vantage point of where one’s habitus is located. Bourdieu (1984) goes on to discuss how people’s habitus will guide the construction and perceptions of how sport profits oneself,

Different classes do not agree on the profits expected from sport, be they specific physical profits, such as the effects on the external body, like slimness, elegance, or visible muscles, and on the internal body, like health or relaxation; or extrinsic profits, such as the social relationships a sport may facilitate, or possible economic and social advantages...one is practically never entitled to assume that the different classes expect the same thing from the same practice (p.208)

How people experience various forms of physical activity is one general consideration that informs constitution and reproduction of the habitus. The other consideration lies in *what* specific physical activities are experienced by the habitus.

In particular, physical activity biographies will set people on a trajectory that will foment dispositional affinities for the particular activities they experience the most, and the types of physical activities that are congruent with the principles and values of the various social fields that are most influential to the construction of their habituses. Bourdieu (1984) puts it succinctly,

The system of sporting activities that offer themselves at a given moment for the potential ‘consumers’ to choose from is predisposed to express all the differences sociologically pertinent at that moment...The agents only have to follow the leanings of their habitus in order to take over, unwittingly, the intention immanent in the corresponding practices, to find an activity which is entirely them, and with it, kindred spirits. (p.220)

Just as we saw that particular ‘ways’ of engaging in a physical activity are legitimated based on the positioning of one’s habitus, so too different physical activities are legitimated depending on the same dynamic. For Bourdieu, the primary spaces that legitimate and inculcate particular choices in physical activity as ‘appropriate’ are the larger cultures of which one is a member (Bourdieu, 1993). This is because in culture various physical activities become “and end in themselves, a sort of physical art for art’s sake” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.120). Within a culture, particular physical activities are the symbolic, material, and embodied manifestation of a plethora of frameworks on what it means to be human. The variable and opposing values and beliefs, that different cultural heritages and class ideologies attach to different physical activities, point to the historically contested nature of determining what ‘counts’ as a legitimate practice (Bourdieu, 1993). The social, cultural, and physical capital required to participate in specific physical activities, is passed on to children in one’s family, shared among friends who inhabit particular social and cultural spaces, is considered when including particular activities as part of the curriculum in local schools, is required for entry to particular physical cultures, and is embodied by individuals. All of these social dynamics have implications for the constitution of the habitus in relation to physical activity.

*Habitus and physical education.* The specific relation between the habitus and physical activity has implications for physical education. Despite its explanatory power, relatively little research on physical education teachers have been conducted using Bourdieu’s theory (Brown, 2005). The research that has been done, however, has provided some perceptive findings. Specifically, the gendered and sport based biographies of secondary school physical education teachers appear to play a strong role in their decisions to be teachers as well as in the content they (are prepared to) teach and include in the curriculum.

Brown (2005) sees physical education as a primary space where the habitus of its future teachers is formed. Using Bourdieu's theories of habitus, field, and capital, Brown demonstrated that one PETE student (Paul), with a strong and extensive background in sport was positioned on a cyclical trajectory towards the field early in life. Brown demonstrated that with each subsequent 'success' in sport and physical education Paul's trajectory towards the field was refined and reinforced. Paul's decision (congruent with the sub-conscious nature of the habitus) was guided rather than consciously explicit. Brown (2005) also revealed the gendered nature of the participant's habitus, a masculine set of dispositions, was strongly informed by his sport biography. Of concern to my study is Brown's (2005) mention that Paul's lack of experience with non-sport content, specifically dance, while being recognized intellectually by Paul as a gap in his preparedness to teach, would likely not be a barrier to him comfortably entering the field of physical education, and in fact might ease the facilitation of this transition. Despite disclosing this instructive point and discussing the role sport plays in constituting the habitus, Brown failed to mention or discuss the curriculum as a significant area of continuity in physical education that has been reproduced over generations. Also, unlike Brown (2005), who sees the habitus' affinity for physical education beginning with its first exposure to it, I see a person's induction to specific physical activities as the first space that will affect someone's liking or disliking physical education. I suspect the more congruent a person's physical activity participation is with the activities offered in physical education programs the more fond they will be of both.

Similarly, Hay and Hunter (2006) found one teacher's habitus was heavily informed by their extensive sporting biography. Using teachers' constructions of ability as the primary focus of research, Hay and Hunter (2006) found one teacher equated physical education with sport, and hence, all conceptions of ability were filtered through highly masculine conceptions of large-

sided competitive games. This teacher's approach and viewpoint was not lost on his students. For instance, one student, Emily, who was quite involved in martial arts, dance, drama, and other physical activities was turned off from PE, did not take it seriously, and resisted the teacher's direction because he did not value the same physical activities as she did. Emily saw PE primarily as a place to engage in competitive sport, a view congruent with other work that has examined the habitus of students in physical education (Hunter, 2004). Hunter (2004) found students in her study not only equated sport and physical education as being one and the same, but accordingly, labeled themselves and each other as 'good' and 'bad' students based on how they performed and engaged with sport. It is noteworthy that while experiencing a similar set of dynamics facilitated by the PE teacher, Emily and Paul have constructed different meanings and learned different lessons. While Paul has entered the profession, PE for Emily is evidenced to be painfully irrelevant. Allin & Humberstone (2006), like Hay and Hunter (2006), and Brown (2005), found the particular genre of physical activity someone has a long history with, in this case outdoor pursuits, was powerful in explaining the trajectory they traveled towards a particular physical activity career.

The habitus and the resultant dispositions and tastes toward particular forms of physical activity, in addition to drawing people to particular careers, creates social positions. When someone is exposed to physical activities that are unfamiliar, divergent, different, or opposed to one's own social positioning, the habitus will respond immediately with a 'gut reaction,' guiding them to "keep one's distance" from that activity, "to manipulate [the distance between them and that activity] strategically, to reduce it, increase it, or maintain it"; while "refusing to 'take liberties' and 'put oneself' forward," all as a way to keep oneself from "becoming familiar" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.82). This reaction may be perceived as natural given the habitus' previously



discussed desire to aspire towards that which is contextually familiar. Ultimately, the context in which one's habitus is structured and restructured will considerably influence the range and forms of physical activity that one is both comfortable with and views as legitimate. Like Brown (2005), and Hay and Hunter (2006), Green (2000, 2002), using Bourdieu's theories to frame his research, demonstrated that secondary physical education teachers' ideologies equate physical education and sport as synonymous. How physical education teachers negotiate content decisions will be highly influenced by what their habitus has to say about the legitimacy of particular physical activities.

Research that has used Bourdieu's theories might lead some to see the field of physical education as very deterministic and unalterable, a view that has been leveled as a general criticism of Bourdieu's work (Brown, 2005). Bourdieu (1999) responds to this criticism,

This then raises the question of whether there can be any liberty other than to master one's inheritance and acquisitions. Pedagogical action can thus, because of and despite the symbolic violence it entails, open the possibility of an emancipation founded on the awareness and knowledge of the conditionings undergone and on the imposition of new conditionings designed durably to counter the effects. (p.340)

This point is important in framing the previous physical education research, as well as positioning the importance of my study for a couple of reasons. First, collectively, the physical education research (Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Brown, 2005; Hay 2006; Hunter, 2004) while insightful to the ways sport functions in physical education, does not specifically address how physical education teachers negotiate content decisions. Also, while it points to the growing frictions between larger youth physical activity culture and sport dominated curriculum, the teachers' perspectives on this reality and how they negotiate content decisions is left

unaddressed. Second, this work has neglected the emancipatory space Bourdieu himself has positioned the habitus as possessing for agents.

### *Field*

I have alluded to the supposition that the habitus is a socially constituted way of being. I also discussed the primary role the family and school play in the early structuring of the habitus and the role that these early experiences play as one goes through life. In addition to the family and schools, Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1993) positions a variety of additional fields as playing a role in inculcating beliefs, values, dispositions, and tastes depending on the focus and value framework of that field, how much time is spent in it, and how that field relates to other fields inhabited by people. Fundamentally, Bourdieu (1993) says, “Fields present themselves synchronically as structured spaces of positions (or posts) whose properties depend on their position within these spaces and which can be analyzed independently of the characteristics of their occupants” (p.72).

Fields are constituted by a number of characteristics. First, fields are bound by laws, rules, and customs that are maintained by social groups (Bourdieu, 1993). These rules and customs identify and structure the various practices that occur within that space (Bourdieu, 1993). The homogenous, yet variant, nature of the habituses of the people who inhabit a field give rise to dynamic and stable principles that structure and guide what is acceptable and unacceptable. Second, just as the habitus is a historically bound construct, so are fields; they are the generational products of a slow and ever evolving process (Bourdieu, 1993). Schools, families, and various physical activity cultures are continuously inhabited and shaped by people who were trained, taught, and influenced by the same spaces in previous generations.

Third, while fields are influenced and informed by other related and distinct fields, they have relative autonomy (Bourdieu, 1993). A field creates autonomy from other fields by “defining stakes and interests, which are irreducible to the stakes and interests to other fields and which are not perceived by someone who has not been shaped to enter that field” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.72). While fields are independent spaces of contest, they can be informed and influenced by other fields. Given this relative autonomy, Bourdieu sees society as constituted by numerous fields, none of which are beholden to one overarching field (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993). Four, just as the habitus can be restructured (and in radical ways), fields can always be reflected on and negotiated by the agents that inhabit them. This means that as social constructions, fields can be significantly altered by processes that include consensual communication and action. Five, fields are spaces of competing interests (Bourdieu, 1993). Within a field, we can see the dynamics of competing interests manifest themselves in the form of doxic structures. Bourdieu (1977) positions doxic structures as “the taken for granted” rules that structure the “games.” These games are played out in the “universe of discourse” (Bourdieu, 1977, p.168). Historically, Bourdieu (1977) proposes these games result in the rise of orthodoxy (that is, the accepted and dominant explanations given to phenomena and practices) and heterodoxy (that is, explanations that are opposed to or significantly refine orthodoxy).

*Field and physical education.* According to Bourdieu (1977, 1993) the doxa of a field presupposes that “a field share a certain number of fundamental interests” (p.73). In physical education it seems very apparent that the whole of our field is interested in people of all ages regularly engaging in physical activity. During the past century, the field of physical education has attempted to address this aim by relying on large-sided team sport as its primary subject

matter. This reality is largely explained by the profound and historic role three other fields, education, sport, and physical activity culture, have played in shaping physical education.

First, physical education has had to compete within the larger field of education for both legitimacy and a finite set of resources within public schools (Brown, 2005; Spring, 2008; Stroot & Whipple, 2003). Our historic marginalization and the field of education's present focus on cognitive based high stakes testing have largely left us off the radar (Stroot & Whipple, 2003; Spring, 2008; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). When the field of education has paid physical education attention, it has largely been to position the subject as being of service to other cognitive based 'core' subjects (Placek, 2003). All of this attention, both the token and well-intentioned, however, has left the nature of our subject matter unquestioned. This reality has structured physical education to function in ways where the field relies on education for space, approval, and resources, but is autonomous when choosing pedagogies and content.

Second, the larger field of sport has significantly affected what physical activities are offered in physical education (Bourdieu, 1984, 1993; Mechikoff, 2010). This has resulted in the field of physical education being synonymous with our most dominant subject matter, and Brown (2005) referring to us, as "weakly autonomous." Bourdieu (1984) explains this phenomenon, "It is always forgotten that the universe of products offered by each field of production tends in fact to limit the universe of the forms of experience that are objectively possible at any given moment" (p.228). In this respect, physical education has limited and been limited to the possibility of large-sided team sport. This reality is (re)enforced through the attraction and formation of habituses that bend to the orthodoxy of our field. This can be seen in how various spaces of socialization (Lawson, 1983, 1988; Stroot & Whipple, 2003; Stroot & Ko, 2006), PETE programs in particular, reinforce the dispositions of majors who enter with

gendered and sport based habituses (Bahneman & McGrath, 2004; Brown, 2005; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Placek et al., 1995; Rovegno, 1994; Tsangaridou, 2006). Bourdieu (1993) says,

The field, or more precisely, the *habitus* of a professional, adjusted in advance to the demands of the field will function as a translating machine... [this is] an automatic effect of belonging to the field and the mastery of the specific history of the field that it implies.  
(p.76)

This work, however, has not explicitly focused on the content that is offered in physical education. This might be because the historical and contemporary alignment between sport and physical education appears as *natural*, making it seem that our curriculum is ‘set’ (Lawson, 1988). In fact, Bourdieu (1977) says, “when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization the natural and social world appears self-evident” (p.163). The inclusion of sport seems to be self-evident for physical education.

Third, since the adoption of sport, the field of contemporary physical activity culture has diversified considerably. Currently, we see that physical education’s reluctance to replicate this diversification, in significant ways, demonstrates its current autonomy from the field of physical activity culture. Scholars have warned of the danger in continuing down this path (Kirk, 1999, 2009; McCaughtry, 2009; McCaughtry et al., 2008). These warnings and the evidence of change (Dyson & O’Sullivan, 1998; Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006; Humberstone, 1990, McCaughtry, 2006; Wall, 2005) show that physical education is a contested field where some seek to integrate new and more relevant content. These individuals represent the heterodox space of opinion, whereas, those teachers who are resistive to diversifying their curriculum, and whose trajectories are greased towards sport-dominant secondary physical education, represent

the orthodox space of established practice and belief. Or, as Bourdieu (1993) puts it, all physical education teachers are one example of,

The taste-makers who are able to produce or impose new practices or new forms of old practices, as well as those who defend the old practices or the old ways of practicing, put into operation the dispositions and convictions that constitute a *habitus* through which a particular position in the field of specialists, and also in the social space, is expressed.

Bourdieu (1977) sees the teachers and scholars, who look to diversify and make the curriculum more relevant for their students by including new and ‘cool’ content, as having “an interest in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted” (p.169). In this case the taken for granted is the dominance of sport.

These teachers and scholars attempt change as a way of addressing the tension and friction between the habitus that adolescents bring to physical education, in terms of physical activity culture, and the sport dominant habituses that secondary physical education teachers bring with them. Bourdieu (1993) helps us to understand this tension,

Changes in supply (with the invention or importing of new sports or the reinterpreting of old sports and games) arise through the competitive struggles to impose legitimate sporting practices and to win the loyalty of the ordinary practitioners, struggles between different sports, and within each sport, between different schools and traditions, [and] struggles between different categories of agents involved in this competition (PE teachers [and students]). (p.131)

These current struggles inform Kirk’s (1999) speculation that we are heading toward a crisis moment, and Bourdieu (1993) clarifies how contemporary physical activity culture’s break with

traditional secondary physical education curriculum might be received by those who are positioned in orthodoxic spaces,

Heresy, heterodoxy, functioning as a critical break with doxa (and often associated with a crisis), is what brings dominant agents out of their silence and forces them to produce the defensive discourse of orthodoxy, the right-thinking, right-wing thought that is aimed at restoring the equivalent of silent assent to doxa. (p.73)

Previous work where physical education teachers have positioned adolescent students as disinterested, lazy, or rife with a variety of other social deficiencies (Sanford & Rich, 2006; Chen, 1999) provides some evidence for defensive positioning among the orthodoxy. Other claims regarding the inactivity of citizens of all ages and subsequent health issues provide further evidence to reinforce desires for a 'return' or re-establishment of a lost state (Gard & Wright, 2005). I see physical education's ability to be a relevant space more in line with contemporary physical activity culture, resting in how the field positions vantage points as either (more or less) heterodoxic or orthodoxic, and the state of power relations between the two ends of the continuum.

Bourdieu's theories of field and habitus provided a sound foundation for investigating all the forces and influences that affected how these secondary physical education teachers negotiated decisions to include and exclude specific content and physical activities. The idea of social fields helped me identify and understand the spaces that these teachers participated in across their lives, and how these spaces contributed to their perceptions of content and curriculum. Examples included: the teachers' own physical education experiences, their sport participation, their engagement in other physical activities, their teacher preparation programs, and the schools/districts/states in which they taught.

Ultimately, Bourdieu's theory of field afforded me a broad lens to examine how teachers' life experiences contributed to how they made decisions to include specific content, while his theory of habitus allowed me to see how various social fields converged to shape each teacher's subjectivities as they related to choosing content. Bourdieu's theory of habitus and social fields provided me with powerful conceptual tools. There were, however, some gaps between these theories and what I intended to study, which forced me to look to other literature to fill in and strengthen my theoretical framework. I supplemented my use of Bourdieu's sociological theories and included in my theoretical framework theory and research concerned with teacher socialization, teacher ideology, teacher emotion, curriculum as a political text, and a variety of work grounded in critical and postmodern social theories.

### *Teacher Socialization*

Bourdieu's theories provide considerable weight to the time spent in a variety of social spaces, and how the values, beliefs and actions characteristic of those spaces become an embodied aspect of one's subjectivity. I saw this as being congruent with much of the teacher socialization literature. Just as Bourdieu sees one's habitus as being constituted and reconstituted throughout one's life, scholars have positioned socialization into teaching in a similar fashion (Lawson, 1988; Stroot & Ko, 2006). Lortie (1975) described socialization as, "a subjective process – it is something that happens to people as they move through a series of structured experiences and internalize the subculture of the group" (p.61). Researchers continue to find this process happens in three distinct phases; pre-professional acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization (Lawson, 1983).



*Acculturation.* Acculturation begins at birth and continues throughout one's life (Lawson, 1983). From birth, people are acculturated in a variety of social spaces. These life experiences structure the formation of one's identities, which includes the values, beliefs and ideas that pertain to how one views their role in life (Lawson, 1983). In this study I focused on the sport, physical activity, and physical education experiences that teachers have had leading up to their entry into the field of physical education, and how these experiences informed their 'decision' to enter the field. This included investigating how the interactions with family, friends, coaches, teachers, and teammates shaped the choice to participate in particular physical activities. For example, I speculated a teacher's positive relationship with a former physical education teacher may have provided a role model from which a teacher based their own teaching and curriculum. My concentration on these aspects of the teachers' biographies helped me identify the role that they played when the teachers decided what content to include in their curriculum.

How one perceives their experiences in various physical activities will inform their level of subjective warrant for particular roles (Lawson, 1983, 1988). Subjective warrant is the ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation of one's skills and abilities as they relate to carrying out tasks particular to a profession of interest (Lortie, 1975; O'Sullivan, 2003). Those who tend to have success in physical education and sport based activities, who develop a meaningful relationship with their teachers, and who believe that they have the potential to execute this role, are more likely to consider it as a possible career in the future. Lawson (1983) postulated that the amount of time students spend in physical education and participating in physical activities afforded ample time for subjective warrant to form. Specifically, students who have demonstrated proficiency in large-sided team sports may have been drawn to careers they felt would allow them to continue to demonstrate this proficiency. Likewise, students who may have

developed skill and affinity for Yoga outside of school, but never experienced this activity in physical education, may have never considered PE as a possible career choice. My focus on the participants' decision to teach PE allowed me to identify how particular physical activities influenced this decision, and what role those activities played in their content negotiations.

Experiences in physical education and physical activity will shape values, beliefs, and actions, as they pertain to what is legitimate and appropriate in those spaces (Lawson, 1983, 1988; Schempp & Graber, 1992). Scholars refer to this as the apprenticeship of observation (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Simply, one's experience as a student forms the basis on which one makes sense of their own teaching, especially in novel and unfamiliar situations (Bourdieu, 1993; Lawson, 1983; Schempp & Graber, 1992). The extensive experiences that teachers have in schools foment embodied dispositions and tastes towards what they sense are the correct and proper behaviors and practices of a physical education teacher (Schempp & Graber, 1992). The concepts of subjective warrant and apprenticeship of observation both point towards the same phenomenon: that early in life, physical education and physical activity experiences influence how physical education is perceived and later taught. I speculated that the teachers would consider specific content in light of what they witnessed in their own experiences. Focus on the teachers' acculturation helped me to identify the social fields that they participated in leading up to their decision to become a physical education teacher, and also, how those experiences informed their teaching practices and, specifically, how the content and physical activities central to those experiences informed decisions to include specific physical activities in their curricula.

*Professional socialization.* Professional socialization is the time, usually taking place in an undergraduate program, where one learns the knowledge, beliefs, skills, and values that will lead to success in a profession. Entry and navigation during this time is filtered through previous

accultured experiences that have shown to be durable (Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Placek et al., 1995). The durability of these accultured dispositions can lead PETE majors to employ a form of “studentship,” that allows them to pass through a program while maintaining their initial positions (Graber, 1996).

Lortie (1975) has suggested that one’s pre-career experiences in educational spaces can be more influential than the teacher education program. Specifically, physical education teachers are drawn to the field because of their success and affinity for sport (Lawson, 1983, 1988). Also, PETE programs have shown little effect in changing preservice teachers who enter with traditional and sport-based mindsets (Brown, 2005; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Green, 1998, 2000, 2002; Hay & Hunter, 2006; Placek et al., 1995; Tsangaridou, 2006). There are a couple of reasons why I suggest that this is the case. The first reason is the marginal space physical activity content has been given in the PETE curriculum (O’Sullivan, 2003). Physical activity content, in its struggle for meeting a threshold of accepted academic rigor, has had to compete with sub-disciplinary courses that have attained more academic prestige (O’Sullivan, 2003). Compounding this reality, the second reason is that, whatever space physical activity content is afforded in the PETE curriculum is dominated by large-sided team sport (Bahneman & McGrath, 2004). While it has been suggested that a more balanced offering of physical activities be presented to PETE students (O’Sullivan, 2003; Tinning, 2000), the reality in practice has changed little (Bahneman & McGrath, 2004). Third, even if PETE physical activity curriculum was diversified and provided more space, it may prove to be inadequate for addressing the accultured habitus of PETE students (Brown, 2005).

Consequently, there is evidence that the physical activity and physical education experiences one has, leading up to becoming a physical education teacher, is what has

traditionally been most important in shaping one's teaching practices, and for the concerns of my study, also has been most influential in how teachers negotiate content decisions. I speculated that the physical activities with which one had the most experience (regardless of their presence in the PETE program) with would hold a significant and privileged place when teachers created their curricula. I examined teachers' pre-professional experiences to tease out and see in what ways this was and wasn't the case.

This is not to discredit the potential that PETE programs can hold in altering PETE majors' knowledge base and ideologies as they relate to content. Theoretical models are available (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997a; Macdonald, 2002), and encouraging results have been documented (Oliver, 2010; Rovegno, 1993). Given the lack of theoretical work and research on physical education content, it might take some time to study how PETE initiatives focused on content diversification (like those of Oliver, 2010) can best be implemented. The results of Oliver's study can potentially inform how this work might be best conceived, approached, and carried out in PETE programs.

I speculated the types, amount, and framing of particular physical activities that the teachers experienced in their PETE programs would have an impact on their own content negotiations, and that this depended on how 'intensely' the program focused on content, and how the teachers' previous acculturation was congruent or divergent to the program's content courses. Studying the teachers' professional socialization enabled me to understand the role this social field played in the constitution of each teacher's habitus and how PETE programs affected their content negotiations.

*Continuing professional development.* More recently, increasing numbers of professional development opportunities are being made available for teachers. In particular, some of these

reform-style professional development opportunities have at least partly focused in the inclusion of new content and curriculum (McCaughtry, et al., 2005; McCaughtry et al, 2006a; McCaughtry et al., 2006b). While this literature demonstrates successful implementation of new content and curriculum to be a contextual and complicated affair, a greater degree of success has been found when teachers were matched with mentors that possessed significant content knowledge (McCaughtry et al, 2005). Furthermore, the sustaining of partnerships and learning communities over time has also been seen as key to teachers learning and implementing new content (McCaughtry et al, 2006a; McCaughtry et al., 2006b). Pertinent to my study was itemizing the kinds of professional development that teachers have made available to them, the barriers and facilitators in their attendance of them, what kinds of development they chose to attend, and the degree of implementation that was seen as a result of their participation.

*Organizational socialization.* Lawson (1986) described organizational socialization as all the spaces that influence someone to enter a field or profession, as well as the spaces primarily responsible for how they make sense of and act as teachers. While he described five subcategories that comprise organizational socialization (societal, sport, professional, organizational, and bureaucratic), Stroot and Ko (2006) note occupational socialization theory has often been used to frame research done on physical education teachers' induction to schools. Physical education scholars have positioned this transition as a crucial period fraught with contextual dynamics to be navigated by teachers (Stroot & Whipple, 2003; Stroot & Ko, 2006). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) have identified one of three orientations that new teachers may adopt during this transition; custodial, content innovation, or role innovation.

A custodial orientation “perpetuates the existing system and maintains the status quo” (Stroot & Whipple, 2003, p.313). In terms of the content taught in physical education, I see this

as being the most prevalent orientation being held by teachers (Brown, 2005; Hay & Hunter, 2006; Green, 2000, 2002). Most secondary school physical education programs are sport-dominant and will make the transition into them easier for teachers who already have a strong orientation towards sport. These same programs will potentially force teachers who do not have strong sport backgrounds to either develop them, to fake competency, or to leave the department, school, or field altogether. I speculated that sport-dominated programs, occupied by teachers who had the same orientation, would likely marginalize any efforts to diversify the curriculum.

Teachers who might look to expand or change the curricula that are offered in physical education may seek to adopt a content innovation orientation. This orientation “promotes change in how teachers define and implement the teaching of their own content” (Stroot & Whipple, 2003, p.313). This can include significant changes in the knowledge base and what is presented to students (Stroot & Ko, 2006). For example, teachers who see one of physical education’s main purposes as addressing the health of students by teaching lifetime oriented physical activities may include content such as; tennis, golf, Tae-Bo, aerobics, cycling, swimming, disc-golf, various forms of dance, or running/jogging. How readily a new or continuing teacher is able to adopt this orientation will not only be impacted by their school context, but also where they are at in their career.

Teachers who might seek to develop a content innovation orientation while in the survival stage of their induction are particularly vulnerable to “reality shock” (Stroot & Whipple, 2003). Reality shock is when overwhelming feelings of inadequacy are felt because one’s previous experiences and ideology collide with the harsh realities of everyday school. Furthermore, if a school’s philosophies and culture do not match those of the newly inducted teacher, the effects of a PETE program may be “washed out” regardless of their orientation

(Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). Experiences like this may drive newly inducted teachers to a “curricular zone of safety” (Rovegno, 1994).

While Rovegno’s (1994) work was focused on how inadequate pedagogical content knowledge was confronted with a school climate hostile to change, forcing young teachers into negotiations and actions that were not congruent with their philosophies or goals, it is not hard to imagine the pushback one might get when trying to challenge orthodoxic positions in a school physical education program. Even teachers who are in a space of renewal or maturity in their development (Stroot & Whipple, 2003) are still likely to face considerable resistance if their content innovations are perceived to be directly opposed to orthodoxic positions. Continuing professional development provided through professional organizations and PETE departments at universities can help to provide a buffer against this resistance and offer teachers both the emotional and material resources required to enact content innovation (McCaughtry et al., 2006a; 2006b).

A role innovation orientation “redefines the teacher’s role in the school and community context” (Stroot & Whipple, 2003, p.313). A teacher who comes to a school with beliefs, philosophies, and a knowledge base that explicitly rejects the status quo might seek to adopt a role innovation orientation, and from there, change the fundamental purpose of a field and the roles central to its mission (Stroot & Ko, 2006). I speculated that teachers who sought to revolutionize and fundamentally alter how physical education was practiced and perceived, were likely to seek the inclusion of content outside the traditionally dominant and accepted norm of sport. I thought this could result in any teacher, who was focused on fostering non-competitive cooperation and socially minded engagement in physical activity, to explicitly exclude all

competitive sports, and instead would include a heavy dose of community based events, adventure initiatives, lifetime fitness development activities, and various outdoor pursuits.

Regardless of the role, or combination of roles, that teachers seek to adopt as they enter the field, this literature clarifies a couple of realities. Physical education and physical activity experiences form deeply ingrained subjectivities that guide people to the field of physical education. PETE programs struggle to alter or significantly restructure the sporting dispositions characteristic of the students they attract. Secondary school physical education programs have been historically dominated by large-sided team sport and are largely durable institutions resistant to change. What is not known is how exactly these organizational spaces are navigated in terms of the content that is taught in them? We do not know the ways teachers negotiate physical activities and content for inclusion in the curriculum. We do not know if teachers consider various non-sport activities as realistic possibilities for inclusion in the curriculum; and if they do, we do not know the nuances of that consideration in light of the larger organizational structures. My study focused on this negotiation process in order to reveal where the organizational structures are strongest and weakest in terms of including non-traditional content. I suspected that the psychodynamic considerations teachers gave to particular content would be heavily filtered through their physical education ideologies.

### *Teacher Ideology*

In this section, I explain how the concept of teacher ideology complemented my study of how secondary school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions. I begin this section by explaining my definition of ideology and how it complements my other theoretical frameworks. Next, I outline the physical education literature on teacher ideology and discuss



how it was used to frame my study. Finally, I discuss gaps in the literature that my study could potentially address.

*Ideology.* Scholars in education, while readily using the terms belief and ideology to theoretically analyze and explain phenomena and events, have often done so without clarifying what they have meant when using these terms (Apple, 2004; Pajares, 1992). While beliefs could have been a more than adequate construct for framing this study, the theories and concepts that I used were grounded in a view of reality where power dynamics and political maneuvering were central to explaining how people came to understand and negotiated decisions in their contexts, which made ideology a more appropriate theory.

Apple (2004) sees ideology as “some sort of “system” of ideas, beliefs, fundamental commitments, or values about social reality” (p.18). Furthermore, in describing the nature of ideology, Apple (2004) says, “rooted in the Marxist tradition...ideology’s primary role [is] the justification of vested interests of existing or contending political, economic, or other groups...It always deals with legitimation, power conflict, and a special style of argument” (p.18,19). From this description, Apple (2004) sees that ideology can be identified by particular markers. The first, legitimation, is when particular ideologies are used to explain, apologize for, and/or sanctify particular practices and beliefs. The second marker is social conflict. When competing ideologies interact, then authority, resources, and allocation of awards all become contested. The third marker is the ‘style’ in which one makes their arguments. Ideological arguments are lined with sanctioned terms and manners of speech that communicate ideas designed to resonate implicitly with those to whom the speech is directed. These markers point to the diversity of concern and level of sophistication that particular ideologies hold. To this point, Giroux (1997) positions ideologies as functioning to produce and represent ideas and behaviors that can distort

or illuminate the nature of reality depending on how one's vantage point interacts with the context and action in question. Giroux (1997) says,

As a set of meanings and ideas, ideologies can be either coherent or contradictory; they can function within the spheres of both consciousness and unconsciousness; and finally they can exist at the level of critical discourse as well as within the sphere of taken for granted lived experience and practical behavior. (p.75)

Essentially, my construction of ideology emphasizes the inconsistent, idiosyncratic, durable, political, and social characteristics the term encompasses. This description of ideology holds much congruence with the other theoretical frameworks used by / in my study.

For example, Bourdieu's (1977) construction of field, and how stakes are contested between heterodoxic and orthodoxic positions, is underpinned by power struggles that are guided by explanations predicated by particular interests. Similar to how Giroux positions ideology as operating in either taken for granted or critical discourses, Bourdieu sees fields as functioning in the same way with his distinction between doxa (the taken for granted) and hetero/orthodoxy (the contested). In reference to how fields function, the previously discussed socialization theory (Lawson, 1983; Stroot & Whipple, 2003) is littered with examples of how ideologies inform power dynamics. Acculturation and life experiences, largely hierarchical arrangements, strongly contribute to the formation and subsequent structuring of ideologies (Apple, 2004). Also, ideologies inform social dynamics within spaces of organizational socialization, specifically, with the roles adopted by a teacher. Ultimately, each space of socialization discussed above, functions politically to privilege the forms of knowledge (physical activities) that communicate most readily, the values and beliefs of the class and field that controls the curriculum.

Also, Bourdieu's (1977) construction of habitus, and how it often functions to limit creative action and reproduce the social fields it is constituted by, is similar to how ideology functions (Bourdieu, 1977). Bourdieu's conception of habitus, however, runs much deeper, to the point where ideology reaches beyond cognitive functioning, and is saturated into the body. Much in the same way that Bourdieu conceives of the habitus as structuring people's perceptions and decisions in an unconscious and tacit way, the taken for granted ideologies people hold pertaining to particular issues will function to legitimate and justify the actions and beliefs they enact in pursuit of fulfilling their interests. Similar to the emancipatory space Bourdieu (1999) allows the habitus, Giroux (1997) sees that people can become consciously aware of their ideology and work to change or alter it. Both Bourdieu's concept of habitus, and Apple (2004) and Giroux's (1997) version of ideology are powerful constructs that function to give meaning and guide actions when people are faced with both familiar and unfamiliar events.

Below I discuss more explicitly how curriculum can be seen as a political text, as well as how research using various critical social theories informed this study (theories that position political vantage points between dominating and dominated groups as foundational to their theorizing). Both frameworks position ideology as a central concept.

*Secondary physical education teachers' ideology.* Secondary physical education has traditionally been underpinned by a sport-oriented ideology (Kirk, 1999, 2009; Green, 1998, 2000, 2002). This ideology has served as the orthodox position within the field of physical education, and has attracted teachers whose ideologies are congruent with this position (Brown, 2005; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Placek et al., 1995; Tsangaridou, 2006). It has also functioned to marginalize teachers who hold ideologies that run counter to the dominant sport-based mindsets (McCaughy, 2004; 2006). Those committed to heterodox ideologies must be

knowledgeable of the local context in which they operate and politically skilled as they navigate local cultures (McCaughtry, 2006).

Ken Green's (1998, 2000, 2002) extensive work on secondary physical education teachers' ideologies has been especially illuminating to how sport functions within this field. Of relevance to my study is Green's repeated use of Bourdieu's theory of habitus in framing his work. Green (1998, 2000, 2002) reveals a number of issues pertinent to the reproduction of explicit beliefs that underpin this sport-dominant ideology. First, with specific attention to content, Green (2002) demonstrates that secondary physical education teacher's ideologies bear the hallmark of their past sporting experiences. He shows that teachers' past experiences with sport served to deeply ingrain in them an emotional and mental affinity for these experiences, giving rise to sporting habituses (Green, 2002). The teachers' sporting ideologies functioned tacitly and implicitly, as evidenced by their repeated use of physical activity and sport, and sport and physical education interchangeably (Green, 2000). Given this ideological position, it was not surprising to learn sport was the dominant genre of physical activity in their curricula (Green, 2000, 2002). The teachers' implicit and taken for granted assumptions of sport informed a number of other aspects of their ideology.

Second, these teachers believed that competitive sport builds character. Green (2000) provides evidence that teachers believed that students' mere involvement in sport and physical education would lead to a variety of personal and social benefits. Strikingly, however, when Green pressed these teachers for specific examples of how they taught for these social benefits, or if they could provide examples of their occurrence, the teachers could not provide any, saying instead, "it (just) comes out" (p.120). The commonly held belief that sports builds pro-social character is buttressed by work that demonstrates the opposite, that sport has historically

extended homophobic, sexist, racist, and classed ideologies (Bourdieu, 1984; Chappell, 2003; Clarke, 2006; Coakley, 2007; Kirk, 1998; Sage, 1997).

Third, Green's (2000, 2002) teachers believed that children love sport. One of the underpinning themes in Green's work is the inconsistency found within teachers' ideologies (Tsangaridou, 2006). This is exemplified in how these teachers' emphasis that physical education should be a place all students enjoy, was contradicted with their knowledge that not all students, in particular girls, liked sports (Green, 2000). Ironically, this did not stop the teachers from justifying their inclusion of sport because they believed this was desired by the students, their parents, and the community (Green, 2002).

Fourth, these teachers believed that sport molds healthy bodies (Lawson, 1988). Green (2000) found that, in general, the teachers he worked with viewed sport as being good for children's health. In fact, in light of recent public health concerns, these teachers positioned health enhancement as the current primary purpose of physical education, with sport being the primary vehicle in addressing this concern (Green, 2000).

One overarching explanation Green (2002) gives for the primacy of sport ideology is the resistance the teachers' habituses had towards changing from what is known and comfortable. In this case, the teachers' reliance on yesterday's experiences, in particular, their own accultured sport and physical education encounters, are what Green sees as a primary barrier to change. Green, in congruence with the literature, found that PETE programs were ineffective in challenging the teachers' sport based ideologies (Green, 2002), and that the broader school culture and traditions of the field provided justification for the status quo (Green, 2002). Green's (2000, 2002) work, and the concept of ideology, was important when I conducted this study, specifically, because it provided me makers to identify ideological positions, as well as, allowed

me to start with a sense of what has already been learned about secondary physical education teachers' ideologies. Green's work, in addition to providing this initial sense, also afforded me the opportunity to confirm these findings, as well as, to investigate additional and alternative phenomena that informed my teachers' ideologies. The concept of ideology and Green's work brought me to a series of questions and focus points that helped me tease out the role that ideology played in my teachers' content negotiations.

Were Green's teachers asked about teaching non-sport content? If so, how did their sporting ideologies function when they were presented with the prospect of teaching non-sport content? What was the level of consideration given to including non-sport physical activities? What were the reasons given for not including this content? Second, given the durability of dominant ideologies I'm left wondering what can account for the ideological change made by some teachers (Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006; Oliver, 2010). How exactly do teachers' situate and resituate their ideologies when they choose to include content that may compromise their most staunchly held beliefs? For teachers who include a considerable amount of non-sport content, what do their ideologies look like? And how do they function during the content negotiation process? Are teachers aware of the diversity in the larger physical activity culture? If so, how do they perceive this reality in light of their ideology? If teachers problematize their own ideologies, why do they do so? How does this process take place? What are the results? What areas of teachers' ideologies are considerably durable and resistant? Where are the areas vulnerable to critique?

I speculated that teachers who would have considerably diverse curricula would generally, and specifically to physical education, hold more liberal and inclusive ideologies pertaining to the purpose of their work. I also speculated that physical education teachers who

held sport-dominant ideologies and deep emotional comforts, tastes, and tacit knowledge pertaining to sports and physical activities would likely do two things. First, it would complicate, even prevent, this intellectual restructuring. Second, it would create a significant and difficult practical consideration when they decided to include and exclude specific content. That is, even if the teachers' minds were changed, there would be serious practical limitations to actually including and teaching content with which they had little or no knowledge, taste, or experience.

This is where the concept of habitus added richness to the dynamics of these teachers' content negotiations, because their deeply bodied and emotional comforts and dispositions were taken into account alongside their cognitive based ideologies. In my study, I aimed to address these questions and issues, and documented the ways that secondary physical education teachers' ideologies mediated their negotiation of content decisions during curriculum construction. The next theoretical framework, teacher emotion, discusses in detail the role that emotions can play in teachers' negotiations of content decisions.

### *Teacher Emotion*

The next theoretical framework that I used in my study of how secondary school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions dealt with teacher emotion. I begin this section by discussing the theoretical roots of emotion. Next, I discuss the role that emotions play in people's engagement with physical activity. Third, I discuss teaching as an emotional practice and the research that has been done in physical education. I conclude this section by explaining how the literature on emotion informed my study.

*Emotion.* A significant aspect of Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993) theory of habitus points to the deeply embodied aspects of the various social fields one inhabits. While not explicitly communicated in his theory, regular discussion of dispositions, meaning, aesthetic taste,

manners, relaxation, tempo, violence, and toughness, point to the emotions that lie just under the surface. Although Bourdieu does not explicitly state the role of emotions in the formation of dispositions and constitution of fields, other scholars do, including Dewey (1958), who said, “Emotion is an indication of intimate participation, in a more or less excited way in some scene in nature or life; it is, so to speak, an attitude or disposition which is a function of objective things” (p.390). Similar to Dewey (1958), many scholars have studied and positioned emotion as an inextricable and holistic part of life (Denzin, 1984; Shilling, 2005; Simmel, 1971). Specifically, experience in life has “continuity” between the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions of our being (Dewey, 1934; Wilber, 2000a). As such, emotions are felt in our bodies, fixated on in our minds, and often occur in relation to others (Denzin, 1984). Scholars position emotional affect as functioning in one of two ways, as a trait or as a state (Fridja, 1993; Wilber, 2000a). Emotional traits are considered stable patterns of affective response that hold across time and contexts (Wilber, 2000a). Emotional states are, in slight contrast, seen as shorter lasting, alterable, and bounded by time and context (Wilber, 2000a). The ways in which we perceive and experience emotional states will be affected by the emotional traits we embody, and vice versa (Wilber, 2000a). Emotions are felt when we are faced with and engage in a vast array of social practices, such as physical activities (Shilling, 2005).

*Emotion and physical activity.* Despite the highly rationalized structures that have been imposed on a wide range of physical activities, the zeal with which many people continue to pursue participation is quite significant (Shilling, 2005). In fact, we might be hard pressed to find another set of social practices so many people are attached to and concerned with in contemporary times (Shilling, 2005). One reason given for this reality is that participation and engagement in physical activity has been documented to evoke a wide range of emotions (Laker,



2003; Shilling, 2005). Elias and Dunning (1986) suggest that participation in physical activity provides people with opportunities to experience a range of emotional satisfaction, and is a space where people can pursue their own “quest for excitement” (p.3). Shilling (2005) proposes that physical activities are a good fit for this quest because they are associated with motility, sociability, and mimesis. Motility involves the complete immersion in an activity where the sense of self is lost or experienced in a deeply pleasurable way. In this way, physical activity engagement allows some of us to ‘escape’ from the everyday realities of life (Laker, 2003; Shilling, 2005). Some examples might include: experiencing a runner’s high, feeling a profound sense of transcendence while surfing, or entering a deeply meditative state while practicing Hatha yoga (Bonheim, 1992; Sheehan, 1978). These examples might also be described as holistic sensations where the participant is completely tuned into the task at hand, something Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls “flow.”

Sociability refers to meaning and enjoyment that comes from playfully engaging with others. These social bonds can enhance one’s identity through the emotional sense of community, sisterhood, or camaraderie that is felt (Dunning, 1999). Some examples might be: bonding during a road trip with sporting teammates, celebrating with your team after winning a hockey tournament, or playing a round of golf with friends. Mimesis includes the arousal and experience of strong affects in spaces where this is acceptable and encouraged. The results of these experiences usually involves the buildup and release of emotional tension, albeit, in ways that may or may not be acceptable to that context. Examples of this might be loudly cheering, yelling, or crying during or at the conclusion of a contest.

What can be concluded is that engagement in physical activity is an emotional affair. Drawing from Dewey (1958), Denzin (1984), and Wilber (2000a), I see emotions enduring with

people as they live, impacting the formation of their dispositions, and informing their cognitive perspectives of various physical activities (both favorable and unfavorable). If engaging in physical activities is an emotional affair, teaching these same activities is likely to include a range of emotional characteristics.

*Emotion and teaching physical education.* Scholars have positioned teaching to be a very emotional practice (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000, 2001; McCaughtry, 2004; McCaughtry et al., 2006a, 2006b). Hargreaves (drawing heavily from Denzin, 1984) has outlined four specific points that explain the emotional nature of teaching in schools. These are: one, teaching is an emotional practice; two, teaching and learning involve emotional understanding; three, teaching is a form of emotional labor; and four, teachers' emotions are inseparable from their moral purposes and their ability to achieve those purposes. Below I will describe how each of these points informed my study.

First Hargreaves (1998) establishes that, while a cognitive and technical practice (and I would add physical), teaching is also an emotional practice. He says,

As an emotional practice, teaching activates, colors, and expresses teachers' own telling, and the actions in which those feelings are embedded (i.e. teachers' inner streams of experience). Likewise, as an emotional practice activates, colors and otherwise affects the feelings and actions of others with whom teachers work and form relationships. Teachers can enthuse their students, or bore them. (p. 838)

A key facet of this point for my study is that physical education teachers enter the profession with a lifetime of emotional connections and comforts with *specific physical activities*. I suspected that teachers would be more willing to include content if their emotional connection to them could be characterized as deep, positive, and comfortable. Historically, this comfort has

been with large-sided team sport. Partial evidence can be seen in its presence in the secondary curriculum (Fairclough & Stratton, 1997; Fairclough, Stratton, & Baldwin, 2002), as well as in the desire of those who enter physical education to coach (Ojeme, 1988; Spittle, Jackson, & Casey, 2009). I was curious to investigate what, if any role, these emotional connections played when teachers negotiated decisions to include and exclude specific content.

The second point that Hargreaves (1998) discusses is the emotional understanding that is involved in teaching. He says, “Because it is an emotional practice which involves relationships with others and which seeks to shape those relationships in particular ways, teaching also necessarily involves and depends upon extensive degrees of *emotional understanding*” (p.838). This understanding requires that we as teachers are able to “reach inside our own feelings and past emotional experiences to make sense of and respond to someone else’s” (Hargreaves, 1998). I suspected that students’ verbal, emotional, and physical actions would be filtered first and primarily through the physical education teachers’ own personal affect towards the physical activity being taught, and second to how students respond to it. In this case, if a teacher and their students did not share the same emotional experiences and connections with specific content, it was likely that attempts at vicarious understanding might be inaccurate and provide a specific example to utilize during informal and formal interviews (Hargreaves, 1998). The work by McCaughtry (2004) and his colleagues (McCaughtry et al., 2006a, 2006b) has demonstrated that teachers’ own emotional connections with content and their perceptions of students’ emotional responses to be a significant factor when they chose to teach particular physical activities. This work has revealed that students can be the most vocal critics to the inclusion of content with which they are not familiar or comfortable (McCaughtry, et al., 2006b). This finding is compounded by the reality that teachers can be significantly uncomfortable when teaching

unfamiliar content (McCaughtry, et al., 2006b). While this work has provided invaluable insight to how teachers in urban centers navigate emotional understandings, research in suburban and metropolitan areas is virtually non-existent.

The third point that Hargreaves (1998) makes is that teaching is a form of emotional labor. He says,

Teaching involves immense amounts of emotional labor. Not just acting out feelings superficially like pretending to be disappointed or surprised but also consciously working oneself up into a state of actually experiencing necessary feelings that are required to perform ones job well. (p. 840)

In this respect, I was curious to know what kind of labor took place when students did not enthusiastically receive the physical activities presented to them by teachers. How would this dynamic of emotional understanding affect or alter the kind of emotional labor that these teachers would undertake? Just as students who are more skilled get the brunt of attention from teachers (Portman, 1995), or students displaying ‘types’ of ability in line with what the teacher values get higher grades, I suspected that students with whom the teacher had congruent emotional understandings pertaining to specific content would also receive more positive affirmation from that teacher.

The fourth point that Hargreaves (1998) discusses is the moral purposes that shape teachers’ work. Hargreaves (1998) demonstrates that the moral actions of teachers are based on emotional as well as cognitive forms of understanding. When these purposes cannot be achieved, a number of emotions may be felt, as well as reasons assigned for their occurrence. Anxiety, guilt and other negative emotions can be directed towards oneself if teachers believe that their efforts are the reason students are not learning or successful (Hargreaves & Tucker, 1991;

McCaughtry et al., 2006a). Other negative emotions, such as frustration, anger, or blame can be directed at students if a teacher perceives a lack of learning is the result of their own shortcomings (Sanford & Rich, 2006; McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2003). Just as McCaughtry and his colleagues (et al., 2006a) discussed teachers' understanding students' emotional and cultural connection to basketball was one significant factor shaping the content "tightrope" that they walked, where leaning too far to one side presented significant problems, the emotional dynamics between teachers, students, and particular physical activities may play a role in how teachers feel and perceive their efforts are received when addressing particular moral purposes. These moral purposes, and the emotions teachers feel in relation to how they perceive they are addressing them, may influence the teachers' decisions to include and exclude specific content. A teacher who seeks to include Yoga in their curriculum because they believe it will enhance the health and well-being of all students, and be especially beneficial for girls to learn, may second guess this decision if initial exposure is critiqued by both boys and girls.

Considering the integral role that emotions play in our life, the emotional connections associated with participation in various physical activities, and the emotional nature of teaching, I was curious to explore the role that emotion played in the dynamics that impacted teachers' negotiation of content selection of specific physical activities. I suspected that the strong emotional connections that teachers had with particular physical activities would be a significant mediator in these negotiations. For instance, a teacher's significant affinity for tennis may cause that teacher to give little consideration to including this activity. It may be a forgone conclusion that tennis would be taught, even though the students, community, and school do not desire, and are ill-equipped, for its inclusion in the curriculum. I was also curious to see what role teachers' emotional understanding of their students played in their perceptions of students' engagement

with specific physical activities. Data that revealed examples of teachers who were resistant to step outside their physical activity comfort zones, as well as examples of teachers who did so, is going to be beneficial in addressing this phenomena in a variety of teacher education settings.

### *Curriculum as a Political Text*

Apple (2004) has discussed at length that many have sought to examine education and learning as a neutral enterprise free from bias. Traditional curricular theorists seek to find the best ways to impart objective and factual knowledge to people (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). Apple (2004) and others (Giroux, 1997; Spring, 2008; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004) have demonstrated that the curriculum is, despite the best of efforts, anything but unbiased and neutral. Apple says of teaching and education in general,

Education [is] not a neutral enterprise, that by the very nature of the institution, the educator was involved, whether he or she was conscious of it or not, in a political act. I maintain that in the last analysis educators cannot fully separate their educational activity from the unequally responsive institutional arrangements and the forms of consciousness that dominate advanced industrial economies like our own. (p.1)

Just as Apple (2004) positions education as a political enterprise, he goes on to say the same of the curriculum that is *chosen*,

The knowledge that now gets into schools is already a choice from a much larger universe of possible knowledge and principles. It is a form of cultural capital that comes from somewhere, that often reflects the perspectives and beliefs of powerful segments of our social collectivity. Social and economic values, hence, are already embedded in the design of the institutions we work in, in the “formal corpus of school knowledge” we preserve in our curricula. (p.7-8)

For me, curriculum “is comprised of content to be learned and/or activities to be engaged in by students. This content and/or set of activities are, on some level, planned and intentional” (T. Barone, personal communication, January, 2008). By political, I am referring to the power dynamics that are at play in various contexts where multiple actors and interest groups compete for legitimacy and space to operate in ways they wish (Spring, 2008).

Education in general, and curriculum specifically, needs to be seen as a historically rooted political struggle, where a variety of fields and interest groups will seek to influence what knowledge gets taught to students (Apple, 2004; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Spring, 2008). This is readily seen when institutions and individuals are faced with varying degrees of governmental intervention and oversight. The political nature of the curriculum is underpinned by the social and cultural values laden in the content that is included (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1997). This theoretical position fits with Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984) discussion of the historically grounded tensions and struggles between the hetero- and orthodoxies that function within fields. Curriculum then, must be analyzed and studied within the context it is created and implemented (Pinar et al., 2004).

For instance, in physical education a variety of social and cultural institutions and movements have had a significant influence on the content and curriculum (Kirk, 1998; Lawson, 1988; Mechikoff, 2010; Phillips & Roper, 2006; Wright & Harwood, 2009). Lawson (1998) notes that curriculum design is in fact a politically laden “exercise in problem setting,” where particular models and content will win out and gain prominence depending on society’s concerns, and the role in alleviating them that can be played by physical education. In Lawson’s view, curriculum then remains or becomes dominant, residual, or emergent in light of these concerns (Kirk, 1999; Lawson, 1988). Today, this dynamic is no more readily seen than when

we focus on obesity. Currently, there is a variety of government and field related agencies that seek to influence what happens in physical education, in the name of curbing the obesity crisis and fomenting healthy and active lifestyles (Wright & Harwood, 2009). The policies which have resulted from the social concern of obesity have been analyzed by scholars revealing that the purpose and value of physical activity is reduced to addressing physiologically based biomedical concerns, which position particular physical activities to be more readily included than others (Wright & Harwood, 2009).

Quennerstedt (2008), drawing on Dewey's transactional approach to meaning-making, discourse theory, and Foucault's work on power relations, presents an integrated theoretical framework to analyze the meaning and assumptions that underlie the subject content in physical education. He found that the subject content matter in Swedish physical education contained a predisposition towards exercise physiology as the foundational basis to define health and include content. Likewise, Gard (2008) found one health curriculum, while extolling the importance to provide children with the knowledge and skills to make 'healthy' 'choices,' is in reality, not interested in developing self-directed and critically thinking learners, but instead, seeks to inculcate a set of 'truths' that sit on questionable and unclear assumptions. It is entirely one thing to analyze the content of policy that is created; it is quite another to examine its effects when implementation is attempted in school settings.

There seem to be two general methods of analyzing and implementing large-scale curriculum reform; from the top down, and from the bottom up (Jewitt, Bain, & Ennis, 1995). Scholars have been more favorable of bottom up initiatives because the increased level of teacher control is believed to lead to a higher level of success (Jewitt, et al., 1995; Sparkes, 1991). In contrast, top down approaches have been critiqued by a number of scholars because the teacher's



lack of central involvement will significantly compromise the chance of ‘real change’ (Sparkes, 1991). One reason given for the unlikelihood of real change to happen in top-down initiatives is the belief that teachers will only ‘go along’ with reforms as a way to survive, not because they actually buy into what is being asked of them (Sparkes, 1991). Furthermore, in top-down initiatives that have little or no oversight, how teachers read the ‘text’ cannot be controlled or discussed, leading to the likelihood of inaccurate readings or readings that confirm one’s own beliefs (Curtner-Smith, 1999; Sparkes, 1991). It needs to be noted, however, that top down approaches come with a significant amount of crucial resources and support that otherwise might not be available in more bottom up approaches (McKenzie et al., 1997).

*Bottom-Up Approaches.* Pinar and his colleagues (2004) discuss a variety of theoretical models available, focused on reforming curriculum and fomenting educational change from the ground up. Examples include work by Freire (1970), McLaren (1989), hooks (1994), and Weiler (1988). In general, all of these models seek for scholars and teachers to work cooperatively and democratically to help educators identify issues of inequity and injustice that are at work in their classrooms, schools, and society, and to address them, in part, by including and altering curricula that are focused on specific issues. Below, I will discuss two recent examples of bottom up curriculum reform in physical education.

McCaughtry (2006) documented the efforts of one teacher, Tammy, whose gendered reading of the sexist physical culture that her school reproduced led her to create girl friendly curriculum and learning spaces. McCaughtry (2006) describes the political maneuvering that Tammy had to employ in order to attain permission, facilities, and space to enact her reform, and to do so in a way that did not raise flags or considerable concern. To do this, Tammy used a variety of ‘cover stories’ as a way to hide her own ‘secret stories’ that ran diametrically to the

‘sacred stories’ of her school. These actions allowed Tammy to integrate more diverse content, like walking, jogging, strength training, in-line skating, hiking on nature trails, aerobics, rope jumping, and other non-competitive activities. Tammy also included activities and content that addressed social concerns particular to women, such as body image and eating disorders. Finally, Tammy organized a community health fair and focused her recruitment efforts on attracting local female health professionals as a way to show her students that potentially empowering opportunities were available for them in the human movement field.

A more recent effort by Oliver (2010) focused on PETE students’ ability to co-construct curriculum with their adolescent students. Using democratic and egalitarian methods, Oliver (2010) worked with her majors in their developing the conceptual framework and ability to create a student-centered curriculum with their students. Oliver’s students were challenged repeatedly to employ and reflect on their efforts, resulting in a deep and nuanced understanding of the difficulties and benefits of enacting curriculum in this manner. A key finding relevant for my study was the students’ desire for an increased variety of physical activities.

*Top-Down Approaches.* Sparkes (1991) notes there are three kinds of change that can result from top-down reform efforts; superficial, teaching practices, and ‘real’. Superficial change includes things like curriculum texts, equipment, and other teaching materials. Teaching practices includes the introduction of new and/or different teaching styles and approaches. ‘Real change’ is a deep and significant change. This occurs when teachers’ beliefs, values, and ideologies are altered significantly from where they were before the reform took place.

Sparkes (1991) also emphasizes curricular change can be analyzed and implemented from one of three perspectives: technological, ecological, and cultural. Technological change includes the content that is offered in the curriculum. Sparkes (1991) notes, that while

technological alterations may result in superficial change, it may be a significant first step towards 'real change.' Ecological change is concerned with the school's political and bureaucratic constraints (Stroot, Collier, O'Sullivan & England, 1994). Cultural change represents significant 'real change' of the beliefs and values that are indicative of teachers that work within a department. Sparkes (1991) notes that, like 'real change,' cultural change is the hardest to foment and the kind teachers are most resistive to.

One reason that Sparkes (1991) offers for the resistance to curricular reform concerns the positioning that can result from implementation. Teachers whose values, beliefs, and practices run counter to reform efforts will see their social positioning damaged, whereas, teachers whose pedagogy is congruent with the reform are set up to be justified and see their stature increase or improve. Teachers who sit on the sideline during reform are likely to see their social positioning change in ways that are contingent upon the degree they participate in the reform activities (Sparkes, 1991). A particularly insightful example of the politically charged role content plays in top-down curricular reform was provided by Curtner-Smith (1999).

Curtner-Smith (1999) studied the implementation of national physical education curriculum policy with a group of secondary physical education teachers. He found that the shape and level of implementation was varied according to the general orientation the teachers held toward teaching physical education, which was either conservative, eclectic, or innovative. Conservative teachers, when faced with national physical education reform in the UK, adopted a masculine sport perspective. These teachers saw little practical relevance in the reform, and did not think it would benefit their students. Both stances resulted in little change in the content offered to students. Interestingly, these teachers used 'rhetoric' to give the impression that they

were in fact implementing the reforms in ways that were analogous to Tammy's use of cover stories (McCaughtry, 2006).

Innovative teachers on the other hand, offered a wider array of physical activities to their students. Furthermore, these teachers viewed competitive sport as both sexist and counterproductive. When innovative teachers worked in departments that were headed by more experienced and conservative teachers, they enacted reform efforts 'strategically' to avoid critique from colleagues, again, similar to McCaughtry's (2006) teacher Tammy. Eclectic teachers sat on the political fence but, were documented as offering a wider range of content to their students than conservative teachers.

In line with the occupational socialization literature, Curtner-Smith (1999) found that these teachers' physical activity biographies were in harmony with their perspectives of the reform, and their subsequent (non)efforts to address the broader reform. Most of the conservative teachers were men, grew up playing competitive team sports, experienced traditional forms of physical education, and came from PETE programs that reinforced this disposition. Eclectic and innovative teachers, on the other hand, were more balanced by sex, engaged in more lifetime-oriented physical activities in their spare time, experienced 'relatively' progressive physical education, and came from PETE programs that promoted curricular diversity. Regardless of their perspective leanings, all these teachers injected their own political readings of how the reform should have been implemented, and resulted in very different content decisions among the different groups of teachers. Curtner-Smith's (1999) study and other research on reform efforts (Cothran et al., 2006; McCaughtry et al., 2006a, 2006b) reveal content and curriculum considerations play a significant and political role.

Together these studies reveal that the degree of ‘real change’ that is seen will be significantly mediated by the teachers’ perspectives on the legitimacy of particular physical activities (Apple, 2004), which will also mediate the practical considerations of their implementation (McCaughtry et al., 2006a, 2006b). Keeping the context of my study in mind, given the open and vague writing of the state’s content standard (Michigan Department of Education, 2007), and the specific nature of the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs), I was curious to study the teachers’ knowledge and interpretation of this standard and policy. For example, I hold the position that it is entirely plausible to read the content standard and benchmarks as affording teachers to be in compliance when teaching only sport. The GLCEs, however, provide significant specificity in regards to what content should be taught in physical education. I was also curious to see what role various administrators (district curriculum specialists, school principals) played in the teachers’ considerations of various physical activities. I speculated that school based administration would show little interest in the content that was taught in physical education. A recent study showed that content knowledge was placed fifth among administrators’ concerns when looking to hire physical education teachers, behind interpersonal and personal attributes such as relationships with colleagues and students, appearance and physical activity lifestyles, and general teaching skills (Hummel, McCaughtry, & Dillon, 2006).

I speculated that the political leanings and ideological orientations of teachers (both generally and specific to physical education and various physical activities) would influence how they perceived policies and initiatives that place curriculum and content as an area of focus. Likewise, I was eager to learn what school and district level policies are in place and how those texts were interpreted by the teachers. By treating the curriculum as a political text, I was readily

able to identify the ways in which it was treated by the teachers, and in what ways their leanings affected their negotiations of specific physical activities. Ultimately, I am confident my study's focus on how teachers negotiated content decisions provides further insight into the political nature of specific physical activities. These findings could prove beneficial when organizing reform efforts focused on content, regardless of whether they are top-down or bottom-up.

### *Critical Social Theory, Postmodernism, and Physical Education*

The habitus one embodies, and the social fields one inhabits, can be chaotic and complicated affairs. Above I have attempted to demonstrate that the constitution and reconstitution of both are value laden and result in deeply embodied understandings. I have also attempted to demonstrate the power both concepts hold in explaining that 'what' gets taught in physical education is guided by how one's habitus functions in a social field, and that this negotiation is an inherently political affair encumbered with competing ideological frameworks. As such, the manner in which one's habitus resonates with variable positions concerning specific social issues is likely to further mediate how content decisions are negotiated. To this point in my framework, I have largely concentrated on discussing the powerful hold many orthodox positions have on physical education content. I now turn my attention to what a variety of critical social theories and postmodern scholarship offered my investigation of how secondary teachers negotiated content decisions.

### *Critical Social Theory*

The Enlightenment's ushering in of new world views based on rationality and positivism provided the ground from which the modern era was born (Solomon & Higgins, 1996). With all the "progress" that modernity has made possible, a number of new social problems were born out of, and old ones exacerbated by, the technology and creations of this era (Ingram & Simon-

Ingram, 1991). In response to these realities, members of the Frankfurt school (e.g. more notably, Jurgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno) looked to develop a theory radically ‘critical’ of contemporary culture and society (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1991). Heavily grounded in Freud, Marx, and Jewish and German Idealism, Critical theory has been described as utopian and is focused on “evaluating the freedom, justice, and happiness of societies. In their concern with values, they show themselves more akin to moral philosophy than in predictive science” (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1991, p. xx). As such, critical theorists continually ask themselves questions regarding how particular policies, cultural traditions, practices, beliefs, and values function to preserve the interests of those who hold significant power over others. In my study, the teachers’ power and control over what content and physical activities they include in the curriculum offered ample opportunity to investigate how issues of race and ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and popular culture mediated these content negotiations.

### *Postmodernity*

Like critical theory, postmodern thought represents a significant break from the modern paradigm (Solomon & Higgins, 1996). While a tight and agreed upon definition would be an inherent contradiction to its central stance, three major themes seem to reoccur. First, Postmodernity rejects totalizing grand narratives (Lyotard, 1991). As such, big T Truths, or eternal and unchallengeable truths become partial truths, or rather, interpretations (Foucault, 1980; Wilber, 2000b). Second, all interpretations or truths must be context based (Solomon & Higgins, 1996) with contexts being infinitely imbedded in other contexts (Wilber, 2000b). Something that is ‘true’ or a sophisticated ‘interpretation’ or ‘insight’ is bound to the context in which it is focused and grounded (Wilber, 2000b). Third, because of its inherent skepticism and

reliance on critique, postmodern scholarship has methods used for reflexive self-interrogation (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997b; Solomon & Higgins, 1996). Since physical education is a field that is practiced widely, contexts are sure to vary, as are the ‘truths’ attached to its practice and place in society. My study’s focus on how teachers negotiated content decisions paid special attention to the role that contexts and subjectivity played in how the teachers came to their beliefs and practices as they pertained to teaching physical education.

### *Critical and Postmodern Perspectives in Physical Education*

Scholars in physical education have produced a considerable amount of literature that could be classified as critical and/or postmodern (Kirk, Macdonald, & O’Sullivan, 2006). Below I will discuss this literature by using a specific social issue to frame each section. Sections include discussion of how the physical activities and content included in the physical education curriculum can be, or are, impacted by issues concerned with: social class; race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, popular culture, ability, and community.

*Social class.* Social class, or socioeconomic status by another name, is at bottom, about the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ (Van Galen, 2007). No matter what we are talking about ‘having’ (money, education, knowledge, cultural understanding, body shape) the ‘amount’ and ‘kind’ one has of particular forms of capital, position one at either an advantage or disadvantage in society and specific contexts (Van Galen, 2007). The possession of various forms of capital (social, economic, cultural) is what allows particular groups to exercise control and power over others, and from it, feelings of superiority or powerlessness (Bourdieu, 1984; Van Galen, 2007). Implicit in how class is perceived by people is the notion of meritocracy, that people have what they have because they have earned and/or deserve particular social positions and/or forms of capital (Sage,



1997). Since multiple forms of capital can inform one's "status", multiple demographics and variables must be considered historically when conducting a class analysis.

For instance, in physical education, David Kirk demonstrated in *Schooling Bodies* (1998) that the social class stratification in Australia (a residual phenomenon of British colonial expansion), and the role it played in the mythology of the "games ethic," had to be held in view inseparably with issues of religion, race, and gender, and functioned to create clear distinctions between upper and lower classes with the purpose of the games ethic to "civilize" the bodies of working-class children. The confluence of race, religion, and gender is just as pronounced in the United States, although given our sordid history with slavery and racism (Zinn, 2003), takes on a very different character. A powerful example of this is the role the auto industry played in the systematic and institutionalized racism of African American citizens (Segrue, 2005).

When it comes to physical education, Evans and Davies (2006) note the paucity of research, not only on the role class plays in physical education research, unless mediated by other social theories, mostly of the post-structural variety (e.g. Foucault and Bourdieu); but also, the lack of attempts to study class in a more holistic fashion by also looking at issues of race, gender, religion, body ideology etc. (Shilling, 2005). Stroot (2003) discussed the strong role that household income played in people's physical activity opportunities and used census data to demonstrate how income affected participation in specific physical activities, and physical activity consumption in general. If these distinctions hold, the socioeconomic dynamics at play in a community and its schools are likely to play a role in the content that a physical education teacher is compelled, able, and ultimately, chooses to include in the curriculum.

In fact, Dagkas and Stathi (2007) found just that. The 'class' of the students in their study significantly mediated the relationship that they had with physical education. Students from a

higher class school had significantly more opportunities to participate in a variety of physical activities, were strongly supported by their parents (financially and otherwise), and encouraged by their physical education teachers to participate and engage in physical activity. Furthermore, particular physical activities enjoyed by students from the higher class school such as hockey, swimming, skiing were in contrast to the large-sided team sports provided to students from the lower class school (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). These findings are similar to how Bourdieu (1984) positions dispositions towards physical activity by class. By including social class as part of my theoretical framework I was provided a lens from which to view how teachers negotiated content decisions in light of the various resources available to their students.

*Race, culture, and ethnicity.* Colonialism is another historical current that required attention. The historical practice of European nations colonizing lands in Africa, and North and South America automatically implicates issues of race and ethnicity. As McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, and Park (2005) argue, studies utilizing a postcolonial perspective (i.e. a perspective that places systemic colonial domination of western/advanced industrial countries on third world countries, and the resultant relations, as central to explaining phenomena) have become more important in recent times, in particular since 9/11. Wright (2006) notes the paucity of research conducted in this area, with the lone exception of the work undertaken by Hastie, Martin, and Buchanan (2006) pertaining to a group of white middle-class teachers who struggled ideologically and pedagogically to add “Stepping” as a content component of a middle school physical education curriculum.

Closely associated with a postcolonial perspective, but not synonymous, are issues associated with race, culture, and ethnicity. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) note the distinction between culture and ethnicity. While ethnicity is more concerned with a group working

politically to maintain its cultural presence in a national system, culture entails a much more specific coloring, and pertains to localized beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Culture and ethnicity, however, are almost always grounded in conceptions of race. The discourse surrounding race and sport is rife with (debunked) explanations for the superior performance of many ethnic and racial minorities in particular sports (Chappell, 2003). Examples include the perception of African American males being predisposed to excel at boxing, basketball, and American football (Chappell, 2003; Coakley, 2007). These explanations tend to naturalize or explain away performance differences to biological determinants (Chappell, 2003; Coakley, 2007). It appears this ideology has influenced the discourse in physical education.

Harrison, Azzarito, and Burden (2004) show how students of color may be funneled into certain physical activities and sports because of long held racial stereotypes. Harrison (2006) notes this should not be surprising given the role schools play as spaces of acculturation. Harrison says, “students, teachers, and coaches have over the years unconsciously promoted stereotypical views of racialized physical education and sports activities, reinforcing pervasive racial stereotypes regarding physical superiority in particular activities” (p.741). Ultimately, research continues to document that racial preferences for physical activity continue to confirm stereotypes (Harrison, 2001), as well as mediating perceptions of appropriateness for engagement (Ainsworth, Berry, Schnyder & Vickers, 1992). The work by McCaughtry and his colleagues (et al., 2006a, et al., 2006b) documents the tensions that exist when considering how much of a particular physical activity that holds cultural significance should be offered to students. Given the well entrenched racial discourse pertaining to specific physical activities, it was important for me to examine if and how teachers consider race and ethnicity when

negotiating content decisions, and to explore the specific reasoning behind the inclusion or exclusion of specific physical activities.

*Gender.* The title of this section is ‘gender.’ While this term can be used to describe both masculine and feminine ways of being, keeping with the critical and postmodern theme, I will discuss how girls, specifically, and boys who do not display hegemonic forms of masculinity, secondarily, have been historically marginalized in physical education, paying specific attention to the role that content has played in this development. Before going any further I present a few qualifiers.

While one’s ‘sex’ is a label based in biology, ‘gender’ is a context based social construction placed on the body, and is therefore subject to varying interpretations (Kirk, 1997, 2003). The conflation of the two (gender and sex) has functioned to create tacit and taken for granted assumptions of what it means to be a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’ (Humberstone, 2003), messages that are reproduced in both culture and popular media (Humberstone, 2003). This has often included positioning particular physical activities as being more or less appropriate for boys and girls.

Vertinsky (1992) traces the history of inequitable curriculum construction, placing the feminine curriculum as the more marginal and the one that lost out during post title IX integration. Title IX has been positioned as a document grounded in liberal conceptions aimed at “equality” in opportunity through its treatment of both sexes as the same (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). This collapse put girls in a predicament. First, girls had been cultured to participate in physical activities that conformed to heterosexual norms of femininity such as those associated with grace, poise, finesse, flexibility, and balance (Flintoff & Scranton, 2006). Activities such as dance, gymnastics, netball, volleyball, swimming, and aerobics have been

marked as feminine (Flintoff & Scranton, 2006; Vertinsky, 1992). Now, with the collapse of this curriculum they were/are forced to participate in masculine activities, activities that reward physically aggressive, forceful, competitive, ego-oriented, and achievement oriented dispositions (Flintoff & Scranton, 2006; Humberstone, 2003). This has presented many girls with a false ‘choice.’ Participate and risk your femininity, or abstain, and be perceived a lazy, unmotivated, and uncooperative ‘girly girl’ (Flintoff & Scranton, 2006; Oliver, Hamzeh, & McCaughtry, 2009).

Even when girls do choose to participate, their access is not guaranteed, as Oliver and Hamzeh (2009) have shown, a current physical activity curriculum and culture comprised largely of activities deemed more “masculine” and for boys, has created a situation where girls are relegated to compete for opportunities to participate in spaces dominated by boys unwilling to allow them authentic participatory opportunities. This result has also been echoed at the secondary level by Azzarito, Solmon, and Harrison (2006), who explicitly showed how gendered conceptions of certain physical activities functioned in adolescent girls’ decision making in physical education.

While girls and ethnic minorities have received the brunt of the discrimination in school physical education, boys who display particular forms of masculinity are also vulnerable to marginalization (Gard, 2006; Humberstone, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Tischler & McCaughtry (2011) found that boys who do not display hegemonic masculinities, or particularly like hyper-competitive sport, are ridiculed by fellow students and their teachers, experience unpleasant visceral pain, and employ a variety of avoidance strategies. These same boys do like physical activity, including sports, but physical education is a space that does not affirm their way of being a boy, and hence, their way of doing physical activity and sport. The effects of

experiences like this for boys are felt throughout life in the form of body image disorders and believing their masculinity to be inferior (Drummond, 2003). Indeed, for some boys the onslaught of humiliating experiences in hyper competitive sport based physical education seems never-ending, and can result in deeply felt self-hatred (Davison, 2000). Like the research just discussed, how the teachers in my study construct gender will undoubtedly influence how they negotiate content decisions when creating their curricula. Understanding how these negotiations take place will be important in working to challenge commonly held stereotypes.

*Sexuality.* When discussing issues of gender and biological sex, social concerns over sexuality are sure to creep in at some point. In physical education, Sykes (2009) has been a vocal voice for the inclusion and consideration of issues and injustices pertaining to homophobic, sexist, heteronormative, and fatphobic orientations; the whole of which she has referred to as “postmodern body studies,” with its grounding in the theoretical work of Turner (1996) and Shilling (2005) among others. McCaughy and his colleagues (2005) have made the call for physical education teachers to consider seriously the realities of students who are homosexual and to be sensitive to the realities of their lives by creating an atmosphere of tolerance through the implementation of a variety of strategies that seek to develop a critical consciousness in students’ conceptions of sexuality and the social constructions associated with sex and gender.

Research in physical education has shown this space to be particularly unfriendly to students who are homosexual (Clarke, 2006) or who do not embody traditional notions of gender (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). Certain physical activities may be associated with cultures that have a legacy of homophobia, and this needs to be considered in both pedagogy and curriculum. For instance, dance has historically been a “feminine” activity, although Gard (2006) shows us how it can be used to breakdown stereotypes and address oppression head on. Also, Humberstone

(1990) shows us how adventure activities can be used to break down gendered stereotypes of ability. Sexuality served as an important frame when I examined how teachers negotiated content decisions. I speculated that it was entirely possible that a teacher not teach particular forms of dance simply because they feared movements that are deemed sexually suggestive; or not teach swimming because they feared students seeing each other in bathing suits would provide a significant distraction, and lead to undesirable behavior and actions from and between students.

*Religion.* While some lament the decreasing role traditional religions play in contemporary society, organized religion continues to play a significant role in how we view life, organize social practices, and inscribe meaning to cultural events (Wilber, 2006). While a wide range of religions have established themselves with varying degrees of legitimacy, their influence on physical education is rarely seen in explicit ways. Its residue, however, can be seen in the culturally absorbed and tacit assumptions, that position the body (its utility and desires) as a “lower” level of existence and in need of constant ascetic constraint (Turner, 2006). There are, however, notable exceptions to this variably embodied assumption.

Anecdotally, there have been reports of parents and districts having a fear of activities such as Yoga, because of poorly and incorrectly assumed ties to eastern religions such as Buddhism (Sink, 2003). A physical education teacher’s decision to include content such as Yoga may meet resistance, whether internal or external, explicit or implicit, and this resistance may have its grounding in some form of phobia toward non-Judeo-Christian belief systems.

Also, living in a post 9/11 world, various media sources, politicians, and lay commentators foster an ideology that positions those who practice Islam as ‘dangerous’ (Rizvi, 2005). The recent migration of Muslim people to many Western countries has evidently done little to quell these fears (Rizvi, 2005). Pundits and “leaders” use words that readily feed

people's conceptions of Muslims as a caricature; all Muslims become "backward" "fundamentalist" "terrorists" who are sexist, and wear face scarves and hijabs (Rizvi, 2005). Recent work by Dagkas, Benn and Jawad (2011) has documented the particular predicament in which this puts young Muslim girls. The prominent role of wife and motherhood in many Islamic neighborhoods is congruent with a general lack of interest in things such as physical culture. Activities such as sport are seen as "play" and take away from the more important concerns of life (Dagkas et al, 2011). Furthermore, music and dance are viewed as being a particular form of pop culture that holds potential to undermine moral purity (Dagkas et al., 2011).

In physical education this has resulted in parents citing inflexible and immodest dress codes, gender organization, use of public swimming pools, and poor communication of school policy as reasons why they voluntarily remove young Muslim girls from classes. Dagkas and his colleagues (2011) note that addressing these concerns, building consensus, finding compromises, and writing situation specific policies, and the relaxing of rules and protocols, as ways to be inclusive and accepting, are complicated when teachers and administrators try to decipher when a Muslim family's social practice is an important aspect of striving toward spirituality, or is a pseudo-religious and culturally embedded tradition (Dagkas et al., 2011; Rizvi, 2005; Wilber, 2006). These issues have the potential to complicate matters for physical education teachers who are unknowledgeable and/or ill-prepared to deal with such sensitive subjects. Negotiating to choose specific content like swimming, Yoga, and dance may be significantly mediated by the religion a teacher may subscribe to, as well as the religion(s) students are encultured. Considering religion was especially important for my study, given the large population of citizens with Muslim heritage that practice Islam in the local area.



*Popular culture.* With the advent of increased purchasing power by youth in Western and industrialized societies, youth culture and popular culture have become more integrated than previous generations (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). This includes much attention to how the body is positioned in various forms of media and consumer culture (Shilling, 2005). The body is often positioned as a malleable project that is the source of a variety of forms of capital (Sparkes, 1997). This integration can broadly be seen as being driven by the fact that various youth and peer cultures spend time and resources with/on items and practices they find “cool” (McCaughtry, 2009). The idea, of taking seriously the practices of physical cultures (outside of team sport), and subsequently providing physical activities for students that they find “cool,” holds much potential for pursuing a participatory discourse (Tinning, 1997) and for connecting the child to the curriculum (Dewey, 1902) in post-modern times. Teachers, however, have been reluctant to include the new wave of physical activities and the larger physical activity culture in which adolescents find relevant. Instead, teachers have positioned students (inaccurately) as lazy or disinterested in physical activity (Sanford & Rich, 2006).

In my study, I was curious to see how teachers viewed popular culture, the culture of their adolescents, and what physical activities they thought their students found “cool” and relevant. Significant tensions between the physical activity culture of secondary physical education teachers and today’s adolescents, are important to document given the problems associated with of disjunctures of this form. Addressing this “cultural gap” will be important for physical education to increase its legitimacy with larger physical activity culture (Flory & McCaughtry, in press; Tinning, 1997).

*Ability.* A variety of postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial, and feminist scholarship has destabilized the accuracy of traditional assumptions of ability, physicality, and human

movement (Azzarito, 2009; Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006; Kirk, 1998; Shilling, 2005; Tischler & McCaughtry, in press; Wright, 2006). Of specific concern to my study was how teachers' particular leanings towards specific content impacted their perspectives on what "ability" entailed. Evans (2004), drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus, proposes a view of ability where deeply embodied dispositions towards particular "ways" of moving may be rationalized and serve as a significant filter mediating how one perceives one's own ability and the ability of others. Hay and Macdonald (2009) demonstrated that in physical education, how the field of the class was constructed significantly affected the notions of ability one teacher brought with them. This functioned to dictate how students viewed their own abilities and the abilities of classmates.

Specifically, students whose abilities hold congruence with the teacher's are perceived as high in ability, whereas those students who display divergent abilities, are marginalized both from displaying their talents and skills, as well as, from being able to acquire or develop the abilities that are privileged by the teachers and their curriculum (Hay & MacDonald, 2009). Hay and Hunter (2006) have found that ability is often rationalized from a sporting habitus; a habitus that privileges masculine, aggressive, competitive, and powerful movement. For example, it is not hard to see that teachers who have a habitus that is comfortable with large-sided competitive team sport may readily appreciate a game of hockey that requires a high state of arousal, taking advantage of weaker opponents, cardiorespiratory endurance, agility, power, strength, and skill during a fast paced contest that may include rough physical contact. Contrast this with Hatha Yoga that rewards muscular endurance, flexibility, a lower state of arousal, and being able to patiently and continuously focus on one's own still body for extended periods of time. And for a third example, consider distance running. An activity that requires muscular and

cardiorespiratory endurance, and a balanced dynamic of high arousal and emotional patience. While related to one another in varying degrees, each activity requires a unique set of ‘abilities’ that contribute to the ‘success’ one may see from their participation.

I was curious to see how each teacher’s sense of ability mediated their content decisions and resultant curriculum. These previous two examples are further complicated if and when teachers must consider the needs and desires of students who have disabilities. Given that students with disabilities do not have access to as full of a range of physical activities that more able bodied do (Sport England, 2001), and that activities that require team play present additional challenges for teachers when creating inclusive environments (Morley, et al., 2005), it was important to investigate the role inclusive teaching had on content negotiations.

*Community.* When viewed in total, these issues point to the importance of being responsive to the communities in which one is teaching and employed (Gutmann, 1999). Living in a representative (and to a degree a participatory) democracy it strikes me as common sense to include various members of the community (teachers, students, parents, politicians, religious leaders, business community) when discussing and “authorizing” the inclusion and exclusion of particular content. To take seriously the issues I have outlined above, a teacher would be well served to get a sense of where their community is “at” in relation to them, especially with regard to the physical activities students and parents value the most.

I have outlined a variety of social issues, that contain in them, historical legacies colored by varying levels of marginalization for particular groups of people. I suspected that the degree to which teachers were in-tune with specific issues, the way these issues informed one another, and the stance they inhabited within each, would influence how they negotiated content decisions. Creating conditions that allow more readily for the inclusion of more diverse content

in secondary physical education, as a small sign of progress (if I can say “progress”), can definitely be informed by learning how secondary teachers’ perspectives on a range of social issues affect this process.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### *Introduction*

In this study I examined how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content and curricular decisions. In this chapter, I explain my research methodology and include: (1) a summary of my theoretical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm, (2) participants that I recruited and the data collection methods I utilized, (3) the data analysis and trustworthy techniques I employed, (4) the study process I will followed and how data was managed, and (5) discuss the ethical considerations that were pertinent to the study and share a brief reflexive exploration of my own subjectivity and bias.

### Theoretical Assumptions of the Interpretive Paradigm

In this section, I describe my assumptions of the interpretive paradigm. For Kuhn (1970) a paradigm of inquiry is rooted in a “particular coherent tradition of scientific research” (p.10). Interpretivism’s roots, however, can be unclear, as the term has been used to describe a particular tradition (rooted in cultural anthropology; (Geertz, 1973)), as well as serving as an umbrella term for a variety of related yet distinct traditions. Phenomenology (philosophy), constructivism (sociology and psychology), hermeneutics (linguistics, philosophy, literary criticism, and theology), ethnography (anthropology), and social constructionism (sociology) are all traditions that have, at one time or another, been described as falling under the interpretive theoretical perspective (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002; Schram, 2006).

At their core, these traditions represent a significant break from the modernist paradigm and are often described as post-modern or post-structural (Henstrand, 2006; Wilber, 2000). I adopted many of the assumptions that these research approaches share, specifically, that reality

and knowledge are: socially constructed between participants, based in culture and context, embodied, fluid and malleable, and irreducible to essential variables. Here an individual's understanding of reality is informed by their own experiences with others in a variety of social and cultural spaces (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002). Cultures give form to socially constructed understandings and give rise to different value orientations and belief systems that are stable, orient meaning, contextually bound, and include standards for assessment (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002). The meaning and understanding that is generated within social and cultural spaces, while based heavily in a cognitive view of reality (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), are also informed by other intrapersonal aspects of being, such as emotions, and intentions (Maxwell, 2005), as well as how one's physicality, political views, gender, sexuality, class, age, and ethnic/racial heritage are embodied within various contexts (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). While cultures foment stable ways of being and knowing, they are not unchangeable, as past experiences and beliefs are filtered through current experiences allowing for the possibility of new and novel action (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). The interdependence and variability of these factors severely complicates reducing 'lived reality' to essential variables or particular social spaces.

Consequently, the interpretive paradigm was a good fit for my investigation in how secondary school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions. I was correct in my speculations that these decisions would readily communicate the teachers' understandings, values, beliefs, tastes, and dispositions as they related to teaching specific physical activities. I was also correct that these dispositions were heavily influenced by a variety of experiences in different social and cultural contexts. I will look to further clarify and strengthen this fit by

addressing more specifically the interpretive paradigm's assumptions of the nature on reality, knowledge, and research methodology.

*Interpretive Theoretical Assumptions Regarding Ontology*

Interpretivists hold a significantly unique set of assumptions regarding the nature of reality. In their break from the modernist paradigm, interpretivists believe there is not a stable, universal, or objective reality *apart* from the meaning made by humans. This includes the belief that reality is subjective, that humans act based on their interpretations of meaning, and that reality is bound by cultural context. First, interpretivists believe lived reality is relativistic (LeCompte & Pressile, 1993). This subjective view of reality rejects naturalistic, fundamentalist, universalizing, and “totalizing” accounts of human experience (Bredo, 2006; Patton, 2002). Instead, interpretivists hold the position that perceptions of lived reality are dependent on the context in which they take place. That is, the meaning assigned to particular phenomena is heavily informed by how one's identities and beliefs are situated during particular happenings in specific social spaces (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1993). Personal identity in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, physicality, peer affiliations, and social class, can be significantly impacted by, and in turn impact, lived experience in a variety of social and cultural spaces such as families, religious institutions, schools, physical culture, and political affiliations. The vast plurality of human life makes it likely that people draw very different interpretations of reality, even when confronted with the same kinds of experiences.

Second, interpretivists are ultimately concerned with meaning and the actions guided by it (LeCompte & Pressile, 1993). They see the two-way interplay between embodied identities and social spaces as being the key dynamic from which people construct meaning and craft interpretations (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). These interpretations give rise to malleable, yet

stable, perspectives that people use to make decisions and inform actions. What is good, bad, true, or false is not strictly based on ‘absolute’ parameters, but instead on the knowledge and level of sophistication one has developed relative to one’s own beliefs, values, and also the context in question (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002; Schram, 2006).

Third, interpretivists see culture as the primary context in which meaning is constructed. This is because one of the primary functions of culture is to communicate the traditions and heritage associated with a variety of value frameworks and belief systems (Spradley, 1980). The various values and beliefs emanating from a variety of cultures will influence how the variety of previously discussed identities are embodied and viewed. Any examination of the interpretations and meaning people construct of experienced phenomena must be done while paying special attention to the interdependent and overlapping cultures at work in particular spaces (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The gaps and similarities between and among cultures, and how people embody them, give color to the diversity of social happenings.

#### *Interpretive Theoretical Assumptions Regarding Epistemology*

Interpretivists’ assumptions about reality inform their assumptions about what it means to know and understand. This includes assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how it is constructed relative to research. First, interpretivists believe that we come to understand our world and the perspectives of others through a communication that is intersubjective (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002). For Patton (2002), this process and the resulting ways of knowing, are bound by the context in which this understanding develops. This means that the background experiences of those involved, their perspectives, knowledge stores, beliefs, the particular happenings of meetings and interactions, and the historical events leading up to the present time, all inform any understanding of a situation or phenomenon (LeCompte & Schensul,



1999). By nature then, knowledge for interpretivists is “relative to time and place [and] never absolute across time and space” (Patton, 2002, p.101).

Second, interpretivists hold that knowledge resulting from research is constructed in particular ways. For them, the ongoing interactions between the researcher and participant are the base from where knowledge and understanding are constructed (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Knowledge, in this sense, is not solely the result of the researcher’s interpretations, but is instead a shared and consensual rendering of societal happenings. In order to best develop this understanding it is important that one “engage at some level in the lives of those whom your inquiry is focused; it is through the direct interaction with their perspectives and behaviors” that you come to develop authentic forms of understanding (Schram, 2006, p.45). This process leads to understanding and knowledge taking on increasing complexity and nuance as they are created and recreated over time. In the end, the researchers offer their “own construction of other people’s constructions” (Geertz, 1973, p.9), and, as such, results should not be treated as independent and valid truths, but, instead, as a “socially constructed and consensually validated” refinement of understanding (Patton, 2002, p.99).

#### *Interpretive Theoretical Assumptions Regarding Methodology*

Interpretive researchers, working from their assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge construction, design research inquiries that are naturalistic and emergent (Patton, 2002). Their central focus on context and social dialogue lead to methods that are adaptable and will yield a “thick description” of the perspectives, events, and processes of particular interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Emergent research designs are adaptable and allow interpretivist researchers ample room to follow an inquiry in unforeseen and critical directions, and to maneuver in settings in ways that will yield the most accurate and powerful findings. In this

endeavor, researchers position themselves as the primary tool of investigation and spend considerable time with research participants in settings pertinent to the questions guiding the study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Interpretive researchers spend time conversing with their participants, observing their behaviors, and analyzing artifacts and documents that can inform their inquiry. Conversations between the researcher and participants are the primary way in which interpretivists seek mutual understanding. In this process, interpretivists seek to illuminate the perspectives and experiences of the participants as they relate to the researcher's inquiry (Patton, 2002). This ongoing dialogue allows the researcher and participants to develop and refine ideas, insights, and realizations, as well as, expand their understanding of the phenomena under investigation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Furthermore, given the unique perspectives that individual participants may have, verbal conversation allows room and space to be tailored to the wide range of possible turns and directions that an interview might take. This process, however, will only be rich and informative to the extent that trust and rapport are developed. Unless participants trust a researcher, they will be reluctant to be as forthright and truthful about their perspectives as they might otherwise, resulting in less than credible forms of data.

Ongoing dialogue between the researcher and participants is further informed by, and will inform, the observations conducted. These observations provide another source of data. In particular, observations of social settings provide exposure to actions and interactions in real time. These observations may reveal particular manifestations of meaning and behavior not revealed in conversation. Interpretivists' observations can range in level of involvement from non-participant to full participant (Spradley, 1980). Level of involvement will be determined by the kinds of understanding the researcher is after. Regardless of the level of involvement,

interpretivists adopt orientations that are focused on ‘discovering’ something about the social interactions of people in a particular context, and not to ‘manipulate’ any of the happenings (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002).

Some events or happenings may not be available for observation or reconstruction. In this respect, artifacts of various forms (documents, videos, audio recordings, pictures, signs/posters, etc.) can serve to provide the researcher with another data source. Unlike observations and conversations, these materials provide the interpretive researcher with a unique contribution to their data set, in that, the artifacts are the “material manifestations of cultural beliefs and behaviors” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.216).

The conversations undertaken, behaviors observed, and the artifacts collected are all the result of work that took place in culturally informed social spaces. For interpretive researchers, none of the data that is accumulated from these methods can be viewed objectively or in isolation from the context it was attained. Working from a subjective view of reality, all the data interpretive researchers collect is treated as snippets and snapshots of the context they originated. As such, interpretive researchers pay close attention to the spaces and processes by and in which different events, interactions, and behaviors take place, as this is where meaning is socially constructed (Maxwell, 2005). This includes examining how different ways of embodying identity, such as physicality, race/ethnicity, gender, social class, age, political affiliations, and sexuality, inform how various participants interact with the cultural traditions and social practices central to the investigation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Maxwell, 2005). As a whole then, interpretive researchers must keep an expansive and inclusive perspective when encountering the variety of complex and interdependent dynamics that are at play (Patton, 2002).

It is also crucial for interpretivists to reflexively consider how these same social identifiers affect their own dispositions. As the primary tool of inquiry, the interpretive researcher must remain cognizant of their own experiences, voice, and perspectives, and how each informs and shapes every aspect of the ongoing inquiry (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Patton, 2002). This includes considering how they affect the fundamental reasons for the research and the ongoing dialogue, observations, and artifact procurement processes. This is important, as interpretivist researchers seek to find a balance between extreme objectivity and subjectivity in order to create an authentic and credible depiction of the participants' world (Patton, 2002).

One way that interpretive researchers work toward providing credible and authentic accounts of social phenomena is to spend considerable time in the research setting. By spending sufficient time: in a setting with participants, being reflexive and cognizant during the research process, collecting ample data, and being sensitive to the considerable and diverse happenings, a researcher is more able to provide an accurate and "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the setting. This description is rich in information and descriptive detail, allowing the reader a vivid sense of whom and what were present and how processes unfolded and progressed (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). It is the sufficient description of research that allows a reader to judge the level of transferability a study has, that is, how the findings of a study can inform the reader's own work and context (Patton, 2002). Transferability is the analog to positivist claims of generalizability. Since interpretivists see reality as subjective and context dependent, they believe what is learned in one context is bound there, and cannot be applied verbatim to other spaces. Instead, interpretive researchers strive to provide accurate and detailed portrayals of a setting, in order for readers to determine how applicable the findings are to their own settings.

## Participants and Data Collection Methods

In this section, I first justify and describe the criteria by which I recruited research participants. Next, I provide a brief overview of the participants. More thorough descriptions of the teachers will be presented in chapter four. Finally, I explain the specific data collection procedures that were utilized in this study.

### *Justification and Criteria for Participant Recruitment*

Purposeful sampling guided the recruitment of eight full-time middle school physical education teachers (Patton, 2002). Below I describe why I focused on middle school physical education. Following this justification, I describe the specific ‘type’ of teacher that I sought to recruit and the reasons for doing so.

*Middle school physical education.* Students enrolled in grades six through twelve have been characterized as being in a “liminal state,” that is, an ambiguous space in time where a variety of rapidly occurring physical and social changes take place in the transition from childhood to adulthood (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). At this stage in their life, adolescents increasingly seek independence from their parents, rely more on peer affiliations and outside role models for direction and affirmation, yet, at the same time, they remain significantly dependent upon the very people and institutions from which they seek to distance themselves (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). These physical and social changes, combined with increased freedom and the required structured time in school, provide the conditions that give rise to youth culture (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). During this time, adolescents increasingly experiment with a variety of roles as they construct their identity, which includes a preoccupation with the body and choices in physical activity engagement (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). These realities, when viewed in combination with other social factors such as ability, physicality, social class, gender,

race/ethnicity, family life, and peer group affiliations, allow us to see adolescents as a group that share a series of distinct characteristics, yet develop increasingly diverse and unique sets of dispositions, desires, and tastes.

To address the experiences of adolescents, both the Council on Physical Education for Children [CPEC] and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [NCCDPHP], position secondary physical education as an occasion where students should have the ability to capitalize on this increasing differentiation by exploring a variety of human movement possibilities and developing expertise in specific physical activities (CPEC, 2004; NCCDPHP, 1997). In fact, secondary school curriculum writers make it clear that programs should offer students the opportunity to engage in a wide variety of physical activities (Darst & Pangrazi, 2006). Despite the congruencies between middle and high school, each presents their own unique set of circumstances. In this study I focused on middle school teachers for a couple of reasons.

First, with respect to middle school, this is the time where physical education teachers should present to their students curriculum that is considerably diverse, more readily revealing the role teachers play in making content negotiations, by comparison to high school, where ideally students should be developing expertise in particular physical activities, and typically, departments divide teaching responsibilities according to expertise. Second, and in contrast to high schools, middle schools generally have only one or two teachers, which I speculated would increase the amount of control the teachers had over the curriculum.

Furthermore, a variety of national, state, and local school district policies are increasingly making the statement that students who are physically educated leave physical education competent in a variety of movement forms (NASPE, 2004; Michigan Department of Education,

2007). First, are NASPE's National Standards for Physical Education. Second, these standards have heavily influenced the writing of the Michigan Physical Education Standards, which has a standard that echoes NASPE's content standard. Third, newly created Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs) were created to more specifically articulate and classify "what and how physical education content should be taught" in grades K-8 (Sullivan & Dillon, 2009). Fourth, many local districts have created their own set of curriculum requirements, adding another layer of consideration and requirement for teachers. Fifth, legislation was being considered that would require schools to provide students with one semester of physical education in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Currently, while there are GLCEs, there is no mandated amount of days or minutes of physical education that districts are required to provide students. When viewed together, each layer of policy held the potential to significantly impact what content was taught by teachers in physical education.

While these policies and positions are in place, I want to raise a couple of issues. First, given the current educational climate that is focused on high stakes testing of primarily cognitive based subjects (Spring, 2008), there seems to be an increasing lack of oversight as to what is going on in physical education. In fact, many of the teachers that I worked with over the past two years made it explicitly clear that their administrators do not know what they teach, simply want PE to not "make waves," and rarely if ever visit classes. Second, informed by my ongoing research, it also seems to be true that secondary physical education teachers and departments hold significant control over the types of courses that get offered to students, and also the physical activities that are included in the curriculum. These realities led me to a justification for the following question and concern: given the previously discussed realities faced by adolescents, the gap between secondary physical education curriculum and larger physical

culture, the statement by a variety of ‘authorities’ that secondary physical education should contain a variety of movement forms, and the control that I see secondary teachers having over what gets taught, then why is it that large-sided team sports continue to dominate curricular space? Or, more broadly, how do middle school physical education teachers negotiate content decisions in light of these concerns?

*Participant recruitment.* In working to address this question, I considered a number of criteria during the recruitment of participants. First, I searched for teachers who were recommended by university faculty, other secondary teachers, and administrators, as teachers who ‘cared’ about the learning and well-being of *all* their students. Following this, I sought teachers who were known as ‘teachers’ first and not ‘coaches’ first. This did not eliminate consideration of teachers who coached; rather, it was to guard against recruitment of teachers who were not primarily interested in teaching physical education to all students. Specifically, teachers who saw their primary job as being the coach for the school’s elite varsity sports teams were more likely to be focused on those responsibilities, and use pedagogy that was not inclusive or focused on teaching all students. Examples include: rolling out the ball for games, sitting off to the side reading a magazine, having one large-sided game where high-skilled and aggressive students dominate play and students not playing sit off to the side, teams being chosen by counting off, or allowing the most talented students to publicly draft classmates, and ignoring the harassment of students who do not embody dominant and homogenous ways of being physically active.

Second, I worked to have a gender balance between men and women. I felt the perspectives of both men and women would offer unique and pertinent insights to this study. Third, I only recruited teachers that had at least three years of experience. This kept me from



piling more work and responsibility on teachers who were currently seeking to ‘survive’ their induction, and had not yet been around long enough to develop an informed perspective on this topic.

Four, since school districts located in rural, suburban, metropolitan, and inner city areas each come with their own contextual concerns and realities, I focused my study and recruited teachers from primarily suburban and metropolitan area school districts. I felt teachers from these areas would provide the greatest insight into how content decisions were negotiated because of the increased access to resources both they and their students had when compared to more urban and rural areas. I felt the increased range of possibilities these resources potentially offered teachers when they made content decisions could provide for more ample and insightful instances of how this process unfolded.

Five, while I desired to have teachers of multiple races/ethnicities/cultures and social classes represented, my focus on suburban and metropolitan schools made this challenging. The biographies and life experiences of teachers are significantly impacted by the cultural spaces that they inhabited and the resources that were available (Bourdieu, 1984). Having a diverse set of teachers would have more readily revealed how the embodiment of these social categories informed the negotiation of content decisions. Over the past two years, the 28 Caucasian suburban teachers that I worked with all came from middle to upper middle class backgrounds. While a possible limitation, and not the focus of this study, this reality might provide some valuable insights into the social workings of these schools and their physical education programs.

#### *Research Participants and Settings*

During the past year I worked with eight middle school physical education teachers (Annette, Ken, Jill, Susan, Tracy, Bill, Josh, and Joe). Four of the teachers were male and four

were female. Each teacher was certified to teach physical education. Seven of the teachers held Master's degrees in physical education or adapted physical education, and the eighth was working toward a Master's degree in physical education when the study took place. Teaching experience ranged between three and 25 years ( $M$  years = 14.9). Ken and Jill taught in non-physical education settings for a number of years before their more recent move to physical education. While the mean years does not appear to be particularly low or high, most teachers had either a wealth of experience (three teachers had more than twenty years of experience teaching physical education) or were still in the early stages of their career (four teachers had less than five years of experience). All eight teachers were Caucasian, and discussed coming from "middle class" backgrounds. Indeed, the teachers' discussion of the neighborhoods they grew up in, the schools they attended, the activities they engaged with, as well as the occupations their parents and caretakers held, were all congruent with what is typically characterized as professional/middle class (Brantlinger, 2007).

A more thorough description of each teacher, their curriculum, and the school in which they taught is presented in the next chapter via a series of case studies. The case studies include a description of the schools where the teachers worked, the surrounding communities that they served, as well as information concerned with the facilities and equipment available, demographics of their students (e.g. enrollment, gender, race/ethnicity, free and reduced lunch), and any other context specific information that was pertinent to the study. The case studies also provide a portrait of the forms of physical education that were offered to students (e.g. the number of sections of required physical education, general physical education, and elective physical education), and keeps a focused eye on the content offered at each school. It needs to be noted that all this information will be presented in a way that ensures participant and community

confidentiality. For example, pseudonyms are used to describe all individuals, participants, schools, and communities. Also, contextual information was stripped or augmented to ensure anonymity of the school and community.

### *Data Collection*

I collected data from eight teachers over the span of seven months during the 2010-2011 academic year. During a two and a half week span, five full school days were spent with each teacher, for a total of 40 full school days of data collection. The decision to work with eight teachers allowed me to establish a significant degree a breadth in addressing a wide yet focused set of research questions. Working with each teacher for five full days provided ample time for a solid rapport to develop and to address all my research questions. Furthermore, this was the maximum number of teachers I could work with given the time frame I am was bound in (one school year) and the amount of time I thought it would take to develop a solid rapport with each teacher (five full days). In my previous work, spending three half days was ample time to develop trust and address all my research questions. I, however, felt that each day went by too fast. Also, I felt the teachers became more comfortable and talkative as the day went on. I often felt that once a comfortable and relaxed rapport was in place, it was time for me to leave and move on to the next teacher. Spending full days allowed me to see more lessons, converse informally more frequently, and establish a greater degree of trust.

This process was cyclical in that all data collection was completed with one teacher before I moved to the next. I collected data via classroom observations, informal interviews and conversations, formal semi-structured interviews, and artifact collection. My theoretical framework and research questions guided each of these methods. As qualitative research follows

emergent designs, my time in the field collecting data continued until I had comprehensively developed something unique and valuable to say regarding my research questions.

*Teacher interviews.* Since the purpose of this study was to understand how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions, it was crucial that I employed methods that were best positioned to comprehend and appreciate this process. The primary means I employed to develop this understanding were formal and informal interviews and conversations. While observations and artifact analysis played an important role in this endeavor, it was the interviews that I relied on most for a couple of reasons. First, this dialogical process allowed the research participants and me space and time to explore a range of questions in an open and in-depth manner (Brenner, 2006). Second, the interview process allowed me a significant amount of flexibility as I worked to understand how various social factors had informed the dispositions from which the teachers negotiated content decisions. For Patton (2002), interviews are important in seeking this kind of understanding because,

The fact is we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 341)

Formal interviews and informal conversations demonstrated to be crucial in my development of this understanding within and between the research participants.

Formal and informal interviews and conversations took place each research visit. Each type of interview was guided by specific procedures. Formal interviews were guided by the use of semi-structured interview guides that included open-ended and non-leading questions, and

also a series of more specific questions grounded in the literature, as well as probes to elicit richer responses from participants (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). (The interview guide used in the first round and throughout data collection is included in appendix A of this document.) The initial interview guide included a set of demographic questions about the teacher's background and present curriculum, as well as questions concerned with 28 different factors (personal physical activity biography, personal physical education experience, physical education teacher education, state/local department of Education-Grade Level Content Expectations, state standards, district curriculum, national standards, physical education colleagues, professional development opportunities, personal/autonomy/agency, ease and comfort teaching certain physical activities, field of physical education, school principal, district physical education coordinator, parents, student interests, facilities, equipment, climate, liability/risk management issues, teacher philosophy, popular culture/media influences, socioeconomic status/social class, race/culture, gender, religious institutions, spiritual/deeply meaningful experiences, and the obesity crisis), and a set of questions designed to specifically examine aspects of Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus.

The 'formal' interviews were conducted in a focused yet conversational style. According to Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999), "[the] interview is a special kind of conversation. It requires a reciprocal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, one that honors the rules that people normally follow for good conversation in the given cultural setting" (p. 135).

Early interviews focused on general background and biographical information as a way to ease into the researcher and participant relationship, while at the same time collecting important information. These initial conversations always led to discussion of other factors included on the interview guide, making for relatively easy conversation transitions. I sought to conduct the

interview in way where I could direct the flow and direction of the conversation in routes the participant was already moving. For instance, if I asked a question pertaining to a teacher's perceptions of students' gender, and imbedded in their answer were ideas, thoughts, and experiences that pertained to their teacher education experience, I would look to move the conversation in that direction once I was satisfied with the answer the teacher had given to the previous question on gender, or when we had reached an ending point for discussion of a particular factor or topic.

The interview guides constructed in later rounds included questions that: addressed specific research interests not yet covered, looked to further develop research interests covered previously, provided participants an opportunity to confirm and/or clarify earlier statements, compared and contrasted phenomena across participants, and tested ongoing interpretations. As I conducted my research with each participant, I kept a running inventory to be sure I addressed how each of the 28 factors affected their content negotiations. I did not conclude my work with a teacher until I was confident I had a thorough understanding of how each factor affected their content decisions.

Classroom observations also informed the formal interview process, as I used what I saw and heard and adjusted the guides accordingly. Writing down questions or highlighting factors concerned with student behaviors was the most prevalent reason I adjusted the guides. All formal interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, were recorded using two digital audio recorders, and were transcribed by myself.

By comparison, the informal conversations/interviews were less structured and relied more on relating the research foci to the immediate environment (Patton, 2002). These conversations took place throughout the school building and included the gymnasium, outdoor

fields, walking through hallways, the swimming pool, personal or shared offices, equipment rooms, the teacher break room, the front office, and the school's copy and resource room. This method increased the salience and relevance of questions by matching what I asked with what was being seen and heard by both myself and the participant (Patton, 2002). It also provided opportunities for conversations from formal interviews conducted the previous visit, or earlier during the day, to be continued. Spending full days with each teacher allowed for plenty of time for these conversations to take place. As I spent more and more time with each participant, trust and rapport developed, and both formal and informal interviews became more comfortable.

I used a variety of tactics to strategically develop trust and rapport. First, I used clear and non-threatening language when I described the project. Words like research, data, analysis, and publication were avoided where possible and substituted with words like study, information, and project. Second, I was as open as possible to whatever questions or concerns the participants had pertaining to my research, my past teaching experience, my work in general, as well as personal characteristics. I found that sharing my own teaching experiences in early visits was an especially important method for easing any teacher reservations. Third, while words are important, actions might be of more importance (Patton, 2002). In this respect, I was vigilant in my effort to be as respectful, helpful, and interested in the participant's world as was possible. We talked at length about our own physical activity participation and histories, our favorite sports teams, our families, the teachers' children, current events, and politics. We shared coffee and lunch, and I spent much time helping teachers set-up and take down equipment. For one participant I wrote a letter commending her exceptional work as a teacher. I have no doubt these shared experiences contributed to the solid rapport I developed with all the teachers.

*Classroom observations.* The second form of data I collected for this study was field notes that came from classroom observations. This was my primary method for participating in each teacher's world. During my whole day research visits, I sought to make "visible the invisible" as I compared the insider perspective gained from both forms of interviews with an outsider perspective that was informed by what I saw transpiring in the classroom (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). During these observations it was important to keep in mind that the phenomena I witnessed were relationally constituted happenings (Nespor, 2006), that is, they were the products of social interactions mediated by each individual's framework of meaning as it pertained to the activity at hand. In this case, I paid specific attention to the relationships and interactions between: the teacher and the content they taught, the students and their engagement with the content, and interactions between the teachers and students. In short, I looked for what the teachers had chosen to teach, how they taught it, and how students participated in the activity.

These observations served three purposes. The first was to inform the formal and informal interviews. The observations were crucial in ascertaining knowledge of particular interest that participants were unwilling to talk about in the interviews (Patton, 2002). Second, the observations helped me to better understand the context and setting. The first-hand exposure in the participants' social settings afforded less reliance on off-hand accounts of how teachers taught their classes (Patton, 2002). Third, the observations served as partial evidence of what actually got taught in classes. These observations also allowed me to draw on personal and experiential knowledge during analysis and interpretation of the data (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Patton, 2002).



As a passive participant (Spradley, 1980), I limited my interaction and influence on the setting as much as was possible. I did this by remaining still and quiet during observations of lessons, and positioned myself off to the side, and away from regular traffic and movement. The passive nature of this observation was important in my development of an outsider's perspective that complemented the insider perspective that I also worked to cultivate (Nespor, 2006). By taking a passive position I was better able to view happenings and dynamics that could have escaped my awareness had I been participating in the activity (Patton, 2002).

During observations I took copious and detailed field notes of the lessons and social interactions. These notes were guided by a number of criteria. First, I attempted to be descriptive of what was happening in a way that was factual and accurate (Patton, 2002). Second, I made coded notations to clarify what parts of the notes were descriptive of movements and speech, and what parts were interpretive in nature (Anderson-Levitt, 2006). Likewise, I coded whether particular speech acts were recorded verbatim or paraphrased. Third, as I took notes, I reflexively interrogated what it was exactly I was taking note of and why my attention had moved in that direction (Nespor, 2006).

A number of foci guided my observations. First, each day I made note of the context. The school, date, times, students, teacher, other adults present, and a description of the teaching space, was recorded each day. Second, the content that was taught to a class was recorded, as was the pertinent features of the class (i.e., required/elective, male/female breakdown, age level, time of day). Third, I noted how the teacher presented and taught specific content and physical activities. During this time, I paid special attention to how the students and teachers interacted and responded to the each other in relation to the activities that were presented. Third, I looked specifically at how 'different' groups of students engaged with the activities. I focused on peer

affiliation, student dispositions, ability, gender, race/ethnicity, evidence of prior experience, and religion. Fourth, I worked to keep as “wide angle” of a lens as was possible in my attempt to capture all happenings pertinent to the study (Spradley, 1980) (The observation guide used in all research visits is included in appendix B).

*Artifact collection.* I collected cultural artifacts as a way to document social and cultural meaning and events (Patton, 2002; Spradley, 1980). Collecting this form of data served a number of purposes. First, the artifacts provided evidence and information of social happenings and cultural meaning that could not be observed (Patton, 2002). For example, this included curriculum maps and lesson plans for past and future lessons, teacher and school websites, district curriculum and websites, equipment orders, guest instructors, attendance of professional development, student hand-outs, course syllabi, curriculum books, and permission slips for off campus lessons. These artifacts provided confirmation and contrast to other data that was collected (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Third, particular artifacts stimulated paths of inquiry (Patton, 2002). For example, one teacher’s exceptional curriculum book served as the basis from which we talked about district policies, state content expectations, teaching colleagues, school administrators, and students’ interests. All artifacts obtained and viewed were given a descriptive outline. Each outline described the nature of the artifact, the information it contains, its relevance to the study, the date, time, and location it was acquired, from whom it was acquired, and any other pertinent information.

#### *Study Process: Data Collection, Management, and Analysis*

I constructed a clear study protocol, data management plan, and data analysis process as a way to ensure organization and productivity while I conducted the study. This included procedures for collecting, analyzing, transcribing, interpreting, and storing data in a manner that

smoothly facilitated each step of the research process. Below, I will cover each of the 16 steps that guided this process, which included; pre-field entry preparations, field-based data collection, and post-field management and analysis leading to the preparation for subsequent research visits. This process is outlined in Table 1.

(1) Before entering the field, I created a semi-structured interview guide and observation protocol. I designed both instruments based on the research questions that guided my inquiry. The interview guide included a variety of open ended questions (and follow up probing questions) that sought to accumulate biographical information, as well as to identify the teachers' perspective on a range of factors related to how they negotiated content decisions. This included questions that addressed how teachers' perceptions of institutional factors (e.g. state and national standards, district physical education administration, school principal, professional development, teaching colleagues, geographical climate, facilities, equipment, and liability), personal factors (e.g. physical activity biography, teacher preparation, philosophy and values, comfort/autonomy/emotions, and social concerns such as obesity), and student factors (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, youth culture, peer dynamics, access to resources, religion, student resistance and desires) impacted these negotiations. The observation protocol required that I identify the physical setting, date, times, people in the setting, and the activities that took place. Also, what content was taught, how the teacher taught it, and how students reacted were of particular concern.

(2) I spent one complete day immersed in the participant's setting, during which I observed multiple lessons. I conducted these observations as a passive participant and was guided by four foci. First, each day I made note of the context. The school, date, times, students, teacher, other adults present, and a description of the teaching space, was recorded each day.

Second, the content taught to a class was recorded, as were the dynamics of the class (i.e., required/elective, male/female breakdown, age level, time of day). Third, I noted how the teacher presented and taught the content. I paid special attention to how the students and teachers interacted and responded to the each other in relation to the activities. Third, I paid specific attention to how ‘different’ groups of students were engaging with the activities. Fourth, I kept as “wide angle” of a lens as was possible to capture all happenings that were pertinent to my study (Spradley, 1980).

(3) Next, I conducted informal interviews. These conversations took place before, during, and after lessons, as well as during any other times where the teacher was free to converse. These conversations were used to match specific research questions with what was being seen and heard in real time, and also allowed space for topics and conversation that originated in the formal interviews to continue.

(4) I updated and adjusted the interview guide based on what I saw and heard during the observations and informal conversations. I paid specific attention to incidents and events that critically informed either a particular research question or factor. Being able to attach specific things that were said or done to specific research questions was extremely useful as it allowed me to add specificity and examples to questions that could have been otherwise generic.

(5) I collected, copied, and (in the case they could not be removed from the setting or could not be obtained) documented all pertinent artifacts. I made mental notes to obtain artifacts as I identified their pertinence to my study, and collected them at the conclusion of observations and informal interviews, and before I conducted the formal interview. Teachers were often time able to provide evidence of a particular event that had happened, or was going to happen, all of which was outside of my time working with that teacher.

(6) I conducted a formal semi-structured interview as the last field-based procedure. While not all formal interviews were conducted at the end of the day (some were conducted before school, during preparation blocks, and lunch) due to teacher responsibilities and obligations, I made every effort to conduct them at the end of the day. The interviews were always conducted in the teacher's private office, an empty conference room, an empty classroom, or equipment room. The interviews were conversational in nature and guided by the previously discussed interview guides. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were digitally recorded.

(7) Once I left the research setting, post-field data work began. My first task was to transcribe all field notes that came from observations and informal interviews. I did this first in order to document any significant information while it was still fresh in my mind. Specifically, I expanded explanations and added detail where it was needed. During this process I was sure to code data if it was: an example of purely descriptive observations, an exact quote of something said, paraphrasing of comments, or interpretive of what was seen or heard.

(8) I transcribed all artifact content. A document was created that covered the nature of the artifact, the information it contained, its relevance to the study, the date, time, and location it was acquired, from whom it was acquired, and all other pertinent information.

(9) I transcribed the formal interview. This was done by playing back the audio recordings using Microsoft Media Player and typing verbatim what was said during the interview. I used codes to identify who said what. All transcription documents were created using Microsoft Word.

(10) Step ten marked the start of data analysis. My data analysis was guided by methods that comply with the principles of grounded theory (Schram, 2006), that is, the interpretations,

themes, and theory that result from this study will be grounded in the process by which data was collected and analyzed (Patton, 2002). In this first step of analysis, I read and re-read all data, including interviews (formal and informal), observations, and artifact transcripts, in order to gain familiarity. This means, I read all the data until I could narrate a detailed story about what I experienced. This story included my ability to recall behaviors and conversations that took place, as well as how all the data sources informed one another.

(11) Next, I coded and categorized all data according to its content and pertinence to the study (Patton, 2002). I employed analytic induction and constant comparison, and continuously sought to identify instances and patterns in the data that were significant to the inquiry (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Patton, 2002). During this process I identified contrasts and congruencies within and between the data, which allowed for the construction of interpretations, as well as facilitated the design of subsequent research visits.

(12) I created initial interpretations from the categorized data. For LeCompte and Schensul (1999), this process is cyclical and “recursive” in nature (p.15). Specifically, as I moved coded pieces of data to inductively constructed categories, I also looked to develop overarching explanations that moved individual pieces of data and categories into mutually interdependent themes (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Themes and categories were refined as I repeated this process throughout all rounds of data collection and until stable themes were created (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This approach provided ample means for me to construct themes and issues that directly related to how and why teachers negotiated content decisions. To ensure accuracy, I employed a number of trustworthiness strategies.

(13) Step thirteen outlines one of the trustworthiness strategies I used in this study; a negative case analysis. I deliberately and continuously searched for data that contradicted or

challenged the categories and themes that I concurrently constructed (LeCompte & Pressile, 1993). Also, as I prepared for subsequent research visits, I took any disconfirming data into account when I constructed interview guides and observation protocols.

(14) Next, I created a journal entry to document reflexive efforts at addressing bias and subjectivity. This process helped me reflect back on what was seen and heard in the research setting while it was still fresh. This was also a time for me to question my ongoing interpretations, insights, ideas, and directions for future inquiry. A developed understanding not only of ‘what’ I knew, but also, ‘how’ I had come to know it was critical in the development of accurate findings (Patton, 2002). Reflection on how I constructed my understanding of a phenomenon was crucial in identification of where and how my bias and subjectivity guided the inquiry in unwarranted directions.

(15) Once all data had been transcribed and worked it was stored. Microsoft Word documents were stored in four places: on my personal computer, university based computer, and two separate external drives. Electronic audio files were only stored on my personal computer. All paper data were stored in plastic file containers at my home.

(16) The first pre-entry step that I took before beginning the next round of data collection with each teacher was to create an interview guide that included three types of questions: questions related to the original research purpose not yet covered, member checking questions that were specific to what was learned from previous visits with the participant, and questions that addressed the negative case analysis conducted.

I wrote a case study summarizing what was found with each teacher at the conclusion of my work with them. This was shared with the participant as a form of member checking. Also, I

conducted a cross-participant analysis once I concluded my work with all the teachers and all case studies were complete.

Table 1: *Steps in the Research Process.*

Step	Description
1-Pre Entry	Create an interview guide and observation protocol based on research questions
2-Field	Spend one complete day in the teaching environment observing lessons
3-Field	Conduct informal interviews/conversations
4-Field	Update and adjust the interview guide based on observations and conversations
5-Field	Collect pertinent artifacts
6-Field	Conduct formal semi-structured interview
7-Post	Transcribe field notes, observations, and informal interviews
8-Post	Transcribe artifact content
9-Post	Transcribe interview
10-Post	Read/re-read all data to gain familiarity
11-Post	Code and categorize all transcribed data
12-Post	Write emerging interpretations of analytical categories in researcher journal
13-Post	Conduct negative case analysis based on disconfirming data
14-Post	Record researcher bias and insights into journal
15-Post	Data storage/back-up
16-Pre Entry	Draft interview guide for next research visit with three types of questions: (1) Original research questions not yet addressed (2) Member checking questions specific to the participant's setting (3) Negative case questions

### *Trustworthiness Strategies*

Qualitative researchers must make concerted efforts to address several trustworthiness criteria, as a way to support their emerging findings. Trustworthiness is a subjective standard that qualitative researchers strive for when trying to demonstrate their findings are accurate, useful, and plausible (Schram, 2006). The degree of trustworthiness that I garner from readers and stakeholders is important for establishing the significance and applicability of my research. I strove to establish trustworthiness in this study by including methods that ensured credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

*Credibility.* Credible research includes findings that are found to be both acceptable and accurate by people intimate to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss six methods by which researchers try and ensure credibility: prolonged engagement,



persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking.

Prolonged engagement requires that I spend ample time in a specific context in order to gain familiarity. Spending five whole days with each teacher in their setting allowed the novelty of my presence to wear off, and provided extensive time to reflect on and critique ongoing interpretations; both of which ensured my ability to develop trusting relationships and provided sufficient opportunities to keep my personal biases in reflexive view. Spending extensive time with the teachers in their schools helped me guard against distorted and inaccurate views of the context. Spending five full days with each of the eight teachers provided ample time to gain a thorough understanding of each context in relation to the focus of my study.

In conjunction with prolonged engagement, I used persistent observation to demonstrate credibility. In this respect, I was able to identify aspects of the context that were “most relevant” to my research questions and theoretical framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.304). I am confident that the detailed explanation of how I conducted field-based classroom observations addressed these demands, and provided insurance against “premature closure” of the inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305).

Next, I triangulated data sources as another method to demonstrate credibility. This process uses multiple data sources to ensure accuracy and consistency. In my study, I compared multiple forms of data from one teacher (i.e. analyzed the consistency of data within emerging categories and themes from the formal interviews, informal interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts collected from one teacher), and also compared the same type of data across different teachers (i.e. analyzed the content of interview transcripts across all eight teachers). By

collecting three forms of data across eight different participants, I provided myself ample opportunity to compare and contrast the data as it was acquired and analyzed.

I also used a peer debriefer as way to add credibility to the study. I regularly met with a peer versed in the theory and method that I employed in order to explore all aspects of my research. This served three functions. First, regular meetings allowed the peer debriefer to critique, question, offer advice, and present alternative explanations to the directions that I pursued in the study. This ensured all my biases and values were interrogated in light of the ongoing collection and analysis of data. Second, the peer debriefer served as an invaluable sounding board to test working interpretations of the data. Presentation of my ongoing interpretations, and the data that supported them, allowed the peer debriefer to make judgments about their accuracy and veracity. Third, the peer debriefer aided my occasional need to clear out thoughts or emotions that were “clouding good judgment” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.308). Personal thoughts and feelings prevented me from moving forward in conducting particular aspects of the inquiry. In these instances, the peer debriefer took what I had shared and helped me resituate the research and provided invaluable perspective.

I utilized negative case analysis as another method to establish credibility. During this process I deliberately and continuously searched for data that contradicted or challenged the categories and themes that I constructed concurrently (LeCompte & Pressile, 1993). This process added strength and detail to themes, and ensured that alternative possibilities had been exhausted when I constructed more global interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Member checking is the last and most crucial method that I employed in my efforts to establish credibility. The interpretations that I developed were presented to the very teachers with whom I co-constructed them. This took place in two different ways. First, I tested my developing

interpretations by including member-checking questions in the interview guides that were used in subsequent rounds of data collection. This provided the participants with opportunities to critique and comment on my efforts to articulate the meaning based constructions created between us. Second, the participants received a copy of their case study. My use of member checks adds trustworthiness to the study, in its consideration of the participant's views regarding the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the findings. While I am bound to 'consider' the products of these checks, I was not ultimately "bound to honor" them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.315). As the researcher I did not seek to establish and report perfect consensus, instead, I worked to establish a trustworthy account of a social phenomena (Patton, 2002). Member checking, albeit the importance it holds, is only one part of establishing trustworthiness. Furthermore, as the researcher I am ultimately the primary constructor of these interpretations, and responsible for the products of this inquiry.

*Transferability.* I strove towards establishing transferability as a second criterion of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). I attempted to make my findings as applicable to other contexts as possible by presenting a "thick description" of them in my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I did this by providing a thorough description of what was unique to particular research sites, and at the same time disclosed what was common among all of them. This was done to provide interested parties with the information needed to determine how readily the knowledge and theories presented in my study could inform their own context. As such, it needs to be noted that establishing transferability is not solely my responsibility; rather, it is ultimately in the hands of readers to make their own judgments as to how transferable the research findings are to their own contexts.

*Confirmability.* I worked toward establishing conformability as the third criterion of trustworthiness. The confirmability of a research study lies in the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the findings are the result of the research process, and not *solely* that of the researcher's biases and perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). I strove towards confirmability through three methods. First, I kept a researcher journal to document reflections and monitor affects of my own subjectivity that threatened to contaminate my efforts as they pertained to the research questions, theoretical framework, and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Entries into this journal were made each day of the study. Second, this journal combined with my peer debriefer meetings provides my committee with a record of how the study progressed. Third, the way I stored the raw data and categorized data provides another way for interested parties to confirm that the findings are based on my original research.

#### *Researcher Perspectives*

Below, I cover two crucial aspects to conducting research with human participants. The first covers ethical considerations unique to qualitative research. The second concerns the role of my own subjectivity, dispositions, and perspectives as they related specifically to this study.

*Ethical considerations of research.* Qualitative researchers are bound by unique ethical considerations because a significant amount of intimate time is spent with study participants. As such, we are obliged to consider our own unique set of ethical issues and dilemmas, and to consult established standards for guidance (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). This includes considering ethical issues that may exist within each step of the research process, from study design, to obtaining informed consent, to data collection, to data analysis, and writing for publication (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Due to the interpersonal nature of the work, the amount of time spent in close proximity to the participants in their social settings, and the more

intrapersonal nature of the topics of inquiry, researchers employing qualitative methodologies must consider how they establish levels of commitment and address the concerns of various stakeholders (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Particular to education, Strike (2006) notes three broad ethical obligations researchers have to uphold; to focus efforts on individual and social betterment, to protect the participants, and to maintain the integrity of research and the research community.

Before the study began, I gained permission from two sources. First, I secured permission to conduct the research from the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board. (See appendix C.) Second, I gained permission from each teacher, and their school's administration. I obtained permission from each teacher by thoroughly informing them of each and every aspect of the research study, including, the general focus of the study, the methods to be used, the specifics of how confidentiality was and will be maintained for both them and their context, the voluntary nature of participation, and any foreseen benefits and risk. At the conclusion of this briefing, a signed informed consent was collected and stored. I also provided a blank copy to each participant for his or her records. I also had a conversation with each school's principal thoroughly informing them of each and every aspect of the research study.

When conducting an inquiry, researchers must take particular steps to mitigate foreseen risk, and take special care when they identify unforeseen risk(s). Throughout the collection, analysis, and writing phases, I stripped sensitive and identifiable features. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants and settings pertinent to the study (i.e. current and former schools, as well as names of participants, colleagues, former teachers, and students). Any atypical or identifiable demographic data was augmented and/or rounded to the nearest 10%. None of the information or data collected was, or will be, used against the teacher. Specifically, colleagues,

department chairs, and administrators did not, and will not, have access to any data or information. Questions from these stakeholders that pertained to the study were answered with brief non-sensitive statements; that I was a PhD student interested in learning about the participants' perspective on curriculum, and I was conducting this work for a school project. During data collection, I repeatedly omitted information I deemed as harmful to the participant or their setting. I did not report sensitive instances to the appropriate personnel because I did not witness or hear of any that warranted such action.

During the study it was important for me to acknowledge the contributions made by the participant. I asked them to choose their pseudonyms, included a variety of member checking measures to ensure the stories I tell moving forward are accurate, and left open the possibility for future collaboration. At the conclusion of the study, I provided a small token of appreciation, in the form of a card or written statement thanking them for sharing their time and insights, and acknowledged that the care and effort they took to help with this study will undoubtedly benefit the field of physical education.

Protecting data was one of my primary concerns throughout the study. All data is kept in four places: a password protected home computer, two flash-drives, a password protected office computer, and in a locked file cabinet in the university advisor's locked office. I shredded all written field notes once electronic Microsoft Word files were created. Audio recordings are only kept on my password-protected home computer. Paper copies of transcripts are kept at the researcher's residence or in a locked file cabinet in the university advisor's locked office. At the conclusion of the study, I will destroy all paper documents. Electronic files will be kept for three additional years and then destroyed.

My vigilance when undertaking this study leaves me confident that my study will provide insights beneficial to the field of physical education and upheld the integrity of the research community, all while protecting the participants and stakeholders.

*Researcher Subjectivity.*

If there is a common thread to the general postmodern current, it is a radical critique of monological consciousness—variously referred to as the myth of the given...[which] basically means not dialogical, not intersubjective, not contextual, not constructivist, not understanding the constitutive nature of cultural backgrounds... (Wilber, 2006, p.176)

My choice to quote Ken Wilber to begin this section is instructive of both the important role that he has played in my development as a scholar, as well as providing an important frame of this section: that we are all subjects affected by living in social reality. Disclosing how my own subjectivity has been affected by living in various social spaces was important to consider throughout this study. These experiences have indubitably impacted my reasons for pursuing this study, and I'm sure influenced what I 'saw' and 'heard' in the field. Several social spaces of particular concern are my childhood physical activity experiences, Tennis and Life camps, my time teaching elementary school physical education, and graduate school.

I grew up very active. During my childhood and early adolescence I played competitive baseball, basketball, football, soccer, tennis, swimming, and hockey. I was also active in other ways. I regularly went bowling, in-line skating, cycling, and camping as a boy scout. I loved being active, and, in particular, was captivated by competitive sports of all kinds at an early age. These formal experiences were supported by non-organized activities experienced at the local park across the street. Here a lot of kickball, tag, capture the flag, roofball and games we designed ourselves were played under the supervision of "Parkies" throughout the summer. I had

no interest or opportunities to dance. Later, I played both tennis competitively in high school and college. Despite the increased narrowing of focus to only tennis, I still regularly went camping, played pick up soccer, hockey, and touch football. I was also an avid consumer of sports media. I did not come from an overly privileged background, but my parents saw these experiences as being worthwhile and important enough for my family to allocate my physical activity participation considerable resources.

In college, I decided to major in kinesiology but really did not know what I would do with the degree after graduation. All I knew was I liked sports, and this was the appropriate major. While in college, I was an instructor at the Tennis and Life camps at Gustavus Adolphus College. This camp provided expert tennis instruction to juniors and adults of all ability levels, as well as providing camps for families. Aside from its primary focus on tennis, the camp sought to blend in social functions, framed to teach a variety of ‘life lessons’ heavily informed by Judeo-Christian traditions. It was here that I learned how to teach, met my future cooperating teacher (who holds a PhD in Physical Education), and began scholarly reading. It was also here that I discovered a talent and desire for teaching.

After graduation, I taught two years of elementary school physical education in Charlotte, NC at an urban, culturally diverse, Title I school. Three quarters of the students were African American and received free or reduced meals. During my first year, I struggled to build rapport with many of my students, in particular boys in the upper grade levels. On the advice of my cooperating teacher, I worked hard to get to know and cultivate relationships with my students. Some weeks of gains made with ‘tougher’ classes and students, were followed by particularly challenging days and weeks. I experimented with a variety of instructional strategies, protocol



adjustments, and disciplinary measures. None seemed to have a lasting impact. I saw myself as a good teacher, a view fed by receiving three staff voted awards in two years.

I always felt, however, that something was missing from my pedagogy. Questions that began to surface regularly were: Why don't African American boys like juggling multi-colored florescent scarves? Why is it that the only thing they want to do is play basketball? Why don't any of my students like doing the Virginia Reel? Furthermore, as I continued to read books on religion and philosophy, I began questioning the value of my work and profession. A nagging sense festered...there has to be more to teaching physical education.

These questions, and a personal desire to pursue a PhD, brought me back to graduate school. No answers came initially, and insecurities of my life's work became further compounded when I was introduced to critical social theory and postmodern scholarship. It was also during this time I began trying to make specific connections between the political projects that these schools of thought offered with what was going in physical education. I came across various models for instructing students and framing curriculum that eased this internal tension, but it still did not feel like enough. I still could not get past the idea that our primary content area was sport and that sport has historically and currently functions as a social opiate. Coming to this realization was a hard pill to swallow given that I spent much of my life growing up with and enjoying sport. I did not have any clue 'what' else we could teach. Transferring to Wayne State, however, made seeing a way forward possible.

Here, I was exposed to and ran with my advisor's Deweyan idea of changing what we teach by connecting curriculum with activities children find "cool." I find it appropriate that my largest blind-spot when teaching has become my primary research focus. I, however, find it disconcerting that it took four years of study to identify this shortcoming. While the idea of

changing what we teach was an easy epiphany to integrate intellectually, changing my own dispositions, tastes, comforts, and knowledge base has been challenging, discomforting, and humbling. It was this comfort, my dominant tastes, my *habitus*, that kept me from being able to see that my kids did like to dance (hip hop) and they did like other forms of activity. They just did not always like what I offered in the form of physical activity. I fully suspect that my exposure to sport early and often heavily informed and hampered my ability to see beyond it, and that a variety of non-sport content could indeed serve as 'legitimate' curriculum. This missed opportunity to enrich the lives of my former students pricks at me often.

As I conducted this study I needed to be careful to not judge those who were like me. That is, those who taught only what they are comfortable with, as it was not long ago that I was in a very similar situation. Furthermore, while I was able to draw on my own experiences as insights into why I did and did not teach new and different content, it was important to keep my perspective as open as possible in order to catch other and different factors that kept teachers from teaching content that they were not comfortable or familiar with, as some were very different from my own. My personal desire for content to become more diverse, culturally relevant, pro-social, and in line with contemporary youth physical culture could not interfere with the research inquiry, which was to better understand, not judge, this phenomena.

### *Summary*

The aim of this study was to examine how secondary school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions. Since this research was focused on how teachers actively constructed decisions pertaining to a specific set of social and cultural phenomena, I approached the study from an interpretive perspective. Eight teachers were visited for full-day data collection sessions, on five occasions, across seven months. Each visit included passive participant

observations, informal and formal interviews, and artifact collection. I managed and treated all data according to strict ethical standards. I employed a variety of trustworthiness strategies as I strove towards authenticity and transferability. My own subjectivity and perspectives on physicality and human movement, despite my reflexive and vigilant efforts, surely impacted this study, but not in a way the peer debriefer or I could identify as detrimental. The findings of this study provides valuable insight as to why these teachers made decisions regarding particular content, and why sport continued to dominate the curriculum, despite the diverse expansion of contemporary physical culture.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions during curriculum construction. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do teachers' personal characteristics (e.g. physical activity biographies and expertise, undergraduate experience, graduate work, gender, emotions, values, beliefs, general dispositions) influence their thinking and decisions about selecting particular physical activities for their middle school physical education curriculum?
2. How do the institutional structures (e.g. national standards, state standards, district curriculum, school ethos, collegial culture) that affect teachers' work, influence their thinking and decisions about selecting particular physical activities for their middle school physical education curriculum?
3. How do teachers' perceptions of their students (e.g. social class, gender, race/ethnicity, ability, peer affiliations, interests) inform their thinking and decisions about selecting particular physical activities for their middle school physical education curriculum?

The main finding from this study revealed that the complex interplay of teachers' personal, institutional, and student factors, and the teachers' consideration of these factors, coalesced in ways that resulted in the perpetuation of competitive sport as the dominant content of their curricula. By sport I am referring to activities that by design have clearly defined zero-sum outcomes ("winners" and "losers") and pit one opponent/team against another opponent/team in a competitive game or contest. These can include invasion games (e.g. soccer,

football, hockey, basketball, rugby, etc.), target games (e.g. golf), striking and fielding games (e.g. softball and baseball), and net/wall games (e.g. tennis, volleyball, badminton, etc.). (Following here after any references to ‘sport’ refers to such games.) These activities sit in contrast to other genres of content such as outdoor pursuits (e.g. camping, hiking, rock wall climbing, etc.), adventure initiatives, and noncompetitive lifetime oriented leisure and fitness activities (e.g. running, walking, cycling, swimming, Yoga, Pilates, hip hop dance, etc.) where the inherent nature of the activity is *not* grounded in zero-sum competition, but rather meaning and benefits are derived from the participation and non-competitive outcomes (for example, resistance/weight training for stress reduction and muscular strength development). All eight teachers shared physical activity biographies that were heavily grounded in competitive sport, from which the culture at their respective schools demonstrated to be a good fit. Seven of the teachers relied heavily on the values, knowledge, and skill they had gained from their extensive experience with competitive sport when choosing content for their curricula. While some of these teachers expressed and demonstrated a desire to teach non-sport physical activities, they felt their sport-dominant curricular and pedagogical expertise did not translate well to teaching non-sport physical activities, and struggled to work through a range of perceived barriers. As a result, they sometimes abandoned these efforts and moved back to their sport-dominant curricular safe zone. In other instances, teachers were able to weather resistance and navigate obstacles well enough to make these new activities a regular part of their physical education programs. Each teacher emphasized that the institutional culture of their schools privileged sport. The combined effects of administrators, classroom colleagues, fellow physical education teachers, facilities, equipment, and resources made teaching many non-sport physical activities especially challenging, and at the same time, made teaching sport-dominant curriculum

particularly easy and comfortable. In addition to a similar institutional workplace culture and analogous sport-dominant curricular knowledge and skill sets, student resistance was another striking reason the teachers shared for not teaching specific non-sport physical activities. They explained that not feeling comfortable or competent enough to perform and/or teach specific non-sport physical activities made them fearful of student resistance, in particular, from vocal, aggressive, and sport minded males, who had previously made teaching non-sport and non-competitive activities especially difficult.

### *Chapter Organization*

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section includes a series of case studies, one for each teacher that explains where they taught and the physical activities they included in their curriculum. The purpose of these studies is to provide a vivid picture of these teachers and their programs, focusing especially on *what* content each teacher included in their curriculum. These case studies are further divided into three groups. The first group includes case studies for Annette, Bill, and Josh, who included only competitive sport content in their curricula. The second group division includes case studies for Ken, Jill, Susan, and Tracy who included and taught non-sport physical activities in addition to the sports that dominated their curricula. The third group describes Joe, who had abandoned teaching sport altogether.

The second section includes a series of three key thematic findings that emerged from my cross case analysis. The thematic findings move from describing *what* each teacher taught to explaining *why* they decided to include and exclude specific physical activities. The first theme details how seven of the teachers' sport-dominant physical activity biographies strongly informed their emotional affinity and desire to include a large amount of sport in their curricula, and at the same time, made it difficult to include non-sport physical activity. The second theme

explains how the institutional culture in which each teacher was immersed functioned to privilege sport-dominant curricula. The third theme highlights the powerful role that students, especially aggressive, vocal, and sport minded male students, played in a teacher's willingness to include non-sport physical activity in their curriculum.

### *Section One: Case Studies*

The following series of case studies provide the reader with pertinent information about each teacher, their school and surrounding community, and their curriculum. By the end of each case study the reader should have a significant and clear sense of each teacher's background, the context in which they worked, the manner in which they taught physical education, as well as the specific content each teacher included in their curriculum. These studies are grouped according to the sport specific content of teachers' chosen curricula. The first set includes case studies for Annette, Bill, and Josh, who included only competitive sport content in their curricula. The second group includes case studies for Ken, Jill, Susan, and Tracy who included and taught some non-sport physical activities in addition to the sport content that dominated their curricula. The third unit includes a case study for Joe, who included no sport content in his curriculum. This section is concluded with a summary of the main findings from the case studies.

#### *Exclusively-Sport Teachers (Annette, Bill, and Josh)*

*Annette: Exclusively-sport teacher.* The school Annette taught at was set in a metro area with a population of roughly 110,000. The city had multiple colleges and/or universities located within the city or nearby. The city also maintained and staffed parks, pools, golf courses, and organized a variety of youth and adult physical activity and athletics programs. The school housed about 500 students, had a near 50/50 gender balance, and had considerable cultural diversity. Thirty percent of the students identified as Caucasian, 30% as African American, 10%

percent as Hispanic, 10% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 10% as mixed ethnicity. Roughly 30% of the students received free and reduced meals, and another 10% received reduced meals. Annette characterized her school as being one of the “lower-class” schools set in an “affluent area.” She said, “It really is a nicer area to live, but we get students from areas that are not as well off.” Annette explained that it was “odd” to see and hear about some of the things that would happen at her school, specifically with disruptive and violent student behavior. She said, “it’s funny, we really have a good school, but you hear about kids doing things and you’re like...what?...that is what I would expect to see or hear at a school in a less well off area...an urban area.”

Annette’s school had considerable facilities. The school had two gymnasias, a pool, two outside tennis courts, outside basketball courts on a cement surface, and a large field with backstops, soccer goals, and lacrosse goals. There was also a wooded trail surrounding the school. The school was well equipped for teaching all the sports in Annette’s curriculum. There were Fitballs, mats, instructional posters, and resistance bands for strength development exercises located in the equipment closet. The main gymnasium, where Annette often taught, was equipped with a sound system, on which she frequently played contemporary music. The school had one other physical education teacher whose primary responsibility was teaching health. Physical education at this school was required in sixth grade for one semester, and was an elective in seventh and eighth grade. Annette’s equipment and facilities, almost perfectly mirrored her sport-dominant curricular safe zone. In all, Annette felt she had considerable freedom to make content decisions “with-in” her school context, with one significant exception. Annette felt compelled to teach a significant amount of swimming because the school’s principal and surrounding community fought to keep the pools open. Annette explained, “Its like, the



community and principals put up a fight to keep them [the swimming pools] open, so I feel like, I need to be teaching much more than normal in order to justify that decision, so we do it all year.”

Annette is a female Caucasian, held a Masters degree in adapted physical education, and was in her tenth year of teaching physical education at this middle school. Annette described herself as “very busy” which was evidenced by her taking on multiple responsibilities. In addition to teaching full time, Annette was also the athletic director, an assistant basketball coach at a local high school, filled in as an administrator when the principal and vice principal were off-site, and was pursuing a PhD in educational administration. Annette had a significant biography with sports as a competitive athlete. She talked fondly of her sporting experiences growing up, especially her time as varsity basketball, soccer, and volleyball player in high school. This biography heavily informed her decision to become a physical education teacher, which allowed her to enter a field where she would be able to combine her knowledge and passion for sports and work with kids.

More recently Annette began playing golf and participated regularly in Crossfit workouts. Crossfit ([www.crossfit.com](http://www.crossfit.com)) utilizes a variety of sprinting, gymnastics, and weightlifting activities during short, yet highly competitive workouts. Participants are expected to push and exceed previous accomplishments, and are strongly encouraged to participate in competitive events such as the “Crossfit games.” A typical Crossfit workout session includes a warm-up, skill development session, and a high intensity workout. Both golf and Crossfit informed Annette’s content decisions, as both have found their way into her curriculum. Crossfit, in particular, emerged as an activity with which she had developed a strong emotional connection. Annette highlighted a string of injuries from playing sport that had left her frustrated and without a

vigorous physical activity to “get that competitive urge out.” She identified Crossfit as “fulfilling” that need and desire.

Annette’s sport background heavily informed her content negotiations, and is evidenced by the dominant presence of sport in her curriculum. The district had no prescribed set of content that was to be taught, and Annette disclosed that her curriculum had “evolved over time.” She explained, “I use to do all team sports and swimming, and over the years I have added and taken things out...now we do lots of different sports and swimming.” Annette taught one-week (sometimes two week) units. The length and content of each unit was evidenced by a yearlong weekly schedule. This schedule did not differ between the required sixth grade classes and the elective seventh and eighth grade classes. The activities included in her schedule were: basketball, softball, kickball, volleyball, flag football, disc golf, speedball, team handball, pickleball, tennis, badminton, swimming, floor hockey, rugby, golf, soccer, and capture the flag. Annette noted that the schedule was “subject to change” depending on wider school and contextual issues that arose (snow days, weather, testing, etc.). While Annette said she taught “fitness activities,” the content and manner in which they were taught was more akin to a warm-up in preparation for sport participation. This portion of the class never lasted longer than ten minutes, and the activities she included were directly from Crossfit and her previous sport experiences.

Physical education at Annette’s school met every day for 50 minutes, and Annette’s typical weekly schedule was as follows: Monday and Tuesday included a warm-up and was followed by “choice time,” Wednesday and Friday were sport days, and Thursday was for swimming. Each class (except swimming days) began with a “warm-up.” First, students walked back and forth between the basketball sidelines in the main gymnasium. Then Annette instructed

students to jog around the perimeter of the gym for no more than five minutes. This was followed by a series of “line drills” where students jogged, skipped, grapevined, cartwheeled, bear-walked, crab-walked, or “spidermaned” back and forth between the basketball sidelines. The warm-up finished with a series of static stretches led by Annette. During the remainder of Mondays and Tuesdays individual students chose to participate in any activity they desired. This is best described as contained “free play.” In my observations, students were not engaged in structured or self-organized game play, but were scattered everywhere, and often chose to shoot baskets, bump volleyballs, play catch with footballs, kick around a soccer ball, or hit a tennis ball to each other. Some students stood around and talked with one another, others sat on the bleachers, and some danced to the music playing in the background. Wednesdays and Fridays were sport days. On sport days, students again warmed-up. This was followed by instruction on the rules and procedures of how to play a particular sport or game. After instruction, and for the remainder of class, students engaged in small-sided game play in a particular sport or game, and rotated to play different opponents every few minutes. Thursdays were for swimming. Annette split the pool in half. Students she had deemed as “competent” had “free swim” in the deep end, while she instructed beginners on basic strokes in the shallow end. Annette claimed to play water polo or have relay races if she felt students were “competent” or “behaved” enough. It was not uncommon for me to see one third to one half of the students sitting on the sideline on swimming days.

Occasionally, Annette had PETE majors from a local university visit for practicum teaching experiences. The activities the students taught, that Annette did not already teach herself, included; line dance (done with contemporary music), Tae Bo, and Yoga. Instead of helping Annette see the value in teaching this content, these experiences reinforced her desire to

not teach these activities and other closely related activities as part of her regular curriculum. She said, “Watching them [the PETE majors] struggle and the students not be into it, makes me think, ‘why would I want to do those things...or things like hip hop dance or Pilates?’” All together, Annette worked in a school that was well suited for her expertise and desires to teach sport.

*Bill: Exclusive-sport teacher.* The school Bill taught at was set in a metro area with a population of roughly 110,000. Colleges and/or universities were located within the city or nearby. The city also maintained and staffed parks, pools, golf courses, and organized a variety of youth and adult physical activity and athletics programs. The school housed about 700 students, had a near even gender balance, and had considerable cultural diversity. Sixty percent of students identified as Caucasian, 15% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 15% as African American, 5% as Hispanic, and 5% as other. Bill identified his school as being “a middle-class school.” Only 15% of students received free and reduced meals, and the school played classical music during passing time (something well received and supported by the school’s parents). Bill’s school also had considerable facilities. The school had two gymnasias, a large field with a softball/baseball backstop, and a swimming pool. The downstairs gymnasium formerly housed a swimming pool, but was converted when a new pool was built. There were three equipment rooms well equipped to teach all the sports Bill included in his curriculum. There were also jump ropes, aerobic steps, and VHS tapes on how to teach various forms of hip hop dance. Bill viewed his facilities and equipment as ideal, as he felt he was “not wanting for anything.” He enthused,

I really am blessed here, we have two gyms, I have all the sports stuff I need, a lot of it is new...the old sports stuff is not really expensive and is easily replaceable with PTO money...I have a pool, a large field...I couldn’t ask for or want anything else.

Alice was Bill's one and only teaching colleague, with whom he had worked for roughly two decades.

Bill is a male Caucasian in his twenty-fifth year of teaching physical education at the middle school level. He held a Masters degree in exercise science, and had long been a track and field coach in the district. Bill noted it was his "passion for coaching" that led him to decide to become a physical education major in college. He explained switching his major during his undergraduate experience,

I was an administration major. In college I started coaching track, and really liked it. I realized I couldn't coach and do admin, so I switched my major to PE because I liked and really knew sports and that seemed to be the most logical fit.

Bill's justified "fit" with physical education was based in his biography with sports, and his desire to reproduce his positive coaching experiences in a full-time career. In fact, many of the same sports he experienced growing up (basketball, baseball, football, track and field) held a significant amount of congruence with the content offered in his classes. Bill was unabashed about the amount of sport he taught in physical education, as he felt it was the PE teacher's job to teach and expose students to sports, to identify talented students, and to encourage them to join competitive teams. Bill's adulthood physical activity included golf, using an elliptical machine, and lifting weights.

Bill's teaching program followed no set district or school curriculum, and contained exclusively sports and swimming. Physical education at this school was required in sixth grade for one semester, and was an elective in seventh and eighth grade. Content included in the sixth grade curriculum was: floor hockey, soccer, swimming, dodgeball, basketball, volleyball, softball, football, track and field, football, fencing, and lacrosse. Content in the seventh and

eighth grade curricula was: football, basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, soccer, fencing, team handball, swimming, lacrosse, Ultimate Frisbee, dodgeball, disc golf, softball, kickball, speedball, pickleball, and badminton. Bill could not produce a curriculum map or lesson plans, and instead pointed to memory, his experience, and the equipment closets as the main source of evidence for the activities he included in his curriculum.

While no lifetime fitness content was taught (e.g. walking/jogging/running, strength training, Pilates, Yoga, etc.), Bill required students to fill out and complete a “fitness log” each quarter. During this time students needed to accumulate 30 minutes of physical activity three times per week for four weeks, and parents needed to sign off affirming their child had accumulated the required amount of activity. Also, near the parent’s section was a line for a coach’s signature. Bill noted that “if a kid plays a sport they don’t need to have a log filled out cause’ they meet the time requirement.”

Most units began with Bill and Alice combining their classes and allowing students to “choose” between two different predetermined sports. If the groups became too one-sided the “choices” were manipulated in order to get a more balanced student distribution. New class rosters were then taken, and students then spent the next two weeks engaged in game play of the chosen sport. Sometimes units would be “extended” if students expressed a strong desire to continue with a sport. While Bill included swimming in his discussion of the content he taught, it was later learned that, in fact, he did not teach any swimming, rather it was Alice who taught this activity when students were presented with the choice. Despite not being familiar with the Sport Education model (Sport Ed), Bill utilized a blind draft method of deciding teams. He picked two to four captains to go with him to the gym hallway. There they picked names out of a hat to create teams. Shuffling of names took place until Bill and all the captains agreed teams were fair.

The remainder of lessons and units consisted of student facilitated game play with minimal teacher direction or interaction. The only exception was Bill rotating team match-ups every five to ten minutes. The majority of students were actively engaged throughout the class time. However, verbal arguments frequently broke out between students, and the more aggressive and physically larger student often won out. In each class it was rather easy to identify the more aggressive and dominant males, as they were most often in the center of such confrontations, but also appeared to instigate the arguments. At times rather unsafe and outright dangerous acts took place (e.g. students swinging and throwing hockey sticks above the waist at other students) that went unaddressed by Bill. Classes ended with students being instructed to return equipment and to change clothing in the locker room.

Over time I noticed that the elective seventh and eighth grade classes were overwhelmingly occupied by male students. Bill discussed a number of reasons for the predominance of males in these elective classes. He felt that it was not that girls did not want to take PE, but that their parents made them take foreign language, music, and art instead, and that there simply was not enough room for another elective. This contrasted with why he felt there were so many boys in his classes, which he attributed to the students' own desires and teachers counseling boys into PE.

*Josh: Exclusively-sport teacher.* The school Josh taught at was set in a metro area with a population of roughly 110,000. There were multiple colleges and universities located in the metro area. The city also maintained and staffed parks, pools, golf courses, and organized a variety of youth and adult physical activity and athletics programs. The school housed about 800 students, had a near even gender balance, and had considerable cultural diversity. Sixty percent of students identified as Caucasian, 15% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 15% as African American,

5% as Hispanic, and 5% as mixed ethnicity or other. Josh identified his school as being “one of the better-off schools in the area.” Seventeen percent of students received free and reduced meals, just slightly above the state average.

Josh’s school had one large gymnasium, a smaller auxiliary room, a pool, three tennis courts, and a large field with backstops for baseball/softball and soccer goals. The school was well equipped for teaching all the sports included in Josh’s curriculum, which included a set of eight ping-pong tables. Equipment present that Josh excused not using included racquets and balls for tennis and badminton as well as golf clubs, regular golf balls, artificial golf balls and artificial green surfaces used for golf.

Josh had one other female colleague who taught at the school part time. He noted that she only taught a few sections of physical education, and that her main responsibility was teaching health classes. Josh generally used derogatory language when talking about this colleague.

Josh was in his twenty-fourth year of teaching. He spent his first 10 years at the elementary level, and the last 14 years at the same middle school. The jump was motivated by “the elementary grind...it just got to be too much.” Josh became a PE teacher because he liked sports and coaching children. Josh grew up locally, and had been involved with sports his whole life. He played competitive baseball and football growing up and in high school, competitive baseball in college and often discussed his accolades. He coached baseball and football for the majority of his teaching career and only recently gave it up so he could follow his son’s sporting experiences, which he now lived “vicariously through,” as he did not actively participate in any sports or physical activity due to a series of physical ailments developed from his previous sport experiences.



Josh and I talked at length about his biography as an elite and competitive athlete. He often talked about these experiences in emotionally positive ways, and was upfront in how much he “missed playing.” Baseball, in particular, was the sport Josh missed playing the most, and demonstrated to be his passion. His office contained plenty of baseball paraphernalia, and he regularly wore clothing from various teams with which he had been affiliated. Josh was quick to share his experiences coaching a local high school baseball team, as well as the private business he ran which was focused on developing the skills and talents of local youth baseball players.

Josh noted that there was no required district curriculum, and that he had complete autonomy to teach the content he wanted. He mentioned that he did not keep a curriculum map per se, but that he had been teaching for so long that he “just knew” the activities he would teach to his students. This is how he responded when I asked about his curriculum map, “curriculum map? Nope, all right here [points at head]...I can tell you right now what I do and when I do it.” Further and repeated discussion revealed that Josh included the following physical activities in his curriculum: basketball, soccer, volleyball, floor hockey, kickball, dodgeball, ragball, softball, speedball, swimming, capture the flag, ping-pong, and team handball. Josh noted that if students in seventh and eighth grade take PE all four quarters they could potentially get “three to four weeks of most sports” because he sought to “repeat and touch on each sport each quarter when possible.”

Physical education at Josh’s school was required for a semester in sixth grade and was an elective by quarter in seventh and eighth grade. Josh taught units that lasted roughly two weeks, and had a set class routine. First, he took students through a daily “work-out” that lasted no longer than ten minutes. This included a series of running laps and other physical activities. In between laps students were given a specific number of push-ups, partner sit-ups, mountain-

climbers, rope jumps or line jumps, and other core development activities to perform. The “work-out” was completed with a series of static stretches. Josh noted this was the same workout he had facilitated with his baseball teams throughout the years. Next, the workout was followed by game play in a particular sport. Each unit lasted four to five lessons and started with a series of sport skill development drills that were quickly followed by game play. Games were small sided or large sided, which depended on class size. Games were often facilitated in a way where “winners stay, losers sit, and the next team waiting gets to challenge.” Like Bill, Josh’s elective seventh and eighth grade classes were populated overwhelmingly by male students. Also like Bill, Josh felt girls were both forced and more interested in taking electives other than physical education. Josh felt girls were less “assertive,” and so were not interested in taking physical education because all the sports he taught required and rewarded more assertive and sport-dominant dispositions and skill sets.

*Mostly-Sport Teachers (Ken, Jill, Tracy, and Susan)*

*Ken: Mostly-sport teacher.* The school Ken taught at was located in a suburban city with a population of roughly 10,000 people. The city maintained and staffed parks, pools, golf courses, and organized a variety of youth and adult physical activity and athletics programs. This city’s boundaries bumped up to neighboring suburban areas on all sides. The school building Ken taught at had housed Grades 6, 7 and 8 in previous years, but the district recently underwent a significant amount of restructuring, which resulted in Ken’s current school becoming an upper elementary building that housed Grades 5 and 6. The school accommodated 300 students and had a near 50/50 gender balance. The school was considerably diverse; 65% of students identified as Caucasian and 30% as African American. Also, Ken noted “significant religious diversity” at the school, evidenced by his account (and my observations) of girls wearing hijabs

as a sign of their families' connections to Islam. Ken also described his school as "typical middle class" and "more well off than some," which was evidenced by comparatively low free and reduced lunch numbers (roughly 10% compared to the state average of 14%).

The school Ken taught at had a considerable amount of facilities. There was a large gymnasium with an electronic divider. Behind the school was a rubber track, surrounding a large field that was lined and had goals for football. An adjacent field was also lined and had goals for soccer. Further away was a large softball/baseball diamond. Ken's equipment room was well stocked for the sports he included in his curriculum, and also had equipment for strength development activities. There were resistance tubes, medicine balls, agility ladders, and a pulley system mounted to the gym walls. Some of this equipment came from the district's physical education coordinator, and their effort to provide teachers with equipment, training, and curricular resources to teach a specific system of strength and flexibility exercises. The school year was split into trimesters. Students in sixth grade were required to take physical education every other day over the span of two trimesters, which roughly equaled one trimester. Due to district restructuring, Ken had a new teaching partner (Frank) over the past year, and he regularly compared working with Frank to working alongside the partner he had the prior year, Jill.

Ken is a Caucasian male, and was in his twenty-third year of teaching, but only his second year of teaching physical education. He did his initial teacher certification in elementary education and has certification in both special education, physical education, and a Masters degree in athletic administration. In addition to his position as a full time physical education teacher, Ken was also an assistant basketball coach at a local high school. He was motivated to become a PE teacher partly because of his coaching experience, partly because he was not happy in his former current capacity as a classroom teacher, partly because of his own values

concerning an active lifestyle, and partly because he enjoyed his limited experience teaching physical education as a substitute teacher, whenever the regular PE teacher was absent. Ken demonstrated an extensive sport background with many of the same sports that were in his curriculum (basketball, football, and baseball, specifically). Ken recounted being a very active child growing up, and regardless of the content that was taught, Ken enjoyed his experiences in physical education from elementary through high school. More recently Ken discussed cycling, lifting weights, Yoga, and running as the physical activities he engaged with on a regular basis.

In the previous year Ken taught a sport-dominant curriculum. The activities included on Ken's curriculum map were: ultimate Frisbee, disc golf, softball, air force football, soccer fitness activities, basketball, badminton, floor hockey, volleyball, pickleball, wiffle ball, lacrosse, and handball. In showing me his curriculum map from the year he worked with Jill, Ken highlighted that the main differences were that adventure initiatives, Yoga, and dance were all removed. When I asked Ken about his district's curriculum (that was posted on-line) he explained he was unaware they had one, that the district physical education coordinator had never discussed it, and that no-one had been out to see if he had been following it or not.

Ken's physical education classes lasted 50 minutes. He ran five-day units, which took two school weeks to complete. Students sat in rows to begin each class. Then, Ken led the students through a series of "warm-up" exercises that lasted roughly five to seven minutes. Activities included a variety of push-ups, and core/abdominal development activities. Ken often indicated ways to make these activities harder and easier, so students could adapt the activity to their level of strength or ability. Also included in the warm-up was some form of cardiovascular activity, often jogging around the track or the gymnasium for a set period of time. These activities were taken from Ken's experience coaching and from the aforementioned strength

development system. Next was the sport component of the lesson, which usually included a brief skill development activity, followed by game play. During game play many elements of the Sport Education model were present. Students were put into intact and teacher decided teams for the duration of the unit. Scores were kept and posted in the gym, and there were non-playing roles performed by students such as scorekeeper, timekeeper, and equipment manager. There were no other formal roles (team or duty), nor was there any pageantry. Teams were identified simply by numbers 1, 2, 3, etc.

Students appeared to enjoy Ken's classes, and the majority appeared to be active and participated in the day's activities. There were students, however, that appeared to be less than fully engaged during sport game play, and remained a safe distance from where the most vigorous activity was taking place. Ken felt in these instances that "not all students like sports, or like all sports, or are super aggressive...but we have good kids and most of them have a sport or two they really like." At the same time Ken also acknowledged that students, especially female students, liked and wanted to do other activities, "especially dance...they asked about that a lot...I really should be doing more things [other than sport]."

*Jill: Mostly-sport teacher.* The school Jill taught at was located within a larger metropolitan area and had a population of roughly 10,000. The city also maintained and staffed parks, pools, golf courses, and organized a variety of youth and adult physical activity and athletics programs. The school housed Grades 7 and 8. Student enrollment was roughly 500 students, and had a near even gender balance. Seventy percent of the students identified as Caucasian, 20% identified as African American, and 10% identified as either Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic. In addition roughly 20% of students received free and reduced meals. In comparison to more affluent schools in the district, teachers at this school felt they served

students that came from a comparatively lower socio-economic status. Evidence for this comes from the school's free and reduced meal percentages, and that it received Title I funds.

The facilities and equipment at Jill's school were well suited for teaching a variety of sports. The indoor gymnasium was the size of two regulation basketball courts and had two electric dividers that could split the gym in quarters. The equipment room was well stocked for the team sports Jill taught, and also included equipment for variety of paddle and racquet sports, as well as various strength development exercises. There were Fitballs, BOSUs, jump ropes, resistance bands, and agility ladders. Some of this equipment came from the district's physical education coordinator in an effort to provide teachers with equipment, training, and curricular resources to teach a specific system of strength and flexibility exercises. Also, like Ken's school, the gymnasium had resistance pulley systems bolted to the wall. Outdoor behind the school, one field had a backstop and diamond for softball and baseball. A second field had a rubber track that surrounded a field lined for football. A third field had a section of squared off and mounded land. Jill noted in the past this area had served as an ice skating rink. Jill had one teaching colleague, Andy. She noted that they split their teaching duties by grade level. Jill taught all the seventh grade classes, while Andy taught all the eighth grade classes.

Jill is a Caucasian female, and was in her ninth year of teaching, but only her second teaching physical education. Jill was formerly a middle school science teacher, and felt significant differences between teaching science and physical education, including the amount of prescribed curriculum and lack of oversight and accountability when teaching PE. She said, "when I was in the classroom we had to be doing certain things at certain times...the pressures of testing added a sense of accountability I think...PE is the opposite...we have nearly nothing." In addition to teaching full time, Jill was also a volleyball and track coach.

Jill's experience coaching and her physical activity biography were powerful in her decision to become a physical educator. She addressed coaching, "Well I was coaching three sports in the building, also, just me always being involved in sports, I always enjoyed that, so I felt going over to PE would be a better fit." In addition, Jill's affinity for being physically active is something that had reached across her lifespan. She discussed playing "lots of sports growing up" and in college. Jill's adulthood physical activity participation included running, cycling, lifting weights, and Yoga. Despite a professed desire to include a diverse set of content, Jill's curriculum this past year was dominated by sport content. The activities Jill included as part of her curriculum were: flag football, softball, soccer, badminton, floor hockey, handball, trackball, volleyball, basketball, pickleball, adventure initiatives, and strength development activities.

Physical education at Jill's school was offered strictly as an elective by trimester. Classes met every day for 55 minutes, and units ran roughly 1-2 weeks. Each class followed a similar routine. First students came in and sat in squads. These were chosen by Jill and were altered each unit. Following this was a brief 10 minute warm-up that often involved jogging or rope jumping, and strength and flexibility exercises borrowed from her experience playing and coaching sports, from her Yoga practice, and from the aforementioned strength development system. Following this was a sport skill development activity. Finally, game play proceeded with some elements of the Sport Education model being present. Students were put into intact and teacher decided teams for the duration of the unit. Modifications were made to make game-play more accommodating for students who had little experience or skill with a particular sport. Scores were kept and posted in the gym. There were, however, no formal roles (team or duty), nor was there any pageantry.

Jill appeared to have many positive interactions with her students, and most students appeared to enjoy her classes. There were times, however, where students would express displeasure with particular activities, such as doing laps around the track or playing certain sports, like handball. When I asked Jill to comment on what I recognized as student displeasure for a particular physical activity her rationale for defending her content choices often had little to do with the activity, rather, the student was where the problem lied. Jill viewed students who did not regularly engage in sport based lessons as, “mostly expressing introverted behaviors...they tell me they have an injury, which is probably just an excuse, cause most of the time they’re the kids who are not active, and don’t like activity whatsoever, so they just refuse to participate.”

*Tracy: Mostly-sport teacher.* The school Tracy taught at was located within a larger metropolitan area and had a population of roughly 150,000. The city maintained and staffed parks, pools, and organized a variety of youth and adult physical activity and athletics programs. This included a dance school, an indoor water park, and a community 5K run. The school housed multiple public alternative schools spread across Grades 6 through 12. Student enrollment was about 300 students, with an uneven gender balance (80% male and 20% female). Sixty percent of the students identified as Caucasian, 30% identified as African American, and fewer than 10% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander and/or as mixed. In addition the school served students that came from a comparatively lower socio-economic status. Evidence for this came from free and reduced meal numbers (50%), and teacher knowledge of student home life.

Tracy’s school had considerable facilities and minimal equipment. The indoor gymnasium was large, lined for sports, and was in better-than-average condition. The equipment room was small and largely bare with the exception of basketballs, floor hockey sticks and pucks, soccer balls, a few volleyballs, footballs, golf clubs, and badminton equipment. She noted



having to borrow a lot of equipment from the high school equipment closet. There was a significant amount of green space surrounding the school, and included two backstops and diamonds for softball and baseball. There was one other physical education teacher that worked in the building. This teacher was in charge of all the high school classes while Tracy was in charge of the middle school classes. She noted minimal and less-than-collegial contact with this person.

Tracy is a female Caucasian, was in her fourth year of teaching, and her second year at this particular school. She attended a large research university near the metropolitan area in which she grew up. At the time of the study Tracy was working on a Masters degree in adaptive physical education at a different state university. She grew up very active and was a competitive athlete in three sports (basketball, volleyball, and track and field) in high school. It was during Tracy's involvement in sport when she first considered becoming a physical education teacher. She explained,

For basketball we had to work on the weekends with a younger group of girls on skills and small games and that was the first time I thought, you know, if I could make this a career that would be really cool...PE was the closest thing.

In college she decided not to play sports, and to live a "normal" life. Tracy noted one physical education teacher was a particularly influential role model in her life, and was a significant reason for her initial and ongoing involvement with the state American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) association. In addition to teaching full time she was a freelance Yoga instructor, and had taught Yoga lessons in her PE classes, to the school's teaching staff, and around the metropolitan area during the summer.

Tracy's first two years teaching were at the elementary level. During these years Tracy taught a diverse curriculum that included multiple culturally relevant dances and various games from around the world, both of which tapped into and were congruent with her students' cultural backgrounds. Tracy's curriculum throughout the past year was diverse yet sport-dominant and included: fitness activities (e.g. arm circles, jumping jacks, push-ups, planks, static stretches, rope jumping, jogging), basketball, team handball, flag football, floor hockey, volleyball, soccer, kickball, ultimate Frisbee, disc golf, softball, Yoga, and cultural games.

Physical education at this school was offered strictly as an elective by semester. Classes met every day for roughly an hour. Each class followed a similar routine. First, students came in and walked around the perimeter of the gymnasium with contemporary, student chosen music, playing in the background. I often saw students walk around, talk with peers, and converse with Tracy. Second, students met in the center to discuss the day's activities. Third, students began the warm-up portion of the lesson. This always began with student or teacher led activities (arm circles, jumping jacks, planks, static stretches, etc.). Immediately after, the students (and sometimes Tracy) completed a ten-minute cardiovascular oriented activity (rope jumping, jogging, etc.) accompanied one again with the student chosen music. Four, was the focus of the day's lesson, which was a Yoga lesson, a cultural game, or sport game play. Game play was often small sided, and rarely included any skill development activities. During this portion of the lesson I would often witness up to half of the class sit down by the walls of the gym, especially female students, as the male students played sport games in a "rough" and aggressive manner. I regularly saw Tracy provide feedback and instruction to individual students, groups of students, and the class as a whole. Tracy often commented on the struggles I witnessed with respect to keeping male students "on task" and "getting girls to do something [participate]." Tracy felt that

“sometimes it feels like a no win in trying to balance my attention between what the boys and girls are doing...I really feel for my girls.” The class ended with students meeting back in the middle of the gym to discuss the day’s lesson and the next day’s activities.

*Susan: Mostly-sport teacher.* The school Susan taught at was located in a suburban city with a population of roughly 100,000 people. This city’s boundaries bordered neighboring suburban areas on all sides. There were a variety of physical activity resources in the community, including a fairly new recreation center outfitted for traditional and non-traditional physical activities. The city also maintained and staffed parks and golf courses, and organized youth and adult athletics. The building Susan taught at housed Grades 7 and 8, had roughly 900 students, and had a near even gender balance. The school boasted a high socioeconomic status (10% free and reduced lunch), and was homogenous by race/ethnicity; 90% of the school was Caucasian. Susan noted her school is known as the highest “class” middle school in the district. The school year was split by semesters. Students were required to take physical education every day in the seventh and eighth grades over the span of one semester, with a second semester being an elective option. Classes were roughly 60 minutes long.

There were considerable facilities and equipment located at Susan’s school including two large gymnasiums, each with an electronic divider. Behind the school there was a rubber track that surrounded a large field. An adjacent field was lined and had goals for soccer. Further off were large softball/baseball fields with backstops. Susan’s equipment room was well stocked for the sports and physical activities included in her curriculum. In addition, Susan often utilized other school spaces, such as the parking lot, for activities like tennis. There was one other physical education teacher at Susan’s school. Susan often referred to this particular teacher’s focus and passion for coaching.

Susan is a Caucasian female and was in her twenty-first year of teaching. She had spent time teaching at the elementary, middle and high school levels, and was in her tenth year at this middle school. She was a former state level physical education teacher of the year. Colleagues that worked in Susan's district spoke highly of her, including the district level physical education coordinator, who recommended Susan as a participant for this study. In addition to her position as a full time physical education teacher, Susan was also a volleyball coach at a local high school. She was motivated to become a PE teacher during her undergraduate schooling. While going to college part time Susan worked at a fitness club, as a park and recreation activity organizer, and as a swim instructor. During that time Susan reflected on her extensive experience as a large-sided team sport athlete, her enjoyment of her previous school physical education, and her current part time work, she felt it was a "no brainer" and changed her major to school physical education. Susan remained an avid sport participant and physical activity enthusiast. She talked about participating in recreation softball leagues, participating in her volleyball team's practices, running on a regular basis, and had become active in martial arts.

Susan taught mostly-sports across the school year. The activities included on Susan's curriculum map were: basketball, paddleball, racquetball, soccer, softball, volleyball, creative dance, jump rope, step aerobics, Tae-Bo, martial arts, circuit training, floor hockey, ultimate Frisbee, golf, team handball, tennis, touch football, track and field, wiffleball, water safety, and camping and hiking ("leave no trace" information). This curriculum map was more akin to a book, and included short information documents on each unit that was covered over the year. Each unit document included information such as: the history of the activity, pertinent vocabulary, strategy, equipment, safety precautions, and rubrics/information on how students would be assessed. This information could also be found on Susan's school-based website,

which she maintained, and included all the curriculum information as well as her daily teaching schedule, a calendar that detailed content progression, a course syllabus, pictures and video of students performing physical activity in class, a student interest inventory, in addition to other health and physical education related information and links.

During the past year Susan taught units that lasted 3 to 8 days. Each class began with students coming in and sitting in rows and squads. Once attendance was taken, students had 5 minutes to change clothing and return to their squads. Once back in the gym, Susan led students through what she described as, “a short fitness session” that lasted 10 to 15 minutes. Unlike the warm-up sessions that Annette, Bill, Josh, Ken, and Jill included in their lessons, this session was truly focused on developing a particular component of health related fitness. The activities Susan included during this part of the lesson were an endurance run, rope jumping, scooter triathlon, and circuit training. If the current unit was a sport, elements of the Sport Education model were utilized. The fitness session was followed by whole group instruction by Susan on the day’s sport skill and/or concept focus. Teams then went to a designated space and practiced. Practices were finished with a team cheer, and were followed by a game play. Games were timed and had referees and score keepers, in addition to the team roles. Classes ended with a review of the day’s activities and a preview of the lesson would take place next class. Scores were kept and posted in the gym. There were, however, no supporting roles (e.g., journalist, photographer), or game modifications (e.g., volleyball was played with a standard volleyball, on a regulation size court, with all rules in place). Student participation in volleyball lessons lacked enthusiasm and effort appeared to be minimal. During soccer lessons I witnessed more joyful and vigorous participation than in the volleyball lesson; whereas students were by far the most enthusiastic and engaged during the observed martial arts.

Most of the students Susan taught appeared to be very compliant and demonstrated high levels of on-task and participatory behavior. Susan contributed this to the “class” of students she taught and her teaching experience. Susan felt her students attended the “highest class middle school in the area” from which they came to the gymnasium “with strong values and behaviors” that helped them succeed in her classes. She believed, “most of them are just good kids who listen well for their age...and try hard.” In addition she pointed to her experience as instrumental in her ability to keep students on task. She reflected, “just over time...seeing what works and doesn’t...setting high expectations, have rules and procedures...all that helps in keeping everyone on task.” At the same time, Susan dismissed the instances of student displeasure (most notably with volleyball) as being a misinterpretation on my part.

*No-Sport Teachers (Joe)*

*Joe: No-sport teacher.* Joe’s school was located in a suburban community that was surrounded by other suburban communities on all sides. The community had roughly 100,000 residents, had considerable cultural diversity, and was considered one of the more “affluent” suburban areas. In addition to boasting highly rated schools, the community had a significant amount of government operated facilities and programs focused on promoting and facilitating a wide variety of physical activities. The school accommodated roughly 600 students with a near even gender split. Sixty percent of students identified as Caucasian, 25% as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 10% as African American. Joe’s description of the school’s “affluence” is backed by geographic location, and only 13% of students being eligible for free and reduced meals.

The school Joe taught at is a fairly new construction that was an extension to the building the school previously occupied (which is now occupied by a district high school). The gymnasium was considerably large, had high ceilings, and an electronic cloth divider that split

the gym in half. The wood floor was lined for basketball and volleyball. Equipment was fairly limited. There was plenty of strength and fitness development equipment (Fitballs, medicine balls, jump ropes, floor pads, resistance bands, two elliptical machines) and some sports equipment (basketball trainers, volleyballs, volleyball trainers, tennis racquets and tennis balls, and footballs). Joe had one colleague with whom he shared this space and equipment. Joe taught seventh and eighth grade classes, while his partner taught sixth and seventh grade classes.

Joe is a Caucasian male, was in his third year of teaching physical education, and the second year of teaching physical education at his current school. He spent his first year teaching at a predominately African American urban charter high school. Joe considered a number of previous career paths before deciding to become a physical education teacher, these included trade work, specifically, with aspects of home construction. His early desire to become a physical education teacher was driven by his wanting to capitalize on his affinity for, and expertise with, team sports, coaching, and strength training. He explained, “I was always interested in sports and coaching so I thought PE would be a natural fit.” Joe disclosed a considerable biography with a variety of competitive sports. He described playing competitive soccer and football through middle and high school, and how he competed in Tae Kwon Do at the intercollegiate level. Common to all of Joe’s sporting endeavors was his ability to simply “drop” them, and end participation once he decided he no longer wanted to engage in that activity. This ability to simply decide to stop doing something and switch gears was something Joe mentioned as a more general trend in his life. He explained that he switched majors in college quite rapidly, and also changed career paths just as quickly.

Content included in Joe’s curriculum was predominantly focused on developing muscular strength, flexibility, agility, and cardiovascular endurance. Specific activities included were:

creating and assessing SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely) goals related to one's fitness, an outdoor circuit (planks, push-ups, lunges, walking, power-walking, jogging, sprinting), aerobic activity circuit training (jogging, sprinting, rope jumping, bench step, side stretch, knee to chest stretch), and circuit training exercises that utilized medicine balls (side to side, around the world, partner catch, lumberjack), exercise bands (bicep curl, tricep extension, toe push, leg curl, arm press), Fitballs (reach and pass, jackknife, wall dips, kneeling push-ups, back roll), and strength development exercises using one's own body weight (push-ups, crunches, reverse crunches, squats, lunges, wall sits, mountain climbers, Burpes), agility ladder exercises (hop scotch, in-out drill, tango drill, single foot lateral drill, double foot lateral drill), fitness testing (Fitnessgram), and fitness poker.

Physical education at Joe's school was scheduled by semester, was required in sixth and seventh grades, and was an elective in eighth grade. A typical class ran roughly an hour and a half (block scheduling) and met every other day. First, students would change and then have the first 5 minutes to engage in "privileges." Joe explained that "privileges" were a time for students to "get the giggles out...they've been pent up in a classroom and they are ready to move, so we allow them to get after it right away." Privileges amounted to free play. Some students stood around and talked with one another and/or walked through the area talking with other students engaged with a piece of equipment. This was followed by students being called to a lane formation for attendance. While Joe took attendance he briefly presented students with the day's activities. Following this, students jogged around the perimeter of the gymnasium for a varied period of time (8 to 12 minutes) while contemporary music was playing in the background. In my observations every single student jogged. Regardless of speed, or whether they were alone or with others, or appeared to be "fit," each student jogged throughout the duration of this portion



of the lesson. Students then returned to lane formation and went through a series of teacher (and sometimes student) led dynamic stretches. During the stretching Joe identified the muscles being stretched. He also reinforced and quizzed students on various fitness concepts, such as the differences between dynamic and static stretching, the correct timing of each, and why ballistic stretching was “bad.” Next was the content element of the day’s lesson all of which were focused on fitness development. During two lessons I observed fitness testing. During another the class split in two and Joe facilitated fitness poker, while his teaching colleague taught step aerobics. In two additional lessons I saw students complete a fitness circuit that utilized a mix of the activities described above. Before students were dismissed to change, they were called in for a review, and Joe shared any announcements pertinent to physical education. During the hour and half there was considerable “down time” where Joe lectured or reviewed with students certain fitness concepts, the specific idea or information central to them, and why he believed they were important. In my observations I saw students to be especially compliant with all of Joe’s lessons. Joe confirmed to me that he had “a great group of students.” He attributed this to the upper-middle-class background many of them came from, and the “values” associated with growing up in these families and communities.

### *Summary*

This series of case studies detailed who the teachers were, the kinds of schools they worked in, and the physical activities they included in their curricula. I found that the teachers fell in one of three distinct groups. The first group of teachers only taught sports. This included Annette, Bill and Josh. While Annette taught swimming, she noted she would not have if she didn’t feel pressure from her principal. The next group of teachers taught mostly-sports, but also taught non-sport content such as Yoga, adventure initiatives, step aerobics, and martial arts. This

included Ken, Jill, Tracy, and Susan. The third group of teachers taught no sport. Joe was the only teacher who fell in this group, as he had completely abandoned teaching sport in favor of content that was focused on developing muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardiovascular endurance.

### *Section Two: Thematic Findings*

The main finding from my cross-case analysis revealed that a variety of teachers' personal, institutional, and student factors, and the teachers' consideration of these factors, coalesced in ways that resulted in the perpetuation of competitive sport as the dominant content of their curricula. This section contains four divisions, one for each of the three themes I identified across the teachers, and a fourth that summarizes the findings from this section. The first theme details how seven of the teachers' sport-dominant physical activity biographies strongly informed their emotional affinity and desire to include a large amount of sport in their curricula. These teachers repeatedly voiced being reluctant and uncomfortable teaching specific non-sport physical activities because their values, content knowledge and skill, and pedagogical knowledge were heavily grounded in competitive sport content, and they felt this did not translate to teaching non-sport physical activities. The second theme explains how institutional factors coalesced to privilege sport-dominant curricula by creating an easy, comfortable, and friendly place to work. The teachers discussed their administrators and classroom colleagues, their physical education colleagues, and the facilities, equipment, and resources they had available as particularly friendly to teaching sport and unfriendly to the inclusion of non-sport content. The third theme elucidates the powerful role that aggressive, vocal, and sport minded male students played in a teacher's willingness to include non-sport physical activity. Teachers who taught only sports felt physical education was an important place to meet the sporting

desires of these male students. Teachers who taught mostly sport, in their professed desire to expand curriculum beyond sport, noted the actions and verbal expressions of aggressive and sport minded males fomented reservations to teach non-sport content. Joe, however, expressed and demonstrated a physical education curriculum devoid of sport could indeed be relevant to all students, even sport minded males.

### Theme One: Sport as Curricular Safe Zone

This first theme details how seven of the teachers' sport-dominant physical activity biographies strongly informed their emotional affinity and desire to include a large amount of sport in their curricula, and at the same time, made it difficult to include non-sport physical activity. This theme is divided into three subthemes. The first subtheme illustrates that all eight teachers had physical activity biographies heavily grounded in competitive sport. The second subtheme explains how this biography led all but one teacher to view sport-based physical education an emotionally comfortable curricular safe zone. The final subtheme in this theme discusses some of the teachers' variably successful attempts to move beyond the emotionally comfortable safe zone of sport-dominant curriculum.

#### *Sport-Dominant Physical Activity Biographies.*

All eight teachers displayed personal physical activity biographies that were heavily grounded in competitive sports. Each of them explained that the extensive amount of time they had spent playing and being involved with sports, created a deep and significant comfort and familiarity. There were three time periods that contributed to and solidified these teachers' familiarity with sports; youth participation, time spent in their PETE program, and their adulthood physical activity participation. There were, of course, exceptions to this general trend,

most of them during teachers' engagement in non-sport physical activities within adulthood physical activity participation.

*Youth sport participation.* Each of the teachers readily explained that their fluency with sport was cultivated through the sports in which they had participated during their youth. For example, Bill talked about how his familiarity with teaching sport was the result of his physical activity biography,

I was super active growing up...I was an athlete in every sense, like, not only did I play competitive sports, but I was always in the middle of the neighborhood pick-up games...I was all about it... in high school I ran track, played football and basketball, and played park and rec baseball in the summer...lots of skating and hockey in the winter...all that experience just makes me comfortable with them [sports].

Susan shared her sport-dominant physical activity biography and the fluency that developed from these experiences. She said,

I played three sports in high school, basketball, volleyball, and softball. And I played all those growing up, among other things, like swimming, but mostly it was sports...yeah I'm very comfortable with sports, you're talking about years and years of practice and games. From five, six years old on sports were a central part of my life.

Ken stated that his sport-dominant youth biography was where his grasp and affinity for sports first developed. He observed,

I just remember playing lots of sports and neighborhood games growing up, and not always adult organized, we did it ourselves, and how much I enjoyed that, coming home from school and playing tag, football, basketball, kickball, whatever till the lights came on and it was time to go home...being on youth sports' teams...those days were the best...so that is where I would say my comfort with sports originated.

Joe, despite his abandonment of sport curriculum, shared a biography that resulted in his fluency with a range of sports. He reflected,

Started playing soccer at 3...year round thing soccer was, not forced, parents just wanted me to be active and I loved it. Grew up in suburbs, common wooded area, tons of

neighborhood sports, capture the flag, football, basketball, kick the can, ghost in the graveyard. I remember teeball and baseball through high school, football 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, working out, doing the fitness thing. So what, almost 15 years playing sports, how could I not speak the language...be comfortable with them.

*Physical education teacher preparation.* The second space that contributed to the teachers' complacency with sport content was their physical education teacher education (PETE) programs. The teachers' PETE programs contributed to their sport-dominant physical activity values and expertise in four ways. First, the teachers viewed physical education as a profession that would allow them to pursue their passion for sports and working with youth. Second, once enrolled, their PETE programs reinforced their love for and involvement with sports. Three, their programs entitled sport content over other movement forms. Many teachers found the limited non-sport content courses simply not enough to change their minds or make them feel competent and proficient teaching this content. Four, the teachers' curricula contained many of the same sports they learned in their PETE program. There were, of course, notable exceptions, such as Ken and Jill, and their PETE program's coursework on adventure initiatives, which was instrumental in their decisions to teach these activities. Even for them, however, as mostly-sport teachers, sport dominated their curricula.

The teachers' grasp and affinity for sports led them to decide to become physical educators. Reflection on what they really wanted to do with their lives invariably motivated them to consider careers that would allow them to share their knowledge and passion for sports. For example, Jill explained her decision to become a physical education teacher, "Well I was coaching three sports in the building, also, just me always being involved in sports, I always enjoyed that, so I felt going over to PE would be a better fit, a more natural fit." Tracy outlined a similar consideration,

For basketball we had to work on the weekends with a younger group of girls on skills and small games and that was the first time I thought, you know, if I could make this a career that would be really cool...PE was the closest thing.

The PETE programs the teachers enrolled in quickly reinforced their desires to learn about sport and how to teach them in schools. Annette, Susan, Tracy, Bill, and Josh discussed how their PETE professors and instructors positioned and taught sports and content classes in ways that confirmed they had chosen the right career path, and that sport was *the* content taught in physical education. For example, Annette said, “so, those courses being easy was kind of a sigh of relief, it was like whew, I already know this stuff, and the sports I didn’t know, like pickleball and tennis, came easy.” Josh also described how his content courses confirmed his decision to enter the profession. He said, “All that content stuff was a breeze, it was mostly-sports, and I knew a lot of it already, so what I learned from those was that I was in the right place.” Tracy also noted that her PETE program “settled” her decision to become a physical education teacher. She said, “The activity classes were easy, because the majority of what we did was sports I knew already, those activity classes I think settled it...my decision to be a PE teacher.”

When Annette, Susan, Tracy, Bill, and Josh highlighted that their PETE programs reinforced their affinity for sport-dominant content, they also revealed that their programs had limited coursework dedicated to content and specific physical activities, and that the majority of these classes were focused on sports content. For example, Susan said, “most all of those classes were based on team sports, individual and dual sports, lifetime sports...then we had the token dance and rhythms class.” Josh also said, “it was generally sports...we did all the sports, team sports, dual sports, individual...we also did swimming, gymnastics, and I had one dance class.”

In contrast, Joe, Ken, and Jill (the no-sport and two mostly-sport teachers) came from a PETE program that stressed the value of curricular diversity. Their program attempted to spread course credits more evenly across different genres of content that included: lifetime fitness activities, adventure initiatives and outdoor pursuits, dance, sport education, and movement education. This coursework, however, was limited to a total of nine credits, and only sport education had its own three-credit class. While this program affected Ken and Jill's content negotiations, Joe was adamant that this diverse yet limited focus on content was simply not sufficient to make someone feel competent enough to teach unfamiliar physical activities. Joe explained,

we only had 6 credits of it [non-sport content coursework]...there is no way that was enough time to become comfortable with something so foreign...no way was I was going to go and teach dance or adventure with only a few credits of exposure, that wasn't realistic...its different than fitness or sport, because I already have a ton of life knowledge to draw from.

For Joe, a few credits of exposure were not adequate for him to seriously consider teaching content in the absence of significant biographical experience.

This phenomenon was also evident amongst the other exclusively-sport teachers. For example, Annette said of the one dance class she experienced in her PETE program, "like I told you before, I never desired to dance, and one class wasn't going to change that...or my comfort with it." Similarly, Bill remarked of his one dance class, "I had one dance class...but really, I didn't leave that class thinking I could teach dance to secondary kids...no way was one class enough." Josh expressed a similar thought, "I only had to take one dance class...I really just did what I needed to get through it...it wasn't going to change my liking it, or doing it on my own, let alone teach it."

The underlying sport backgrounds of all eight teachers, and their PETE programs' predominant reinforcement of the sport-dominant values, knowledge, and familiarity they had developed previously resulted in the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' curricula looking very similar to the content they experienced in their programs. Specifically, the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers included sports they learned growing up, and other sports they did not participate in their youth but learned in their PETE programs. For example, Annette, an exclusively-sport teacher, said that the content classes in her undergraduate degree contained most of the content she taught in her classes. She said,

A lot of what I do now was covered in my undergrad. We had three classes. We had a team sports class and then we had an individual and dual sports class and then we had a rhythms class. For instance, pickleball or badminton, I never did growing up or in PE, but I learned how to teach them undergrad.

Tracy, a mostly-sport teacher also said,

I think if you look at my undergrad, and what I learned there, all the sports I teach I did growing up or I learned in my program, like there are sports I learned in my undergrad, but didn't do growing up, so that is where those classes, I think, had the most impact.

*Adulthood physical activity.* The third space in which these teachers developed familiarity, values, and knowledge of specific physical activities was their adulthood physical activity participation. The teachers certainly spoke of their past and current sport participation in positive ways. It was their current adult physical activity participation, most often in non-sport physical activities, that led to positive emotional conversations with each teacher.

Annette, Susan, Ken, Jill, Tracy, Bill, and Joe explained that they not only continued sport participation to varying degrees, but also became involved in other non-sport physical



activities. Susan shared that she continued to play in adult softball leagues, and would “play in” when coaching her volleyball teams. Ken noted he occasionally still played pick-up basketball with the team he helped coach and also golfed occasionally. Bill said that he regularly golfed with his son and spoke of these occurrences in a positive way. Annette explained she participated in softball and basketball into her adulthood, but recently traded in these sports for golf and Crossfit. Annette elaborated on learning to play golf and how playing with friends increased her comfort with the game. She said, “at first I was embarrassed to be on the course, but after some time and lessons, I’m fine and actually like being out there...it’s just nice to be with friends and relax and its fun.” In another example, Crossfit became a regular part of conversations between us and it was clear that she developed a significantly positive emotional connection with this activity. She said, “I’m probably in the best shape I’ve ever been in, and I’ve done all kinds of sports workouts, I feel so much better, I just feel great, um hum...Yeah, I love it.” Anytime Annette would talk about Crossfit she sounded more excited, sat up in her chair, and would talk in detail about the activities she was doing, and what that program was all about. Annette explained the origin of her desire to participate in Crossfit was rooted in her craving for a competitive activity that would prevent the physical injuries she had repeatedly experienced in sport participation. She explained,

I was frustrated because I couldn’t get that competitive urge out...I was kind of depressed...I was so used to playing sports...my therapist said you need to go to this gym, because it will give you the intensity and the competition you want, and even with your injuries. And I tell you what it has fulfilled my need, oh yeah.

While these teachers, with the exception of Annette, shared similar examples of occasional sport participation, it was abundantly clear that their adulthood physical activity

participation had shifted radically. They often passionately and eagerly discussed with me participation in non-competitive non-sport physical activities. The teachers volunteered that they had become runners, started strength training, cycling, learned martial arts, went camping, hiking, skiing, and practiced Yoga. This trend was largely seen among the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers. Josh and Bill, exclusively-sport teachers, did not discuss regularly participating in any non-sport physical activities. Annette mentioned that in addition to Crossfit and golf, she ran and cycled although she was quick to point out that “Crossfit is by far my current favorite...a bike ride or nine holes just doesn’t do it.”

Ken, Jill, Susan, Tracy, and Joe all claimed they had become runners. Ken, similar to the others, felt that in addition to his enjoyment of participating, the activity of running provided him with a variety of psychological and emotional benefits. He said,

Call me crazy, but I like to do it [run]...it’s nice just to get out and burn a few miles...to let out that stress, and work things out in your head, but you also have to take time to just go and enjoy being outside...for all those reasons, it’s like ...addicting. I feel less like myself if I’ve gone too long without a run.

Jill also expressed her affinity for running. She said,

It is a great way to be outside and be moving, and it’s like a meditation for me, and that helps me sort through other stuff. It’s a really important part of my day...it helps a lot that I actually like doing it.

Tracy shared similar reasons for her Yoga practice being so meaningful and important to her.

She reported,

There are many benefits of doing yoga; physical, mental and emotional. The increased intake of oxygen is stimulating and relaxing at the same time. People practice yoga for a variety of personal reasons. For me, it is all that and more, I enjoy being able to let go,

and just be in a flow...to not have to worry about what to do, to just follow the instructor's directions.

Jill also explained the reasons why she participated in Yoga on a regular basis, "It reduces my stress, helps me focus better in other aspects in my life...It's like a tune out for me, you can think about everything, but you don't have to think about anything." Susan shared that her martial arts practice had become especially meaningful for her. Like other teachers, when Susan spoke of her martial arts participation her voice became louder and she sounded more excited. She frequently used words like, "great" "cool" "awesome" "the real deal," and "empowering" when describing participating in the activity. She explained,

I like it because it is challenging, and intense, and I like that someone is encouraging me.

I like it because it is empowering. For me if I was attacked, now I feel more comfortable if something happened...I use to be nervous going, but now I'm part of the group, and there is a camaraderie that comes with that.

Joe described how his physical activity participation had become predominately focused on strength training and working out on fitness machines like exercise bikes, elliptical trainers, and treadmills. He construed a multidimensional set of meanings these activities had for him, including associated emotions, self-actualization, physical health, and a positive self-image. He revealed,

There are a ton of interconnected reasons why I like working out, lifting, and doing cardio...I like the challenge of pushing myself and working at it, I like how I feel, both during, and the calm after and that I've accomplished something that is good for me. I like being able to look in the mirror and liking the person, seeing a guy that is strong, not a meathead, just fit.

This first subtheme demonstrated that, despite some adulthood non-sport physical activity participation, all eight teachers exhibited personal physical activity biographies that were heavily grounded in competitive sports. The teachers' youth sport participation, time spent in their PETE

program, and their adulthood physical activity participation were heavily slanted toward sport which generated a deep and significant comfort and familiarity with them.

*Sport as an Emotionally Comfortable Curricular Safe Zone*

This second subtheme discusses how the teachers' physical activity biographies led all but one to view sport-based curriculum as an emotionally comfortable safe zone. Their sport-dominant biographies provided the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers with deeply embodied dispositions that made sport instruction valued, easy, and comfortable. This was especially the case when compared to the teachers' perceptions of teaching non-sport content, to which they believed their sport-dominant expertise did not readily apply. I found four particular aspects of the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' dispositions directly contributed to their view that a sport-dominant curriculum was emotionally comfortable and safe. These included the teachers' values, their content knowledge and skill, pedagogical knowledge, and feelings of confidence and competence in front of students. The combined effects of these four dispositional characteristics made teaching sport especially comfortable for the teachers.

*Values.* The teachers' extensive biographies within competitive sport led them to hold and express personal values that readily revealed their entitlement of sport-dominant curriculum. For the exclusively-sport teachers this included painting sport content that they taught as being particularly important and valuable, and any other content, especially non-sport content as "not really PE." Mostly-sport teachers also valued including a significant number of sports in their curricula, and also portrayed their inclusion of sport content in a positive light whilst at the same time not discounting the value of non-sport content.

When I talked with the exclusively-sport teachers about the possibilities and prospects of teaching a wide range of physical activities, they quickly extolled the virtues of including and

teaching a range of sports in their curricula. The values cited most often were, societal value of sport, the importance of passing on meaningful experiences, the versatility for talent identification for particular sports or teams, and the practicability for certain sports to lead to competence and skills needed in other sports.

Annette, Bill, and Josh all felt teaching sports in physical education was important because it mirrored the physical activities that society most values. For example, Annette discerned that her personal value of sports matched that of the larger U.S. culture,

I teach sports because, well, I just think our culture, when you look at the United States, our society puts so much power, respect, focus, and money into sports, I just think generally, that is the culture that our kids grow up in, and so when I think about PE, those are the things that I give my attention to, because that is, for the most part, who we are.

The exclusively-sport teachers also cited personal values that resulted from their biographic sport participation led them to want to pass the best aspects of these experiences on to their students. For example, Josh said, “sports were big for me...I learned a lot about myself, and about other people, and how to deal with things...teaching sports in PE allows me to reach a lot of kids in trying to teach those same lessons.” Josh continued, “Like hard work, following rules, being honest, and competing.”

The exclusively-sport teachers also explained they valued teaching sport in physical education because it served to identify and encourage participation in elite competitive sports. Bill said, “I think part of the PE teacher’s role is to get the kids, if they have a talent for something that is, to try a sport after school, so my doing sports helps out with this a lot.”

The next reason exclusively-sport teachers shared as to why sport was so valuable was the cross-over benefits they believed sports had for other sports not included in their curricula.

For example, Bill and Josh both believed their teaching of dodgeball addressed skills and competencies inherent in a variety of other sports. Regarding dodgeball, Josh said, “a lot going on here, throwing, dodging, cutting, strategy, teamwork...most sports have those...even with the throwing, it’s so similar to a tennis serve, and now these kids will have that skill for the rest of their lives.” Similarly, Bill maintained, “dodgeball teaches so much, all these things are in other sports...the teamwork, running in space, dodging and fleeing.” Also, Bill assumed teaching disc golf absolved him from teaching golf, “with disc golf they get all the concepts, so if they want to play golf all they have to learn is the swing...they got the rest.” Josh deduced that teaching kickball helped reinforce concepts important for softball, an activity he particularly valued given his history with baseball, “that is why I do kickball, to get them used to the rules and strategy when we play softball or ragball.”

In contrast to their deeply held sport values, exclusively-sport teachers rejected the idea of teaching a range of non-sport content on the grounds that these physical activities were simply “social” and/or “not PE.” For these teachers physical education was a place that was competitive, vigorous, and serious, and left little room for “mediocrity.” For example, Annette questioned how valuable some non-sport physical activities were in relation to the amount of time she taught her students. She said, “We don’t have a ton of time, I’d just rather have them engaged in sports because they are more active, and doing more, working more, than other, more social activities, like team building things, dance, walking, or whatever.” In a particularly disconfirming case Bill discussed an ice-skating trip he has organized for the last ten years. Here Bill explained why he created the trip,

It's one of those things they [students] will remember long after they are gone...they won't remember basketball, but they will remember how cool this is and how much fun they had...we do it right before winter break to align with winter traditions.

Bill further explained how the event proceeded,

First we ask all students to assess their skill level, then we divide them in groups...we let the advanced skaters just get started, then we do a little instruction with the middle group and let them go, and we spend a lot of time with the beginners and kids who have never skated, talking about the skates and how to go slow and how to fall.

When I asked Bill why he did not teach more lessons or organize more activities like this, he explained that ice-skating was a "social" activity and not "really PE." He said, "is taking a bunch of field trips really PE? I don't think it is...ice skating is just a social activity." Bill was also reluctant to consider teaching a range of other non-sport content. He judged camping, like ice skating, as a "social activity" and "not" PE, "camping...I can barely make the ice-skating trip work, that would be out of the question, and really, is that PE? I tend to think not."

Josh also credited activities such as dance, ice-skating, cycling, skiing, sledding, and camping as "social activities." He maintained, "those are just fun things, I just don't think there is enough in them to be really PE...like camping, kids aren't all that active, there really isn't much going on...how is pitching a tent and sitting around a camp fire PE? "

Like the exclusively-sport teachers, many of the mostly-sport teachers positioned sports as a significant part of our culture, larger society, and their personal lives, and thus, warranted significant space in the curriculum. For example, Tracy said, "Sports are a big part of our larger society...you see it in our economy and culture...it makes sense to me to teach what we traditionally value and appreciate, so that is why I teach the sports I do." Ken also gave society's

value of sport as a significant reason why he included so much of it in his curriculum. He explained,

just growing up myself, I have a well developed appreciation for sports, and passing on the best aspects of it like, playing hard, practicing to get better, being a good sport,...all the things in sport ed...I think my own liking sports so much, helps me...makes me more inclined to teach it.

Like Ken, Susan also pointed to some of the more “ideal” benefits of sport participation that she valued and cited these as important to pass on to her students. She said, “I learned a lot from sports, like teamwork, working hard, winning and losing, like in mature ways...teaching kids these things with sport, other activities don’t do that...those are things we can offer that other subjects can’t.” Jill also expressed how her own personal values for sports impacted her decision to teach so many of them, especially on “rough days.” She said,

yeah, I like sports a lot myself, and I think what helps, with every aspect of teaching is liking what you do, especially on rough days, it’s like hey, I’m teaching what I love and being active, could life really be all that bad.

*Content knowledge/skill.* The next aspect of these teachers’ sport-dominant biographies that contributed to their view of sport-based physical education curriculum as an emotionally comfortable safe zone was the content knowledge and skill they gained from these experiences. Each teacher explained how playing sports throughout their youth and adulthood provided them with two forms of content knowledge: sport specific knowledge and content knowledge. That is, if a teacher played a sport extensively they had a deeply engrained sport specific knowledge of all the aspects of that sport. Additionally, despite not having had extensive experience with a *particular* sport, their substantial experiences with sports *generally* facilitated learning and



understanding new sports, so they could quickly and easily become comfortable teaching these previously unfamiliar sports. According to the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers this ease was due to the professed similarities between and among many sports. In contrast, the professed similarities among different sports did not extend to non-sport physical activities, as the same teachers blamed a lack of content knowledge and skill in many non-sport activities as a significant reason for not including such activities in their curricula.

As illustrated in subtheme one, each teacher played an extensive amount of sport throughout their youth. They explained that the content knowledge and skill they developed from experience in particular sports made it very easy to include them in their curricula. For example, Annette, an exclusively-sport teacher, explained that her experience with basketball left her with a wealth of knowledge on how to teach the game. We discussed,

I: If I said I wanted to come out and see a basketball lesson tomorrow, could you do it?

A: Easy. I could do it today. What kind of lesson...dribbling, passing, defending, moving without the ball...offense, I can teach lessons on running all kinds of zone defenses, trapping, running an offense, set plays.

When I asked Annette where she acquired all of this knowledge, she pointed to her sport biography, “years of playing and coaching...it really is amazing how much stuff you pick up just by playing all those years...it’s not like reading about something or doing it once, you’ve done it so much that you just know it.” Susan, a mostly-sport teacher, explained how her background with volleyball provided her with knowledge and skill that made teaching this sport particularly easy,

I find volleyball easy because I played tons of it, and I coach...all those years I just know the game inside and out. Serving, passing, bumping, setting, blocking...offensive and

defensive formations...tipping, that is my specialty...and I can do everything, so I know it cognitively and physically...all that makes it easy to plan and teach.

Although most of the teachers had extensive experience with two, three, or maybe four sports, they did not have comprehensive experience of all of the sports in their curricula. The teachers explained that this was not a problem, because despite not having extensive experience with *a particular* sport, their extensive experiences with *other sports* made new sports easy to know and understand well enough to teach because of the professed similarity among most exclusively-sports. The teachers claimed this was because sports' similarities made acquiring terminology, physical skills, rules of play, concepts, strategies, and tactics particularly easy. Jill demonstrated how handball, a sport she had never played in her youth, or saw in her PETE program, was easy for her to teach and include in her curriculum. She remarked, "that one [handball] was an easy to include...I have no experience with it, but I feel like it's simple to me, hit the ball to the wall, and don't let it bounce twice, easy." Jill clarified that 'easy' meant that she intuitively knew how to play the game well, and that her sport related physical skills contributed to making the sport "easy" for her to include in her curriculum. She said,

It was easy to pick up...almost right away, I could just see how it was played, and could just do it, like how and when to move to the right place and track the ball, and my hand-eye coordination...all the skill I have from other sports made it easy for me to pick it up, and then teach this one.

Josh explained that his inclusion of sports in which he was not an expert or even familiar was not a significant leap because,

The game premise in most sports are so similar and simple...it's about being aggressive, quick, knowing what to do with the ball when you have it and when you don't, knowing where to be and when...when you are on offense and defense.

For a specific example Josh addressed his inclusion of soccer, a sport he had minimal experience playing in his youth, "we do soccer first cause it's outside, we have the field, and to get it out of the way...no, I'm not super knowledgeable, but it is such an easy game...doesn't really require a lot of brains...ball, field, goals, teams...guard, move, cut, get open, done."

Tracy provided another example in her willingness to teach badminton, a sport she had no exposure to in her youth and adult physical activity participation, and minimal exposure in her PETE program. She said,

I don't know, it's kind of funny, with sports it's easy for me to just pick up on the basic idea, and I think that comes from playing so much sport, I just have a feeling for how sports should be played...and then that makes it really easy to pick up all the details. Like badminton, we did it like once in undergrad, we had the equipment at school... and I did some reading, didn't think about it all that long, and bang had a unit put together.

Unlike the perceived similarities among the sports that exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers taught with relative ease, a lack of content knowledge was one reason why these same teachers excused not teaching particular non-sport physical activities. Teachers felt their sport-dominant knowledge, skill, and expertise did not extend to non-sport content. For example, Ken rationalized not teaching hip hop dance because he lacked content knowledge and skill in this activity, "One thing that is keeping me from that one is I don't have a background in it. I don't really know any moves or terms, history, or any specific dances; let alone how to dance any hip hop." He reasoned that his sport-dominant content knowledge did not extend to making non-sport content easy to learn because the inherent natures of the activities were "too different." He felt, "sports and dance are too different...the whole, like way about them are so completely

different...that is why I think it is hard for me to pick up dance.” Jill expressed a similar feeling with the same activity, “ha...don’t even know where to start, I don’t know any moves, I don’t have any moves...I don’t know hardly anything about it.” Like Ken, Jill felt sport and dance content were inherently different and that her sport-dominant knowledge and skill did not translate. She said, “No, my expertise in sports does not go to dance or other things...sports are all so similar, but other things are so different...how you move the terms, knowledge...everything.” Susan expressed that her lack of content knowledge with camping was a major concern for her, and contributed to her reluctance to include it in her curriculum,

I don’t camp...and I don’t know like, gosh, what equipment or supplies, or how to start a fire...I’m sure I could put up a tent, but then what else do you do? And I’m sure there are all kinds of things I would need to know, and I don’t know any of it.

Susan felt her sport-dominant knowledge base did not readily translate to camping. She said, “I’m so used to thinking in terms of offense, defense, strategy, skills...camping has none of that. This is why I have such a hard time wrapping my head around it, they are worlds apart.”

Joe felt a lack of content knowledge and skill was one reason why he was reluctant to teach Yoga,

I could defiantly do all the poses, but I don’t *have* all the poses, they are not engrained, I don’t know their names, and I really don’t know that much about Yoga...Yoga is fundamentally unlike the other activities I know, and that knowing doesn’t crossover.

*Pedagogical knowledge.* In addition to the content knowledge that the teachers acquired from their significant sport experiences, they also explained attaining a significant amount of pedagogical knowledge from the same experiences. Again, the teachers felt the similarity among different sports made it easy for them to teach the sports they knew well, as well as being able to

“see” how to teach unfamiliar sports. However, the teachers did not feel their sport-dominant pedagogy extended to non-sport content. This was readily seen when one exclusively-sport and the mostly-sport teachers explained they had content knowledge of other non-sport physical activities (activities they had adopted in adulthood), but a lack of pedagogical content knowledge kept them from including these activities in their curricula.

The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers explained that their previous playing and coaching sports provided them with significant first-hand knowledge of how to teach both the familiar and unfamiliar sports. They felt that management, feedback, spacing students, lesson progressions, designing appropriate lesson activities, identifying common learning mistakes, and being able to just “see” when students “get it” and “don’t get it” were features of their pedagogy that were well grounded in their previous sport experiences. Susan explained how her sport familiarity helped her teach a variety of sports,

The big bonus [from playing and coaching sports] comes when you are teaching them and knowing what to do and what to say and you can do it right there on the fly with feedback, progressions and all that...when students get it, when they don’t...I know good sport play when I see it, no matter what sport it is, so that is how that helps.

Josh also analyzed how his considerable experience with sports resulted in a “knack” for teaching them in physical education, even the sports that he admitted not having “a ton” of knowledge.

You know, after all these years, the ridiculous amount of playing, and coaching. I just have this knack for teaching...it’s hard to explain. Like, when I decide what sport I’m going to teach next I just have this vision of how it will go...what drills I will use, how to organize students, behavior things I need to look out for, all that stuff is already there.

Josh explained this “knack” extended to sports in which he was both an expert and non-expert.

Basketball, softball, my experiences apply there, but with soccer and floor hockey too, again, I don’t know a ton, but sports are so similar that all those things, like seeing when kids don’t get it, or fixing mistakes they make over and over and over, if you can do that in one or two sports, you can do it in others much easier.

The teachers felt, however, that their sport based pedagogical skills did not translate to non-sport content. In addition to lacking activity specific content knowledge, the teachers also cited a lack of pedagogical knowledge required to teach non-sport physical activities. Joe maintained, “Sports, strength training, and Yoga...all are completely different animals, so the approach and how you teach them needs to be different.” Joe further elaborated, “The approach to teaching most every sport is very similar, but you can’t just graft that onto say Yoga, it won’t work, the activities are too different.” Tracy explained that her sport-dominant teaching skills did not translate to various outdoor pursuits and, in addition to lacking content knowledge, made her hesitant to teach these activities.

So again, you mentioned wall climbing, skiing, camping, those activities are way different than sports, and I just don’t feel teaching them is the same, I can’t see how it goes...It is hard to consider something if you have no clue what it should look like.

Even when they discussed having requisite content knowledge and skill, the teachers still felt the nature of particular non-sport physical activities made it difficult to envision how best to teach them in the school environments in which they found themselves. For example, Annette felt she had an adequate enough understanding of cycling to teach it, yet could not “see” what teaching this activity would “look like.” She explained,

How awesome would it be to have a biking unit, but then I think...how do I teach a biking class with 30-35 kids? That freaks me out, actually going out on the road and

leaving the campus area. What about transitioning? And to do all this within the time frame of a class period?...I can't see what a biking lesson would look like, like how it would go, how best to teach it.

Annette further stated that her sport based pedagogy did not translate to this non-sport physical activity, "no, biking is way different than sports, so my skills teaching those don't really help me." Another example comes from an activity many of these teachers (Ken, Jill, Susan, Tracy, and Annette) discussed participating in on a regular basis, running. Their reasons for not teaching running or creating events similar to those they participated in were largely based on student perspectives and will be discussed in theme three. In considering these reservations they each revealed a feeling that their sport based pedagogy would not be a good fit for this activity. Ken's perspective was remarkably similar to the other teachers,

I love to run, but I really don't know what a running unit would look like. For me pacing, being relaxed and efficient, enjoying it, staying upright are all important concepts, but would students really like to do that? It just seems a little too boring or adult for them. What would you do with the distances? Or to keep them interested?"

In a final example, many teachers (Ken, Jill, Tracy, and Bill) discussed participating in some form of strength training on a regular basis, but again, could not imagine what teaching a lesson or unit on this activity would look like in their teaching environments. Jill noted,

I can't really see having kids participate in a lesson like that for most of the time, let alone a unit...then what activities would you include given we have no weights or machines, or how to go about facilitating it and timing for that long. I just don't see it.

*Feelings of competence in front of students.* The teachers' sport-dominant backgrounds and the resultant values, content knowledge and skill, and pedagogical knowledge made teaching various sports in physical education a decision that was easy and emotionally comfortable. The

exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers regarded their extensive sport backgrounds as providing them with a deep sense of familiarity and competence when presenting various sports to their students, and claimed this was important in terms of them feeling credible. Their feelings of competence extended to sports with which they had experience and sports in general, but not to non-sport physical activities.

The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers claimed they were very competent teaching sport to their students. Bill said, "I'm very comfortable teaching sports...it rolls off my tongue with almost no thought, and when there are issues or problems I don't have to think long for a solution...it's automatic." Bill further explained his comprehension and competence were important when teaching students, because without feeling "skilled and knowledgeable," students would be more inclined to question the content he was teaching them. He said, "being skilled and knowledgeable are important...if students think you don't know what you are talking about, things can get bad quickly." Susan also said, "am I an expert in everything, no but I can teach most everything pretty easily, especially the sports." Susan further explained her experience with sports provided her with a confidence when teaching them to her students. She said, "I'm very confident in my ability to teach sports to my kids...there is not much I think they could really challenge me on."

The teachers also felt that their sport specific feelings of competence translated to other sports in which they were not experts. Ken explained,

I think that knowing basketball and ultimate, the things you need to teach those convert to other sports...like with pickleball, I'm not great at tennis, you still have that hand-eye, and just know how to move in that game...those similarities are why I think I'm more comfortable teaching sports in general...that students are more likely to learn from my teaching those, instead of other things I'm not good at playing or teaching.



The teachers felt these sport based skills and feelings of competence did not extend to non-sport physical activities, which contributed to their overall hesitance to include these activities in their programs. Jill explained her reluctance to teach hip hop dance was, in part, because she did not feel competent performing this activity. She said, “I can’t dance that well...and if they [the students] see I’m not presenting it to them like I know sports, and I can’t do it, why should they take anything I say seriously, it’s like I lose all credibility.” Josh also felt it was important to be able to comfortably perform an activity if one was to teach it, “I think that it is important to be able to do something yourself, students can sniff out a fraud, and that is when the problems start.” Joe also explained his perceived lack of skill in dance and Yoga made him hesitant to teach these activities.

I struggle to believe kids will buy what you are selling if you can’t do it and don’t do it yourself...case in point, Yoga and dance, I can’t do either, I don’t do either, and the kids will see that. Hard to demonstrate or sell it when you can’t do it, now what do I say when they say to me, ‘why should I if you can’t.’

The combination of these four factors (values, content knowledge/skill, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge, and perceptions of competence) made sport based PE an emotionally comfortable space. Annette said,

I admit it, I am more comfortable teaching sports and the things I grew up playing. When it comes to basketball, softball, soccer or kickball, I don’t have to sit and think a whole lot. I can just see it, what it will look like. That is just my experience though.

Ken expressed a similar feeling with respect to being comfortable teaching sport content, yet at the same time, felt an internal tension with his curricular decisions. This was largely the result of a significant shift to what he believed physical education curriculum should be,

It's a catch 22. It's like I am very comfortable teaching sports, but I have this sense and belief that I need to teach more things, different things. So while I feel relieved that I can teach what I'm more comfortable with, at the same time, I'm actually frustrated because that is not what I've come to believe is good curriculum.

This second subtheme discussed how the teachers' physical activity biographies led all but one to view sport-based curriculum as an emotionally comfortable safe zone. The teachers' comfort with sport-based curriculum was often divergently contrasted with their perceptions of teaching non-sport content, to which they believed their sport-dominant expertise did not readily apply. The teachers' values, content knowledge and skill, pedagogical knowledge, and feelings of confidence and competence in front of students were well geared for sport instruction, and often ill-suited for teaching many non-sport physical activities.

#### *Moving Beyond the Emotionally Comfortable Safe Zone of Sports*

The eight teachers in this study clearly had biographies, knowledge, and skills that were well-suited to teaching a range of sport content. The no-sport teacher and the mostly-sport teachers were, however, also to greater and lesser degrees motivated to move beyond the emotionally comfortable safe zone of sports and taught non-sport physical activities. They discussed three factors that contributed to their decision to do so. First, these teachers recognized a shift in their own personal values and physical activity participation, which significantly informed their thinking on the content that should be included in their curricula. Second, Ken and Jill pointed to their PETE program as being especially influential in their willingness and ability to teach non-sport physical activity. Third, teachers' readiness and eagerness to teach non-sport physical activities were affected by various teaching colleagues. For a couple of teachers, increasing curricular diversity beyond sport became a mainstay, while for others it was especially

fragile. The final section of this subtheme explores the factors that brought a couple of would-be innovators back to their sport-dominant curricular safe zone.

*Venturing beyond the safe zone of sports.* Joe, Ken, Jill, Susan, and Tracy each demonstrated an ability to move beyond the emotionally comfortable safe zone of sports and teach non-sport physical activities. Joe completely abandoned his teaching of sport content in favor of a curriculum that was solely comprised of activities focused on improving students' muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and aerobic strength and endurance. In this move he gave up teaching a genre of physical activity that would have been very "easy" for him to include in his curriculum. He revealed, "It is a bit ironic that a big reason I got started was my sport background, and I no longer teach it...it would be very easy for me to do it, in fact it would probably make my job a lot easier."

Susan included units and lessons focused on creative dance, step aerobics, martial arts, and muscular and aerobic strength and endurance activities in her curriculum. She surmised that the step aerobics and creative dance units, and the martial arts lesson especially pushed her out of her curricular safe zone, yet Susan felt a lack of comprehension or command were not valid excuses to void teaching an activity. She continued, "I wasn't comfortable teaching dance or aerobics, I'm still really not, but I do them, and I'm going to start doing martial arts...yeah I got some help, but still comfort is no excuse to not teach something."

Tracy taught Yoga, flexibility, muscular and aerobic strength and endurance activities, cultural games, and made a brief attempt at teaching adventure initiatives. When she was in her PETE program Tracy did not envision her curriculum would be comprised of these non-sport activities. She also could not see herself completely reverting back to a curriculum that was exclusively filled with sports. She stated, "No. At the time, in undergrad I did not think I would

be teaching these things, but now...it's not easy, but I really can't see not doing them...I couldn't do just sports.”

Ken and Jill (when they taught at the same school) included Yoga and adventure initiatives in their curriculum. Both teachers felt that while they participated in Yoga, they were not comfortable enough to readily teach this activity in their classes. Ken declared, “I really like doing Yoga, I think it is a great activity, but I wouldn't say I'm comfortable with it.” Both teachers also maintained that teaching adventure initiatives pushed the boundaries of the content they were comfortable including in their curriculum. Jill added, “Before the [PETE] program I really didn't know much about adventure initiatives...teaching those certainly made us do something we didn't feel we had a super strong grasp of.”

*Expanded values and physical activity participation.* The teachers explained that as adults their own physical activity participation, and the accompanying values and reasons for why they were physically active had expanded beyond competitive sports participation. Their expansion in participation and the associated values was one reason why they were willing to challenge their sport-dominant curricular safe zone. Ken felt his own regular physical activity participation in cycling, strength training, running, and Yoga provided him with the perspective that being active could include but did not require one to be competitive. Ken declared, “I have no problem if adults want to play sports or be competitive with their activity, but I think you need to show kids you don't have to be competitive to be active.” He elaborated,

Look at my activity, other than the occasional race or pickup [basketball] game, none of it is really competitive...if I didn't value activity for the sake of activity, like Yoga, I doubt I ever would have taught it...I'm sure that I wouldn't have.

Jill revealed a similar position with respect to her Yoga participation, “if I didn’t do it myself, and understand why it is such a great activity, there is no way I would have taught it.” Joe reflected that he had completely ended all of his sport participation in favor of strength and aerobic development exercise, and that this shift in participation came with a change in values.

When I was young sports were everything...but now, I look at what I do and what other adults do and hardly any of us play sports. Sure some of us still chase the dream, and that is cool, but really, how beneficial is teaching sports if hardly any of us will do it later? What I think is important now is being active with what I enjoy so I can be fit, healthy...happy and fulfilled, and lifting and doing cardio does that for me.

This change in values and the resultant knowledge and rapport with strength and aerobic development exercises led Joe to teach them exclusively in his curriculum. Joe stated, “so that is a big reason why I do fitness...it is my bread and butter, and I know how valuable it is, and I’ve seen much better response from students than when I did sports.”

Susan’s own participation in martial arts led her to include aspects of her experience in the fitness portion of her lessons in addition to bringing in her instructor to help teach a martial arts lesson. Susan clearly valued this activity (she constantly referred to it as “empowering”) and her on-going participation provided her with enough knowledge, skill, and understanding to seriously consider and eventually add activities from this practice in her curriculum, leading to a full martial arts lesson. Here Susan listed the content she included in her curriculum from this activity,

First I added fitness things, like the core and upper body exercises, and I’ve introduced the kickboxing with Tae Bo...I’ve added shadow kicking and boxing to my fitness stations, but hitting a pad is more fun, so my next thing is to get some pads.

Later on (during one of my visits), Susan brought in her instructor to co-teach a martial arts lesson to her students. She asserted that it was unlikely that she would have taught this activity without having experience in it herself,

Not a chance. I would have never considered it if I didn't do those things for myself...actually doing it, I see why it is beneficial, and I understand firsthand all the moves...the blocks, counters, retreats, attacks and how to do them correctly.

In addition to the “empowering” effects Susan experienced in her martial arts participation, she explained another benefit related to her health, “I’m a middle aged woman, and I’ll be honest, I do things to keep the weight off and be healthy.” Informed by the increasingly pervasive public health messages regarding “the obesity epidemic” encouraging people to adopt a “physically active lifestyle,” Susan now sees that “the most important objective is increasing the health of my students.” This shift in thinking caused Susan to add more content related to developing flexibility and muscular and aerobic strength and endurance,

I added a fitness trainer to all the Sport Ed teams. Warm-ups use to be about five minutes, now I call it our fitness activity and we go twelve to fifteen minutes...One of the first things I added was a timed endurance run we do twice a week...We’ll do Tae Bo here and there...and sometimes stations with different push-ups, abdominal work, lunges, wall sits, stretching, rope jumping...and the shadow kicking and boxing.

Tracy, like Susan, explained that the amount of time she included at the beginning of her lessons for stretching, cardiovascular activities like running and rope jumping, other strength and fitness development activities, and periodically fitness testing was important to address current public health concerns. She elaborated, “I concentrate so much on those exercises and fitness testing to show them where they [the students] are at...for some of them I hope it is a wake-up call.” Tracy’s public health concerns for her students mirrored her own values for physical activity participation, “I think being fit is important...I don’t love everything I do, like lifting

weights, or stretching...some days I don't want to run, but I do it because I know I'll feel better and I'll stay healthy." Tracy explained her decision to include Yoga in her curriculum was the result of her adulthood participation of this activity.

I guess for purely selfish reasons, just becoming a Yoga teacher, I see the benefits in it and I'm a firm believer in it. I just keep throwing it out there hoping someone might get to catch it... I'm in love with it so I want to spread it to everyone.

*Physical education teacher education.* The most influential factor in Ken and Jill's willingness to teach non-sport content was their PETE program. Pertinent features included professors who taught in the program, taking classes together, and attending required professional development. Ken and Jill explained that their PETE experience fomented the idea of curricular diversity, motivated them to significantly consider stretching their comfort zone, and that by taking classes and working on group projects together, they were better able to work toward the program's ideals. First, the PETE faculty planted the idea of curricular diversity. Ken elaborated,

The program's message of different content was constant throughout, and seeing and experiencing new and different content to the degree that we were comfortable trying it in the schools...No matter who taught the class, we thoroughly taught the activities to each other, so you believed you could actually teach it in the schools.

Ken and Jill both doubted they would have felt as strongly for curricular diversity had they not experienced this program. Jill revealed, "I doubt I would be as open to doing more things had I not had these classes, I probably would not feel this tension...I doubt I would be as open to teaching new things." Ken and Jill claimed that support from faculty was particularly important in their willingness to buy into the program's philosophy of curricular diversity. Ken asserted,

They [university faculty] were all the best, top to bottom, and you knew they cared about the content stuff, and cared about you developing and actually doing it...all the effort they put toward you let you know they supported you actually doing it.

Ken and Jill agreed that going through the program and taking classes together helped them both buy into and “try on” the program’s message of curricular diversity. Ken said, “taking classes with Jill made it easier to do things, we just had a solid working relationship...like when we taught kickboxing, neither one of us did that, and being able to go through that together made it much easier...it was easier to try on these really foreign activities.” The professional development opportunities that were required and encouraged by Ken and Jill’s PETE program were also instrumental in their ability to teach non-sport content they were not fluent in, especially adventure initiatives. Jill explained,

All the adventure stuff we did we learned at the workshop...everything from how to do it, to building the equipment...that was a lifesaver because there is no way we would have known how to make that stuff...then at the conference Ken and I took some things from a session on Yoga that we used when we taught it.

*Support from colleagues.* Ken, Jill, Tracy, and Susan each described colleagues who particularly influenced the teachers’ willingness and ability to teach non-sport content of which they had little knowledge, skill, or familiarity, and thus, were not comfortable teaching to students.

Ken and Jill noted PETE faculty and each other as particularly important in their ability to teach non-sport physical activities they had little content and/or pedagogical knowledge. They both discussed the benefits of being able to teach with someone who went through the same



program, was similar philosophically, and how this provided a “check” on how and what one was teaching in classes. Jill explained,

It was easier to consider different content, like adventure and Yoga, and make it happen in reality. Having someone to lean on and support you when you tinker and try different things. You don't want to disappoint or let that person down...I think it's easier to not be as driven when you're surrounded by traditionally minded people...that check isn't there.

Ken shared a similar sentiment,

It was easier to address when Jill was here because it is easier to be more willing to try something different when you're with someone who is also willing and believes in the importance of it as well...with someone who has your back.

Ken and Jill both felt that working with one another, having a strong rapport with university faculty, and having interactions with other active teaching professionals made it easier to accumulate and develop the knowledge and skill required to teach content with which they were previously unfamiliar. One example is illustrated by Ken and Jill's integration of Yoga. Ken said, “By ourselves we were kind of knowledgeable, but together we had a lot more real experience and knowledge to plan and teach from.” Another example emerged from their professional development attendance. As a required part of PETE coursework, Ken and Jill were eager to develop and implement the activities they learned at workshops and conferences in their teaching. Ken described, “Last year we did six adventure lessons we learned from the workshop that we had to go to for methods...that was one session we were like, yeah, definitely going to teach some of that.” Jill also maintained, “It was really beneficial to learn from other teachers who had real world knowledge...they actually did this stuff, and they were so helpful and knowledgeable.”

Tracy cited her cooperating teacher as being influential in her willingness to teach content with which she was uncomfortable. She explained, “He was so supportive, he basically said, you’ll be on your own soon, so if you have an idea to do something now is the time to test it out, and I’ll support you one hundred percent.” Tracy further elaborated, “One big thing he said was, if you’re not comfortable teaching something, now is the time, because I’m here to help you.” Tracy maintained this support was vital when she created an elective strength and fitness training course at her school for girls who she felt would be interested. This course included content she did not feel competent teaching, such as, step aerobics, resistance training, and various abdominal and core development activities. She said, “I spent a lot of time going over and doing the activities I would teach...and my cooperating teacher helped me tweak things.” Tracy further added that her cooperating teacher helped her decide and develop particular content. She enthused, “he was a great sounding board, he would make suggestions about adding activities...taking others out, and ask me why I was doing things and why I wasn’t doing other stuff...he saw everything I planned to do.” Tracy expounded that her cooperating teacher’s help in developing enough knowledge and comprehension was underpinned by their trust, “when he said, no, I don’t think well he’s wrong or he’s just being a jerk, it was easier to hear cause I trusted him, and I knew he was saying no to things cause he cared.” Tracy doubted she would have taught this course, or at least not as well, without this teacher’s help, “I think I would have offered the course, but I don’t believe it would have gone nearly as well...I know I would not have taught some of the things I did.” Tracy cited this experience as especially important when she was a full time teacher and decided to teach content of which she had little knowledge or familiarity, such as badminton, cultural dances, Takraw, and Yoga. She said, “that experience

gave me the confidence that I could do other things, like the cultural dance unit...and getting that award cause of it, almost like I needed to live up to it and to keep doing other things.”

Susan recalled that the primary influence in her ability to push her curricular fluency was a former teaching partner whom she worked with during her arrival and early years at her current school. Here Susan talked about the transition and the contrast between her current position and the culture that was present at her previous school,

That was a strap on my seatbelt year. Some of the things I teach now were established before I got here. I had never taught dance, track, golf, or tennis. Team sports; I felt good with those. And since then it has just been refining, tweaking, taking out, and adding.

Susan further discussed the transition from her previous school,

At my previous school we did like three sports all year, that was it, and I didn't want to be that teacher. So learning to teach all the different activities was tough, it took like four years to get those things down, but it was for the best cause I didn't want to be that kind of lazy teacher, I wanted to be good, and it forced me to be good.

She shared her desire to stretch her curricular fluency was in part encouraged by a desire to be viewed by this teacher in a particularly positive light,

He was really influential in my willingness to do all those different things...he was just so good with the kids, and good to me...he certainly added to the motivation to teach all that stuff...I wanted him to see me as a good teacher.

Susan explained how her teaching partner was willing to share his content knowledge and help Susan develop the requisite skills in order to teach particular physical activities, “I mean, it was all his stuff, and he was so helpful in my learning to teach it all.” She remembered being able to lean on this particular teacher for help as she attempted teaching this content for the first time,

“when I started out trying those things he would offer help and I would ask, how he did this, or how to deal with things that would come up...it was a nice give and take.” Susan believed that having a solid working rapport made it much easier to ask for and receive feedback, even when it was hard to hear, “yeah, having that solid connection made it easy for me to go to him...but where it really helped was hearing the critique.” Looking back Susan liked to imagine she would have the curriculum she has now, but noted that she could not guarantee it, and the process she went through was quicker. She contemplated, “would it look the same? I don’t know, maybe...but it would not have happened as quickly, and honestly, maybe not at all.”

In addition to this teacher, Susan relied on other teaching professionals in terms of developing her current content knowledge further, or adding new physical activities all together. Two groups of colleagues that affected Susan’s content negotiations included outside experts and student interns. First, Susan discussed bringing in outside teachers to help present activities to the class that she herself was not “comfortable” teaching alone. Here she discussed bringing in her martial arts instructor,

I really want the kids to be exposed to it [the martial art], but I’ve only been doing it for a few months...I’m just not there yet where I feel comfortable teaching it alone, so I’ve asked my instructor to come in and help teach for a day.

Susan believed having this teacher come to class made her more open to the idea of teaching martial arts in the future. She explained, “Like he can demonstrate it so much better, but I could definitely do all the things he did with the students...maybe I just needed to see it done.” Occasionally, Susan has a friend who is currently serving in the armed forces come in and teach “the fitness activities they do, and how the military teaches them to stay in shape.” Susan considered “adopting” exercises from this and integrating them into her daily fitness activity.

The other group of colleagues that influenced Susan's content negotiations was student interns. Susan noted she was willing to consider some of the activities young teachers taught because they were often on the "cutting edge" of the field. She said, "They almost always come in with one or two things I had never heard of...the cutting edge stuff from the university." Susan provided a specific example with her adoption of the Sport Education curriculum model, "it came from a student intern about five years ago, I had never seen it before...I just loved it, and everything it is about and have been doing it ever since." Susan shared another example of a specific dance, "one intern came in and taught the class the hamster dance, and I really liked that so I taught it for a few years."

*Returning to sport-dominant curriculum.* Susan and Tracy claimed that the content they were previously uncomfortable teaching has become a mainstay in their curricula; neither teacher envisioned that changing in the near future. Susan said, "no...I could never go back to just doing a few sports like at the high school." Tracy reiterated a similar sentiment, "no, things like Yoga and strength training and aerobic fitness are too important to me." Joe also stated that unless he was "forced to" he would not return to teaching sports, "no, I really can't say I will, not unless I'm forced to." In contrast, Ken and Jill reported a return to their sport-dominant curricular expertise and cited a number of reasons for this "fall back." First, they felt that not teaching with one another made it easier to revert back to the sport content with which they were more comfortable. Next, they revealed losing the support of one another, and continuing to see resistance from vocal, aggressive, and sport minded males exposed that individually each had an inadequate amount of passion as well as content and pedagogical knowledge when teaching non-sport content.

Ken and Jill felt their being separated and sent to different schools and subsequently not working with like-minded colleagues, provided both of them space to slide back into a more emotionally comfortable sport-dominant curriculum. This resulted in both of them feeling significant tension in relation to the content they included in their curricula. Ken suggested, “I think how I probably do too many sports. It’s a hard thing to grapple with because I’m really comfortable with those and that is what we have the most equipment and stuff for.” He elaborated,

In most situations I feel teachers will fall back and rely on what they know best, and I’m guilty of that. I feel that way even more this year with what I’m doing, that I’ve kind of come backwards because I’m not with someone the same philosophically.

Jill also related similar tension with not teaching certain content, “I feel like I know there are things I should be doing and I’m not, and that makes me feel uneasy...really tense, like I’m not doing my job as well as I need to...not like when I was with Ken.”

While Ken felt unable to teach non-sport content because of institutional factors that will be discussed in the next theme, Jill explained that without Ken, resistance from vocal and aggressive sport minded males exposed her own lack of perseverance combined with unsophisticated content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, “so not only did I not have Ken to help plan and teach, but when I tried to do adventure on my own, I was totally unprepared for feeling such a lack of skill doing it.” She elaborated, “It was like, on my own, the holes in dealing with student issues or complaints, or changing activities, the things we would help each other with on the fly, became much more glaring.” This was especially the case when Jill would see student resistance. She shared a specific example with a Yoga lesson she taught earlier in the year and how sport minded males responded,

The things those boys were doing, screwing around just enough that I couldn't really say much, you know what I mean...like every pose was too easy, or too hard, or it hurt, or they didn't like it, they would do it wrong on purpose, or didn't want to do it, I didn't know to respond to any of that...so now I just integrate poses in the warm-up.

Jill claimed this made her reluctant to teach adventure initiatives and Yoga in the future,

With Ken it was much easier to deal with all that, with two adults for some reason it made it much easier...it makes you just want to do the things you know, and that you know you won't get the kind of response.

Ken also believed that he lacked sufficient content and pedagogical knowledge to teach adventure and Yoga on his own,

With Jill we were able to compliment what each of us knew and could do...I know on my own it wouldn't be nearly as good...I can really see myself struggling with figuring out what activities to do, and how to frame them...to adjust to what the students do.

The no-sport teacher and the mostly-sport teachers were motivated to move beyond the emotionally comfortable safe zone of sports and taught non-sport physical activities. They discussed their own personal values, physical activity participation, their PETE program, and various teaching colleagues as especially crucial factors to be considered when they made this decision. For Joe, Susan, and Tracy increasing curricular diversity beyond sport became a mainstay, while for Ken and Jill it demonstrated to be especially fragile.

### *Summary*

This first theme explained how seven of the teachers' sport-dominant physical activity biographies strongly informed their emotional affinity and desire to include a large amount of sport in their curricula. These teachers repeatedly voiced being reluctant and uncomfortable

teaching specific non-sport physical activities because their values, content knowledge and skill, pedagogical knowledge, and overall feelings of comfort and competence were heavily grounded in competitive sport, and they felt this did not translate to easily or fluently to teaching non-sport physical activities. The no-sport and mostly-sport teachers demonstrated variable success in their attempts to move beyond the comfortable safe zone of sport curricula, with Ken and Jill reverting back to their sport-dominant curricular comfort zone after losing one another as teaching partners.

### Theme Two: Sport Friendly Institutional Culture

In theme one we saw the teachers' physical activity biographies were heavily grounded in competitive sport, and resulted in values, content knowledge and skill, and pedagogical knowledge and dispositions that led them to seek the emotionally comfortable safe zone of sport based PE. This second theme expands on the first by explaining how institutional factors coalesced to privilege sport-dominant curricula by creating an easy, comfortable, and friendly place to work. The teachers deliberated on their school administrators and classroom colleagues, their physical education colleagues, and the facilities, equipment, and resources they had available, as particularly friendly to teaching sport and unfriendly, even hostile, to the inclusion of non-sport content. I investigated a range of institutional factors that I expected would or could impact the teachers' content decisions. These included: grade level content expectations published by the state's department of education, state and national standards, district curriculum physical education colleagues, professional development opportunities, norms and trends in the field of physical education, school principals, district physical education coordinators, students' parents, facilities, equipment, climate, and liability/risk management issues. Of these factors, the teachers' school administrators and classroom colleagues, liability concerns, their physical



education colleagues, and their facilities, equipment, and resources, surfaced as the most influential factors when they made content decisions. These influential institutional factors serve as the basis for the following three subthemes. Subtheme one focuses on the role administrators and classroom colleagues played in creating a conciliatory atmosphere for exclusively-sport or mostly-sport curriculum. The second subtheme explains the role physical education colleagues played in the preservation of sport as the dominant form of curricular content. The third subtheme details how the facilities, equipment, and resources that teachers had available functioned to make teaching a range of sport content an easy and ready-made choice.

#### *Administrators and Classroom Colleagues*

There were three ways that administrators and classroom colleagues created a context particularly conducive to sport based physical education. First, school administrators provided teachers with a significant amount of freedom to teach whatever content they desired, and did not push them to include new, innovative, or non-sport physical activities. The teachers believed that their administrators provided them so much latitude to make content decisions because physical education was not one of their priorities. Furthermore, teachers felt their classroom colleagues similarly did not value their work or subject matter. Second, in addition to, and in spite of, feelings of freedom and marginality, these PE teachers internalized a sense that administrators and classroom colleagues expected them to teach sports and use the swimming pool, and that they were confused, even upset, when the PE teachers taught non-sport activities. Third, teachers cited liability concerns related to their administrators, which seriously limited their perceived ability to teach non-sport physical activities.

Each of the teachers interpreted their relationship with, and the actions of, their school's administrators as providing them with a considerable amount of autonomy to determine the content and physical activities they included in their curricula. For example, Annette said,

I have a ton of freedom...I really can do what I want, no one ever comes down here...no parent complaints...no principal, or teacher or administrator has ever told me, or for that matter, even made me feel like I should be doing this or not doing that.

Jill explained the amount of freedom she held to make her own content decisions in physical education was a significant increase in relation to the tight expectations she experienced as a science teacher. She said, "No not at all, it's not like when I was in the classroom, so much was predetermined...I have way more freedom now...he [the principal] has never suggested I do things." In addition, Susan also said, "I think I have a lot of liberty to make my own decisions in what I teach... my admins [administrators] don't really voice concerns." Joe also said, "They [the school's administrators] hired me because I'm the expert, so yes, I do feel a lot of freedom to make curriculum decisions, and I expect that."

The teachers believed that according to their administrators, the subject matter of physical education was not a top priority, but other academic classroom subjects and the high stakes testing that came with them, was their primary concern. Annette explained, "I think so little attention and resources are paid to PE because of the concentration on test scores...you can't blame them [the principals], higher test scores can attract students, which increases how much money the state gives them." Ken also said, "I just feel he [the principal] has his hands tied with testing, the restructuring, and the academic areas...he's never down here...checking what I teach...he's got bigger fish." Bill also said, "They [school administrators] would have to actually

come down here before I said they cared what I taught...if it's not test scores, it doesn't matter for them."

The teachers also felt that their classroom colleagues viewed physical education as trivial and unimportant when compared to the purposes and pressures experienced by 'academic' classroom subject teachers, especially with respect to the present education climate and focus on test scores. For example, Tracy explained being aware of negative and derogatory things that classroom teachers said about physical education. She reflected,

Things get back to me...when the science, and math, and language teachers say this and that about what I do...when they say we don't matter because we don't test and that all we are is play time, fun time...that we don't add anything to education...that hurts.

Joe also said, "Classroom teachers are under fire with this infatuation with test scores...that doesn't help the already negative view they have of us, because we're not helping them with that directly, nor are we subject to the same pressure." Joe went on, "so not only do some teachers resent this, when combined with their already stereotypical views of us as a bunch of jocks...it makes you feel less valued."

The teachers clearly felt a lot of freedom to make their own content decisions, and that this freedom was partly rooted in the marginal consideration administrators gave physical education. Strangely enough, I found that when administrators and classroom colleagues did share their values, thoughts, and opinions with respect to physical education curricula, it was in support of sports and use of the swimming pool. These opinions and values were most readily revealed when teachers made moves toward, or actually taught, non-sport physical activities.

All eight PE teachers indicated that administrators expected them to teach sports in physical education. Sometimes administrators made these opinions well known. Annette said,

“Our admins are big sports people, they like my program...that I teach a lot of sports...we have all this newer sports stuff and they expect I use it.” Josh explained that his current assistant principal was an enthusiastic supporter of the school’s sports teams, and viewed physical education as a place to help identify and develop athletic talent, and so expected Josh to teach a lot of sport. Josh disclosed,

He [the assistant principal] really supports the school’s [sports] teams...I know he supports my teaching of sports...he’ll come by and ask when are you doing basketball? Softball? Soccer?...he tells me he’s glad I can help coach up kids and encourage certain kids to go out for teams...in the past if I’ve skipped or put off a unit he’ll say, hey, when are you going to do this or that...so I can report to the coaches.

During my time with Josh the assistant principal came to the gymnasium on numerous occasions to talk with him about the sports he was teaching, how certain kids were performing, and if there were any problems in the class. I witnessed one exchange between Josh and his principal where they discussed one girl’s dislike for dodgeball and sports being so powerful that she desired to drop music (a class she really liked) in order to rearrange her elective schedule so she did not have to be in physical education. At no time did the principal ask Josh to stop teaching dodgeball or add non-sport content, but instead requested if the girl could “just do the work-out” and be his “helper” the rest of the day, to which Josh agreed.

In addition to sports, administrators also expected teachers to utilize the school’s swimming pools. Annette and Bill taught at schools in a district that was contemplating closing all of its middle school pools. Consequently, both teachers felt compelled to teach a significant amount of swimming because the school’s principal and surrounding community fought to keep the pools open. Annette clarified, “its like, the community and principals put up a fight to keep them [the swimming pools] open, so I feel like, I need to be teaching much more than normal in order to justify that decision, so we do it all year.” Bill revealed that while Alice did almost all of

the swimming instruction, if she were not available he would likely assume this responsibility. He rationalized, “they [school’s administrators] made it clear they wanted that pool being used given what everyone went through to keep them [the pools] open...so, yes, if Alice wasn’t here or couldn’t teach a class, I would need to.”

Classroom colleagues also expected PE teachers to include a significant amount of sport in their curricula. Ken elucidated, “it’s funny cause all they expect to see you teach are sports, but they also think it’s unimportant...you’re just in a no win with many classroom teachers.” Susan affirmed, “When teachers ask about what I teach, they ask about specific sports...when are you doing basketball? Soccer? Tennis? Softball?...that is all they think we do.”

While the physical education content and curricular opinions of administrators and classroom colleagues were sometimes openly shared, their opinions were more readily revealed when mostly-sport teachers attempted to, or actually taught, non-sport content. Mostly-sport teachers often maintained that when administrators would see or hear about a physical education teacher teaching or desiring to teach, non-sport content, they quickly made the suggestion that the teacher stick to a sport-dominant curriculum. For example, Tracy recounted that on one occasion her principal walked in while students participated in Yoga. Tracy and the students were performing a pose (Shavasana) that had students lying on their backs. The principal later confronted Tracy and “encouraged” her to teach sports and that the activity he saw was not appropriate for physical education. Tracy explained,

So one time we were finishing a flow...we were in Shavasana...and my principal came in to get a student...later he took me aside and said, ‘I really think you should stick to what the kids want to do, like basketball and football’ and that ‘all that lying around was not beneficial’ that it ‘wasn’t PE.’

Ken and Jill also described their principal's concern when they taught Yoga. They believed that he was concerned that parents' assumptions about religious ties would spur calls and complaints.

Jill said,

He really hesitated with Yoga...at one point he said something like, 'I don't know, I don't want parents calling complaining about religious stuff' and then he said 'why don't you just teach a sport instead, our kids love sports and you have all the stuff you need.'

Ken confirmed this, "yeah...it was the same thing with adventure...both times he said he didn't understand why we just didn't teach sports...it's not surprising, that's what he expected because that is what he had in his PE classes." Joe analyzed how his principal had on repeated occasion inquired as to why he was not teaching any sports in his curriculum, and that this questioning made Joe nervous. Joe paraphrased,

so he comes up to me and says, 'so how about teaching this sport thing,' and so I look at him and say, come on, tell me how many sports you play now...and every time he says 'good point' and walks away...but he keeps asking...it's getting annoying, but I'm also starting to worry a little...like he's building a case, cause I'm supposed to be teaching sports.

Classroom colleagues also revealed their sport-dominant thoughts and opinions when the teachers taught non-sport physical activities. Susan explained that classroom teachers openly criticized her creative dance and aerobics units. She said, "One science teacher basically told me he couldn't believe I made kids dance and do aerobics, that he would just teach sports, and he pretty much suggested that was what I should be doing." Ken and Jill contended that some classroom colleagues were confused, even annoyed, when they taught adventure initiatives. Ken said,

ha [laughs], yeah, that was a bit of a shock...here we [Jill and Ken] were trying to do something different, and here were teachers looking at us like 'what are you doing'...one

teacher even said, 'I expected you to get the wiggles out of them, if I knew this was what you were doing, I would have taught them basketball myself.'

The third way administrators functioned to create sport friendly physical education curricula concerned liability. The teachers alluded to their administrators' actions and thoughts regarding the liability concerns inherent in certain non-sport physical activities as critically limiting their being included in the curriculum. Some administrators rejected a teacher's request to teach certain non-sport physical activities due to perceived risk, or fear of being liable for potential injuries that could result from participation in those activities. Annette alleged not being able to get a climbing wall or "cardio equipment" because of the "fear of injury." Annette approached her principal to get "a treadmill, or exercise bike, and elliptical" and a climbing wall, "just like the elementary schools had." Her principal told her that, "the district's insurance won't cover climbing walls at the middle schools, and that the elementary ones might need to come down." Annette felt powerless and had little desire to push the issue. She said "I don't want to fight that battle...it's the same for everyone, and I doubt they would make an exception for me." Bill, as the school's after school club organizer talked with his principal about the possibility of starting a skateboarding club (something a particular group of students requested he teach in physical education). Bill's principal immediately rejected the idea and noted that even if the district's policy on skateboarding did not exist, he still would not allow it because of liability concerns. Bill explained, "He told me the district has a no skateboarding policy...that they are not insured for it." Bill continued, "He also told me that even if the policy wasn't there, that he still wouldn't let me do it in PE or the clubs, because he couldn't have kids breaking limbs or worse."

Instead of directly telling a teacher they could not teach a particular activity, administrators who had liability concerns regarding certain physical activities would put up barriers or strongly suggest to a teacher that they not teach the activity. Joe recalled an idea he had to take his students to a local fitness center well known for its physical size and the wide variety of physical activities offered by the club. Joe noted his principal strongly urged him to “stay in the gym,” that he would not provide financial support, and would make Joe address all the insurance liability work. Joe explained,

I asked about taking students to a fitness gym for a field trip, and he told me, ‘why don’t you just stay in the gym’...ha...and he said that there wasn’t money available to pay for it, and I would have to do all the legwork figuring out all the insurance details and waivers that would be needed...I just wanted to go to a gym...what do you think he would say about a climbing wall? Or skiing? Or snowboarding?

Joe also mentioned his principal was not friendly to the idea of teaching martial arts,

So martial arts, I have tons of know-how with that...I mentioned it to him one day and he was like, ‘ahh, I don’t know, I don’t think you should, why don’t you just keep doing what you are doing.’ He was worried about kids fighting at lunch and on the bus, and then I got nervous about that too.

Susan recounted that while her principal originally allowed her martial arts teacher as a guest instructor and was “ok” with Susan teaching martial arts in the future, but after witnessing part of a lesson, he had “serious reservations” about allowing Susan or anyone to teach martial arts in the future. She said, “At first he was fine, he was like ok...then later, after it was over, he said he had serious reservations about any more martial arts going on in there...he was concerned about liability...if kids used it on each other.”

In this subtheme we saw how administrators and classroom colleagues created a context particularly conducive to sport based physical education. These teachers’ feelings that they had



the freedom to teach whatever content they desired was simultaneously accompanied by a belief that physical education was not a priority or valued by both administrators and classroom teaching colleagues, as well as a strong sense that administrators and classroom colleagues expected them to teach sports and use the swimming pool. The teachers also cited liability concerns related to administrators and non-sport content and that both administrators and classroom colleagues would be troubled when the PE teachers taught non-sport activities as factors that contributed to most teachers' desire to incorporate sport-dominant curricula in their programs.

### *Physical Education Colleagues*

This subtheme explains the role physical education colleagues played in the preservation of sport as the dominant form of curricular content. While it is true that each teacher was ultimately responsible for the classes they were scheduled to teach, and had autonomy to teach non-sport content, I found two interrelated ways that PE colleagues played an influential role in seven of these teachers' sport-dominant content negotiations. First, the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport PE teachers with whom I worked had sport-oriented colleagues who did not want to talk about physical education content. The assumed place of sport among exclusively-sport teachers, mostly-sport teachers, and their colleagues, generally afforded everyone a comfortable work situation. It reaffirmed to these teachers that sport was an integral part of the physical education curriculum.

Second, on the occasions when mostly-sport teachers attempted or desired to add non-sport physical activities to the curriculum, sport-oriented colleagues used power tactics to solidify the position of sport in physical education. This was most readily seen in the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' discussions of either periodically or regularly

merging their classes together. The merging, however, only happened with sport content. If a mostly-sport teacher sought to merge classes to teach non-sport content, their sport-minded colleagues rejected the request. The mostly-sport teachers interpreted their colleagues' reluctance to merge classes in these instances as making it difficult for them to teach certain non-sport content, and hesitant to consider teaching these and other non-sport physical activities, because they believed past rejections were a signal to the response they could expect from future requests. Teachers were slow to push their colleagues for fear of ruining what they saw as a comfortable work environment. In a more pronounced example, Ken revealed how three PE colleagues explicitly prevented him from teaching non-sport physical activities in his physical education classes. The combined effects of these dynamics, when viewed in conjunction with all the teachers' sport backgrounds and expertise, reinforced the dominant position of sport in these physical education teachers' curricula.

When I asked the teachers about the content conversations they had with their PE colleagues I got a range of answers that all pointed to their colleagues not needing to, or not wanting to, have conversations about curriculum. Some teachers claimed it was simply "understood" that sports would be taught in physical education, that these conversations happened long ago and they did not feel the need to revisit them. Other teachers claimed a lack of dialogue occurred when their sport-minded PE colleagues were part-time instructors, and were happy to teach the sports the full-time PE teachers included in their curricula.

Tracy highlighted that despite having one other physical educator in her building, they rarely if ever talked about content, and when they did, they only discussed sports. She said, "we have one other PE teacher...we talk about sharing space and borrowing each other's equipment...but that is it." She also noted, "We might share what we're teaching at that

moment...basketball, floor hockey...but it rarely gets deeper than that...he's not interested in talking about the different things I teach." Susan shared a similar sentiment regarding her sport-minded teaching colleague. She said, "no, we really don't compare curriculum notes...it's kind of understood, he does what he does, and I do what I do...I'm not eager to talk with him about some of the [non-sport] activities I teach, I doubt he'd listen." Bill disclosed that he and Alice had been teaching together for some time and had worked through their content and curricular decisions long ago and "just know" the sports each would teach to their students. He said, "When I first got here we talked about what we were good at teaching, and what we liked to teach...not much has changed since then...we just know what we'll teach." Annette, as the "unnamed head of the department", and her teaching partner whose primary responsibility was teaching health, also did not talk about the content that would be taught in their physical education classes. Like Bill, Annette recalled going through content changes long ago, and did not feel the need to revisit these conversations with a teacher, that she felt, really looked to her in deciding the content to include in his classes. She clarified,

I went through all those curriculum changes before, and I don't think talking with him about content would benefit anyone...he teaches mostly health...I'm really the unnamed head of the PE department...I mean, he comes to me, asks what I'm doing, and then does the same thing.

Josh also mentioned that he did not have conversations with PE colleagues regarding content. He reflected that when he first arrived at his current school there was one other veteran PE teacher who was perceived to hold a lot of power in how physical education was taught at that school. Josh could barely recall if they ever talked about content. He said, "I honestly can't remember if we ever talked about curriculum...if we did it was short, we were both on the same page with

sports.” Josh also mentioned not having conversations with his current PE colleague whose primary responsibility was teaching health. He said, “she is only here part-time...split between here and the high school, and even then she teaches health mostly...so I barely see her...when we do talk it’s about students or housekeeping things.”

The teachers’ general lack of dialogue about PE content was accompanied by the second way their sport-oriented colleagues reinforced sport-dominant curriculum, the practice of merging classes. Merging classes, however, only happened with sport content among both exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers. Bill described how he and Alice merged their classes as a regular practice, and how this afforded students “choice” that allowed each of them to teach the sports with which they were most fluent. Bill and his teaching partner would “combine” their classes at the beginning of a unit. Students would then be afforded a choice between two different sports. Bill said, “One choice that I want to do, and one my partner wants to do.” Bill explained in detail the content he and his partner taught, “I teach exclusively, hockey, soccer, disc golf, the racquet sports, she does lacrosse, fencing, field hockey, swimming, volleyball...after 20 plus years we don’t talk about a whole lot, we just know who is going to do what.” Josh explained that when he started teaching at his current school, merging classes was a common occurrence that made teaching easier, and that he went along with the practice partly because he saw value in it and partly because he did not want to rock the boat. He reflected,

when I got here Lou said this is what we do [merge classes] and I went along with it, I was new, and I didn’t want to come in and step on his toes...besides, it was much easier to teach having two bodies, and with set-up and take down, teaching skills, dealing with behavior problems...two bodies made it all easier.

Josh desired to add his now standard “work-out” to the classes he and Lou taught, but did not suggest adding this content out of fear that Lou would reject the idea. Josh said, “I didn’t want to step on his toes...like take my kids and do my own thing?...I didn’t want it that bad.” Josh noted he and his current teacher partner combined their classes, and that they then followed his plans for the lesson. Annette also explained that her classes would be periodically merged with her teaching colleague’s, and that this was never really an issue, because they were teaching the same sports. Annette said, “yeah, we put them together every once in a while if we lose a gym, or whatever, but content is never an issue because we do the same things.”

Mostly-sport teachers also periodically merged classes with their colleagues. Ken said, “For some class periods if we are light, we’ll combine classes, which is fine because we do the same sports at the same time...it does make it easier to facilitate and manage with two adults.” Tracy also said, “In the winter sometimes we have to share the gym for a few weeks at time...we’ll combine classes and do a sport like basketball or floor hockey.” If a mostly-sport teacher, however, sought to merge classes to teach non-sport content, this request was rejected by their sport-minded colleague. Susan shared that, when she arranged for outside teachers to guest teach non-sport content such as, contemporary dance, martial arts, and strength training activities used by the U.S. National Guard, her colleague had no interest in participating or merging classes. She explained, “You think he’d be all over it, to let the kids do something other than sport, but nope, no interest.” Jill also voiced that part of her reluctance to teach Yoga during the past year was not having the support of Ken, in addition to her current PE colleague’s reluctance to merge classes in order to help her teach it. She said, “Capture the flag, soccer, flag football no problem merging classes there, but when I ask to do it so he can help me teach Yoga, no way, not a chance.” Tracy stated that she had on multiple occasions approached her colleague

about teaching his PE classes Yoga, while he taught her classes sports. Here she described the emotional frustration over a response she perceived as a blatant lack of interest,

I said to him, if you want, I'll come in and teach your class some Yoga, and you can teach sports to mine...that that they might like it...the first time I think he pretended he didn't hear me. The second time he scoffed at the idea.

The mostly-sport teachers contended that their colleagues' reluctance to merge classes in these instances made it difficult for them to teach certain non-sport content. Tracy explained, "When we have to share the gym, it is impossible to teach Yoga with all the noise and no divider...he won't put classes together so I could teach Yoga, not even any cultural games, but we agree on sports, so we just do those." Jill also stated, "I honestly don't feel comfortable teaching Yoga without another adult to watch, manage the boys...and teach poses." Susan also conferred that without another adult, ideally her PE colleague, she had a hard time believing she would teach martial arts again. She said,

you saw it...we had five adults in the room and I was still nervous...ideally if he [PE colleague] helped out it would make things better, even easy for him since we would have to put our classes together and all he would have to do is manage.

The reluctance of the PE teachers' colleagues to merge classes in these instances also made it difficult for them to consider non-sport content that required considerably more preparation. For example, Ken felt of his teaching colleague, "if he's not willing to help with kickboxing, or adventure initiatives, how could I count on him to help with going off campus to a climbing wall or on a bike ride." Susan also argued, "you mentioned camping or going skiing or ice skating...I would need even more help than I did with the martial arts lesson, and if he won't help with martial arts, then why would he help with any of those?"

The mostly-sport teachers, however, were slow to push the issue, as they were concerned that forcing the content issue too far would jeopardize their ability to maintain the positive working relationship they had with their colleagues. Susan divulged, “At the end of the day I’m not going to push it...he’s easy to work with and be around, and he is a good guy, and I don’t want to ruin the good relationship we have.” Tracy also remarked, “I don’t push it because, other than the Yoga and cultural games stuff I get along with him, and I don’t want to come to work fighting with someone.”

Ken encountered a similar, yet more pronounced example of sport-minded colleague discontent when he attempted to diversify his PE curriculum beyond sports during the year. Ken often touted the influential role that Jill (his former teaching partner) had played in their plans to continuously develop a diversified curriculum that included activities such as Yoga, adventure initiatives, kickboxing, dance, and disc golf, in addition to the sports content that was already part of their curriculum. Ken related, “Our goal was to keep adding one or two things a year, like dance and kickboxing, and it was just frustrating to have all that change with Jill having to leave.” Ken’s new teaching partner had a different content philosophy, and was not willing to teach non-sport content. This lack of willingness was facilitated and compounded by the district requiring same-level schools to “mirror” one another. Per the district policy of schools “mirroring” one another, Ken shared the details of a meeting with his new PE colleague, and the two physical education teachers from the other school, to deliberate on the content they would include in their curricula,

The four of us met at the beginning of the year for about three hours. We took all the things that we were doing and tried to come up with a list that we all could agree on...I had a ton of stuff listed, and their lists had only sports. I had adventure activities, dance, and Yoga, and we ended up keeping it all off the syllabus because the other teachers didn’t want to add it...I really felt frustrated and outnumbered.

Ken explicated how this meeting progressed, as certain content was assumed for inclusion,

There was little discussion if we would do things like basketball, soccer, volleyball, and floor hockey, but rather, how many times would we do them. We really built the curriculum around team sports...we talked a lot about why not to include things like Yoga, but never why we would do basketball or soccer.

Ken believed the dominant inclusion of sports was the result of teachers' comforts as well as a fear that if a parent or administrator asked why a particular activity was not being taught, they would then have to teach that activity or activities. Ken added, "The other three didn't want things on the syllabus that they weren't comfortable teaching...they felt that if it was listed, and a parent asked, a principal could make them teach it." Ken felt that his current teaching colleague and the other schools' PE teachers, "aren't even aware they do too much sport. I'm aware and I still struggle to include other things. I'm at least trying to battle it or change it, but they think I'm nuts and are totally unwilling."

This subtheme discussed two interrelated ways that PE colleagues played an influential role in seven of these teachers' sport-dominant content negotiations. First, the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport PE teachers had sport-oriented colleagues who did not want to talk about physical education content. The assumed place of sport among these teachers and their colleagues generally afforded everyone a comfortable work situation. Second, when mostly-sport teachers attempted or desired to teach non-sport physical activities, their sport-oriented colleagues used power tactics, such as only merging classes to teach sport content and not agreeing to include non-sport content in common curriculum, as ways to solidify the position of sport in physical education. The combined effects of these dynamics reinforced the dominant



position of sport in these physical education teachers' curricula and made them reluctant to challenge this reality and possibly jeopardize a comfortable work context.

*Facilities, Equipment, and Resources.*

This subtheme explains how the facilities, equipment, and resources the teachers had available (when viewed in light of their previously discussed sport-dominant curricular safe zone) made the inclusion of a range of sport content an easy and ready-made choice. This subtheme also explains how the same teaching contexts also made teaching non-sport content particularly difficult, or rather, *difficult enough* for the teachers to give minimal consideration to such activities. Each teacher worked in schools that had a gymnasium(s), outdoor fields, and plethora equipment specifically designed and equipped to facilitate teaching sports. For the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, the facilities and equipment available to them were well suited to their sport-dominant curricular and pedagogical expertise and familiarity. So much so, that the exclusively-sport teachers often viewed their teaching situations as ideal. Both exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, when asked about the equipment or facilities they would like to have most, or if they would change anything about their facilities, single-mindedly presented answers concerned with sport. Mostly-sport and no-sport teachers, and one exclusively-sport teacher, however, also listed a number of non-sport physical activities they would be comfortable with and willing to teach, but did not do so, citing their facilities and equipment as primary reasons why these activities were left out of their curricula. These teachers felt the cost and inherent nature of some of these non-sport physical activities made it especially difficult for them to realistically be included in the curriculum. In contrast, both exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers were able to acquire equipment to teach sport and non-sport

physical activities because they, for one, desired to include them in their curricula, and secondly, they were seen to fit within their facilities and teaching contexts.

Each teacher worked at a school that had facilities and equipment that were designed and well positioned for education on a variety of sports. As seen in the case studies, each teacher had a gymnasium (if not two or more) that contained equipment and markings for sports such as basketball, volleyball, badminton, and soccer. These schools also had equipment closets filled with balls, bases, nets, bats, racquets, and paddles to teach these and other sports.

For the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, the facilities and equipment they had available were well suited to their sport-dominant curricular and pedagogical expertise. This is evidenced in a number of ways. First, exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers often portrayed their sport-friendly equipment and facilities in a positive light. Ken said, “In a lot of ways we are really blessed. We have a nice gym with a divider, plenty of field space, and lots of equipment for the sports we teach.” Indeed, the exclusively-sport teachers readily described their teaching resources as “ideal.” For example Bill shared,

I really am blessed here, we have two gyms, I have all the sports stuff I need, a lot of it is new...the old sports stuff is not really expensive and is easily replaceable with PTO money...I have a pool, a large field...I couldn't ask for or want anything else.

Josh also noted, “To be a good teacher you have to have equipment...a gymnasium, a pool, field space, and whatever else...as you can see, I don't have everything, but I have a lot, pretty ideal really.” Like Josh and Bill, Annette had nothing bad to say about her facilities and equipment, and while she noted other things like a climbing wall, treadmills, and elliptical trainers “would be nice to have” she still found her situation “almost ideal.” She queried, “Do I have everything? No, but I have a lot more than most...what I have is almost ideal.”

The second stream of evidence that demonstrates the easy fit between the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' curricular safe zones and expertise and the resources they had available was revealed when we debated changing their facilities and equipment. When I asked the teachers to share any facility changes they would make, or equipment they would like to have, no matter how "unrealistic" this change might be, their answers initially and repeatedly pointed to, one, not wanting to change anything or, two, the inclusion of sports that were not already part of their curricula.

When I asked the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers what they would change about their facilities and/or equipment they often responded with answers like "not much," or "maybe some new softball gloves," and struggled to come up with things they would change. Josh and Bill both assured me they would not change anything about their facilities. Josh replied, "Nope. I'm set." Bill also stated, "I really can't think of anything." Susan also struggled to think of changes she would make to her school's equipment and facilities. She exclaimed, "gosh, off the top of my head, no...you would think I could, but no." Exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, when they did name equipment they would like to have, most often, pointed to sports equipment. Ken, Tracy, Susan, Josh, Annette, and Jill all mentioned they would like to get equipment to teach lacrosse. Tracy said, "Lacrosse would be neat, but we don't have the stuff...that's the first thing that comes to mind...not much else." Ken also said, "I think it would be a really neat activity to do...I asked the district coordinator if we could get a cheap set [of lacrosse equipment]." Jill voiced she would like equipment to add "golf" and "tennis" to her curriculum. She added, "I would do tennis in the gym, or in the parking lot, and golf on the fields, but I would need clubs, racquets, and balls."

While majority of the teachers' initial answers concerned sport content, six of the teachers eventually shared particular non-sport physical activities they would strongly consider teaching, but pointed to the lack of resources, equipment, and/or *on-site* facility constraints limiting their ability to implement the activities. This first quote from Jill was very similar to the thoughts many teachers expressed about their facilities, equipment, and resources; that even if they wanted to, if they did not have what they needed on-site, they could not teach it, and instead taught physical activities appropriate to the existing equipment and facilities. Jill declared,

One huge consideration is what I have. I can't really teach something if I don't have the equipment or if we don't have the space, like golf, cycling, tennis, and swimming, those are things that I'd love to teach, but we're just not built for it...I have stuff for a lot of sports so that is the majority of what we do.

Ken noted he would have liked to teach step aerobics but that he did not have steps. He asserted, "I would like to teach step aerobics, but we don't have any steps, and there just isn't enough money in the budget for new PE equipment." Jill also shared that her school had a field space that was designed to be an ice skating rink, but expressed concerns over a lack of equipment and resources which kept her from teaching this activity. She opined, "We have that space...but we don't have skates...where am I going to get enough skates, and how would you make the rink? Who can do that?" Susan and Tracy both claimed they would teach swimming if they had pools. Tracy declared, "I would love to teach swimming, but we don't have a pool." Susan also maintained, "I would teach swimming for sure, but the building doesn't have one, the lecture lesson on water safety is the best we can do...that is one thing I would change." Joe also identified a number of activities he does not teach,

There are a lot of activities I don't seriously consider for a number of reasons, one of which is equipment and being in a gymnasium...things like biking, camping, swimming, skiing, in-line skating, those things might be cool, but we don't have equipment for them, and they can't be done in the gym.

Joe, like Annette, and many of the mostly-sport teachers, disputed teaching physical activities that could be done in a gymnasium or on a field because, in addition to logistical concerns, he did not believe resources would be available for him to take students to off-site facilities in order to learn specific physical activities. In these cases, the inherent nature of certain physical activities clashed with a lack of resources, equipment, and facilities, and made their inclusion "unrealistic." Joe expanded,

Some of those things I just named, especially biking, camping, skiing are logistical nightmares, one, the school day is not going to be rearranged for me...and where is the money for all that? It is simply unrealistic to expect me to teach stuff when I don't have the equipment and I don't have the resources to take hundreds of kids on a trip.

In a similar fashion, Annette conveyed that she enjoyed cycling and would consider teaching this activity, but had a number of reservations, some of which included not having bikes or helmets, in addition to her school's limited facilities. She declared,

How awesome would it be to have a biking unit, but then I think, everyone has to have a helmet, a bike that fits them properly, with 30-35 kids, that freaks me out, actually going out on the road and leaving the campus area. Who is going to help with that? I can't do it alone. Then where do I store them?

Tracy shared a similar thought with regard to teaching a variety of outdoor pursuits. Tracy's pedagogical concerns examined in the previous theme were exacerbated by not having the equipment to teach these activities. She detailed,

Well, things you mentioned like biking, camping, in-line skating...I think they would be cool, and I can certainly do all of them, but I really struggle to see how I would realistically teach those things...they are expensive, we don't have the equipment...you can't do them in the gym...I really wouldn't know where to start.

As I spent more time with some teachers, however, I found that they often went to great lengths to obtain equipment needed to teach the physical activities they were particularly passionate about, especially when the equipment was relatively cheap and could be easily taught within their school's facilities. These efforts were most often seen in teachers attempting to acquire equipment to teach sports. Josh's desire to teach basketball was so strong, that it led him to file a grievance because he felt he did not have enough basketballs to properly teach this activity. He divulged, "For a while we only had a few good basketballs...I have classes of over forty kids, so I filed a grievance with the union and the district to get new ones...it was just ridiculous we didn't have those." Josh also described how he approached the Parent Teacher Organization for money for ping pong tables, as a way to "get equipment for activities we could do in the smaller gym." Annette's desire to teach Crossfit activities in her class led her to approach her principal about buying some equipment. She remarked, "I'm waiting for equipment to come in, like wall balls, things for Crossfit. Then we can do different kinds of ab [abdominal] work, and wall slams...the money came from the principal...I had to beg a little bit." Bill shared an atypical example in his continued teaching of dodgeball. He expressed un-sureness of its appropriateness and revealed why he had purchased alternative equipment so he could continue

to include the game without feeling guilt. He conjectured, “I’ve come to believe that maybe dodgeball isn’t the best game, so now I use cloth Frisbee’s to play...it’s my way of keeping it and taking out the harm, then I don’t feel bad about doing it.” Susan explained how she contacted the United States Tennis Association years ago because she knew they would come to her school, and provide her with racquets, nets, and supplies to teach tennis. She reported, “I did that years ago...I knew that if I called they would come out and bring a bunch of racquets and nets and leave them for the school.” Tracy reported “running everywhere” in her efforts to find a specific kind of ball to teach Takraw, a popular sport in Thailand.

Teachers also sought resources and equipment to teach physical activities other than sport. While still teaching together, Ken and Jill’s desire to include Yoga, and adventure activities, led them to create their own adventure equipment and purchase Yoga mats with their own money. Jill rationalized,

Yoga was something Ken and I really wanted to include so we bought mats...the stuff we got from the workshop showed us how to build the [adventure] equipment, so we took some time to do that because we really wanted to add it.

Ken and Jill both pointed to the professional development session on adventure that they attended as part of their PETE program, as an especially crucial resource to draw from in their effort to include these activities. Susan pointed to her relationships with various physical activity professionals as an important resource to draw from when she attempted to teach particular non-sport physical activities. She acknowledged, “I couldn’t have done that initial [martial arts] lesson without my instructor and his mats, or that strength development lesson without my national guard friend coming in with all his stuff.”

This subtheme explained how the facilities, equipment, and resources the teachers had available made the inclusion of a range of sport content an easy and ready-made choice, and how the same teaching contexts also made teaching non-sport content *difficult enough* for the teachers to give minimal consideration to such activities. For the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, the facilities and equipment available to them were well suited to their sport-dominant curricular and pedagogical expertise and familiarity. Mostly-sport and no-sport teachers, and one exclusively-sport teacher, felt the cost and inherent nature of some of the non-sport physical activities they were willing to teach made it especially difficult for them to realistically be included in the curriculum. In contrast, both exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers were able to acquire equipment to teach sport and non-sport physical activities because, one, they desired to include them in their curricula, and two, the activities were seen to fit within their teaching contexts.

### *Summary*

This second theme expanded on the first by explaining how institutional factors coalesced to privilege sport-dominant curricula by creating an easy, comfortable, and friendly place to work. The teachers discussed their school administrators and classroom colleagues, their physical education colleagues, and the facilities, equipment, and resources they had available as particularly friendly to teaching sport and unfriendly, even hostile, to the inclusion of non-sport content. The teaching context each teacher found themselves in made teaching an exclusively-sport or mostly-sport curriculum a more valued and much easier choice for seven of the teachers.

### Theme Three: The Conserving Effect of Aggressive and Athletic Male Students

The third theme analyzes how the teachers' perceptions of their students affected their content negotiations, and cites several student factors as being especially important to this



process. These factors, however, were most often positioned in ways that supported the teachers' sport-dominant curricular safe zones. For the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers, some student factors were discussed as influential in their decisions to leave the safe zone of sport, to develop a new safe zone, and also for some teachers to return to their sport-dominant curricula after a brief stint teaching non-sport physical activities. Aggressive, vocal, and athletic male students played an especially pronounced role in most teachers' unwillingness to include non-sport physical activities. I investigated a range of student factors that I expected would or could impact the teachers' content decisions. These included: student physical activity interests, popular culture/media influences, socioeconomic status/social class, race/culture/ethnicity, gender, religious institutions, and spiritual/deeply meaningful movement experiences. Of these factors, the teachers' perceptions of their students' gender, socioeconomic status, culture, and physical activity interests were found to be the most influential factors and therefore serve as the basis for the following two subthemes. The first subtheme demonstrates how teachers interpreted their students in ways that supported their sport-dominant curricular safe zones. The second subtheme explains how teachers' perceptions of students impacted some teachers' willingness to venture outside their curricular safe zones, their ability to create new safe zones, as well as why some returned back to their sport-dominant curricula.

*Teachers' Perceptions of Students: 'Sports...by far the most popular'*

The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers discussed perceptions about their students that almost always confirmed and supported the sport-dominant curricula they developed for their PE programs. These perceptions materialized through six different vantage points. First, teachers often claimed that curricular decisions were ultimately theirs and they knew best the physical activities were most popular among their students. Second, when they

talked about listening and conversing with students about physical activity interests it was often in reference to quelling the requests and complaints of dominant and athletic male students. Third, this in turn often left the voices and interests of most girls and non-dominant boys marginalized. Sometimes exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers pointed to specific sports as meeting the desires of female students. Other times exclusively-sport teachers said female and non-dominant male students did not participate in sports or enroll in sport based elective physical education for reasons unrelated to curriculum, despite some glaring evidence to the contrary. Fourth, the considerable resources accessible to many of these suburban students were situated in ways that supported their sport-dominant curricula. Fifth, physical activities known to be culturally valued by students from non-white cultures and ethnicities were never seriously considered by any of the teachers because they claimed that teaching various sports and physical activities met any requirement of cultural consideration. Sixth, specific non-sport physical activities that students explicitly expressed an interest and desire to participate in were often claimed to be too controversial.

*Physical education curriculum: 'Students want sports.'* The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, in support of their sport-dominant curricular safe zones regularly positioned sports as the physical activities that were most popular among their students. While mostly-sport teachers acknowledged that not all students liked sports, they were quick to point out that the "majority" did, to justify their sport-dominant curricula. Exclusively-sport teachers would not readily acknowledge non-sport physical activities as being relevant or popular among their students. There were instances where teachers discussed and I witnessed student actions that pointed to the students' dislike for particular competitive sport content. Both exclusively-

sport and mostly-sport teachers were quick to discount these instances of student displeasure in defense of their sport-dominant curricula.

Mostly-sport teachers were quick to emphasize sports as the physical activities that were most popular among the “majority” of their students. Susan explained her teaching of sports as confirming the desires of her students, “At this age, there are certainly exceptions, but for most students, the mainstream activities, hockey, basketball, baseball, football, soccer are big, volleyball, golf are the most popular...so it’s good I do these things.” In another example, Jill acknowledged that, while not all students liked sports, she pointed out that the “majority” did. She asserted,

I think it motivates most kids to have a goal for an activity, that there is an end to their efforts, and sports have that. I’m learning some kids don’t really like competitive sports, but the majority do, and the athletes really want to play them...I think it is important I do the things they like the best.

Exclusively-sport teachers, in contrast, were slow to acknowledge physical activities other than sports as being popular among their students, and again pointed to sports as being most relevant among their students. When Bill discussed the physical activities his students participated in, he exclusively focused on sports,

We have a very involved and busy student population in general...sports are really what are most popular...they do things like basketball, football, hockey, soccer, baseball, track and field is big, softball, swimming...lots of really strong programs in those sports.

He continued, “Students take PE to do the sports they are familiar with, that they are good at...to practice what they know...what they do at school and away from it...and my job is to support that.” Josh, in another example, focused his responses only on students who signed up for

physical education, not on the broader student population that I repeatedly asked about during the interviews. Josh believed,

Sports for sure, those are by far the most popular...most all of the kids who sign up for gym are athletes, and athletes want to play sports...they like to be competitive, and they enjoy playing sports outside the ones they play regularly.

There were moments, however, where exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers acknowledged and I witnessed students' discontent for the sport content they were engaging with, as well as actions that signaled their desire for non-sport content. The teachers most often dealt with these occurrences by ignoring them, claiming that particular content was "good for students," or challenging inferences I made from my observations. Josh admitted his students hated the sport-based warm-up they do every class, and that he simply ignored their complaints about it. He said, "yeah they complain...the daily workout are things I did as an athlete and that I had my athletes do...it's the thing kids hate the most, but we don't do a ton of it, and I'll be honest, they need it." Susan also maintained that since she could not please every student with every activity she taught, for the most part, she ignored student complaints about her curriculum. Here she discussed students who complained about softball, "you can't please all of them all of the time...I ignore most of it, especially the ones where all they do is complain...like with softball, we get a lot of complaining then...you just have to let it go." Annette also explained that she often ignored student complaints about having to swim or run the mile, and that particular students would sometimes complain about playing sports. She said, "When we do things like the mile, even swimming, goodness even sports like volleyball, students will complain...I just ignore most of it because you can't please all of them all at once."

Some of the more distinct examples of teachers defending their sport-dominant curricula came from discussions about my observations of student actions. While Susan included many aspects of the Sport Education model, there were no game modifications and regulation rules were in place. During game play for a volleyball lesson I witnessed many students frowning, looking bored, standing still with their arms to the side, not moving for a ball hit their way, and many students would feign from a volleyball moving swiftly in their direction. I heard many students say, “this sucks,” as the majority of points started and ended with an unsuccessful serve or a maximum of two-hit rallies. At the end of class I heard students say under their breath, “finally, it’s over,” “what a waste,” and “think I might forget my clothes tomorrow.” When I asked Susan about her students’ words and body language during the volleyball lesson, she said,

I don’t know what you saw, I didn’t see or hear that at all. I know for a fact most of these kids like volleyball. I saw them having fun, trying hard, working in their team, building skills...once we play more it gets better...it’s just the first day.

Another example emerged through Annette’s perception of her students’ reaction to Crossfit activities. In my observations I regularly saw students not performing the activities as instructed, groaning while participating, or skipping activities all together. This was her response to my observations,

I mean, I don’t think all the students like all the Crossfit stuff, but I think most do, like the spiderman, cartwheels, and inchworm, I hate those things too, but they do it and it’s good for them, and good for their health, and that’s important...I bet once the equipment comes in and we do those exercises their attitude will change.

*Dominant, athletic males: ‘all they want are sports.’* While the teachers were quick to dismiss most students’ dissatisfaction with sport-dominant curricula, some students’ voices were

discussed as influential. The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers often pointed to the dominant, athletic, and sport-minded males' requests and complaints with respect to particular content and physical activities as being especially influential in how they made curricular decisions. In short, athletic males made it clear they wanted to participate in sport, and if the activity being taught was not a sport, they were especially vocal in their displeasure and often very disruptive during the lesson. Sometimes the disruption continued to the point where they would convince the teacher, to teach a lot of sport, to shorten the lesson or unit on non-sport content, to seriously question teaching non-sport content in the future, or to stop teaching the non-sport activity altogether.

Tracy felt that most of her dominant and athletic male students would not participate in an activity unless it was a sport and that they would vocalize their displeasure with any non-sport content. Tracy believed,

All they want are sports...they won't participate unless it is basketball, football, or floor hockey. After that, everything is a struggle, and when they don't want to do something, they tell you and everyone else in the room all about it.

She explained that this resistance led her to teach many team sports as a way to quell their complaints and keep them active, "their complaining influences me to include lots of the sports they want to do, because I want them [the boys] to be active and not sitting." In a specific example, Tracy explained how her "alpha males" can "ruin" activities like Yoga for her female students,

Well, the first thing is they, the alpha males, don't participate and make obnoxious comments, and the other, and unfortunately these two are related, is the girls say that the boys look at them, like, sexually, and they think that the inappropriate comments are sometimes sexual in nature, and I believe them, shoot, sometimes they say inappropriate things to me.

Susan explained that the reason her creative dance and step aerobics units were significantly shorter than her typical units was because that was roughly the maximum amount of time vocal athletic males would hold back any complaints or resistance to participating in these activities. Susan observed, “That is about as long as the more vocal boys can take it for. Any longer than that they get too rambunctious.” When I asked “what boys” were the most resistive, Susan stated, “it’s always the athletes, and really, the super aggressive and opinionated ones...like I said, three days is about as long as I can get them to go before they start disrupting everything.” Annette confessed her reluctance to teach dance, Yoga, and Tae-Bo, was in part because of the response she witnessed when local PETE majors came to teach this content to her students. We discussed,

A: When they come in to teach those things, they [the students] really struggle...those days really feel like pulling teeth.

I: Why? Who do you have to pull teeth with?

A: The athletes mostly, and I don’t blame them, I’m an athlete and I can’t get into the dance or Tae Bo and Yoga either.

I: What about the kids who do like it? Do you see kids who enjoy those activities?

A: I don’t know, maybe some might be enjoying it, but the complaining and screwing around is just so loud, it’s all I hear...It might be that the majors are still learning, but I wonder if the inclusion is worth the hassle.

In another similar example Josh admitted his “athletes” would not be open or interested in hip hop dance lessons, “all the athletes would hate doing that, and who could blame them, so would I.” Jill shared one of the primary reasons why she did not teach Yoga anymore was because of the resistance she perceived from dominant and athletic males,

It’s the ultra competitive boys...they were screwing around the whole time, falling down, making noise, laughing at others...every pose was too easy, or too hard, or it hurt, or they didn’t like it, they would do it wrong on purpose, or didn’t want to do it, I didn’t know to respond to any of that...so now I just integrate poses in the warm-up.

*(Most) girls and non-dominant boys' voices (un)knowingly marginalized.* The amount of time and attention paid to vocal and aggressive sport minded males often left the non-sport physical activity interests of most girls and non-dominant boys leveraged out of the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' content decisions. On the one hand, some mostly-sport teachers knew this was occurring and felt a sense of guilt for not meeting the desires of these students. On the other hand, the exclusively-sport teachers claimed girls and "less assertive" boys were not interested in PE because they had other classes they were more interested in taking, or because their parents made them take these classes, not because they lacked interest in sport based PE.

Mostly-sport teachers, inhibited by the amount of influence dominant and athletic males had on their content decisions, often felt they marginalized the non-sport physical activity desires of female students and less athletic males. Ken explained how he and Jill had planned to teach hip hop dance to their students but never "got to it" largely out of fear for how dominant and athletic male students would react,

That was one thing we even told students we would do was dance...and the girls kept asking, 'when'...even some lesser skilled boys would ask...and I feel bad that we never did it...its one of those things that after seeing some of the more hyper aggressive boys reactions to Yoga we got real hesitant to teach it.

Jill confirmed this, "we listed dance on our curriculum...right after we told them [female students] we were going to do it and they kept asking when and we kept saying soon... but we never did it, I kinda feel bad about that." Tracy also claimed that many of her female students voiced a desire to participate in various non-sport physical activities, yet she was "afraid" for how dominant athletic males would respond if she taught these activities. Tracy said, "My girls have made it well known that they want to hip hop dance, do Yoga, do more fitness, like step



aerobics...I'm really afraid to do them given how they [dominant athletic male students] ruin everything else, like Yoga." Tracy elaborated, "I really feel for the girls here. Being a girl myself in this atmosphere is very challenging. I can only imagine what they are going through." She also said,

They [female students] want classes on their own; they don't want to participate with the boys. I guarantee if the alpha males weren't in there everyone else would have jumped rope, and I could do more dance stuff, and more Yoga, and Pilates...I really wish I could do more of what they want, I feel guilty sometimes.

Tracy continued, "It's not fair to them [female students] but I feel so powerless...even if you make them sit [male students] the girls still won't participate cause the boys are still in the room making them feel uncomfortable."

In contrast to the guilt and negative feelings that the mostly-sport teachers experienced, the exclusively-sport teachers were rather dismissive of the notion that gender should or could impact the content of their curricula. Annette, Josh and Bill taught elective classes that were significantly male dominated and all were dismissive of my questioning whether the content they taught had an impact on this. All the exclusively-sport teachers reasoned that their classes were disproportionately balanced by gender due to: a limited number of elective choices, girls being "more interested" in subjects other than PE, and girls' parents making them take particular elective courses. Annette stipulated, "we're limited in the number of electives we have...most girls are more interested in things like foreign language or art or choir." Josh also said this about the elective choices of his female students, "it has nothing to do with the curriculum...many of our students have parents who make their kids, especially girls for some reason, I don't know why, they make them take music and a foreign language or art." Furthermore, Bill concurred,

A lot of girls have parents who make them take foreign language and music, and since they only get two electives that's it, so it's less to do with me and what I teach and more about what their parents want them to have.

This contrasts with the reason why Bill maintained there are so many males in his class. He explained that the homeroom teacher played a heavy hand in this, "when they do their schedules, the homeroom teachers make the boys take PE."

The exclusively-sport teachers were dismissive of the notion that a more diverse curriculum would encourage more female students to sign up for PE. Annette claimed there was "no guarantee" she would attract more female students, but felt that her overall enrollments would "definitely" drop. She said, "Even if I did more things girls might like, there is no guarantee I would get more female students, but I would definitely lose a lot of boys... and enrollment overall would drop...I need to keep the athletes happy." Bill was also dismissive of the idea that presenting a balanced curriculum would encourage more girls to sign up for PE, "no, I don't think that would make any difference, we may not do some things girls want, but I already told you, we do softball, soccer, and volleyball for the girls, and the lack of electives is the reason why."

Josh considered most girls as "less assertive," and thus less inclined to take sport based physical education. He said, "Girls are simply less assertive and generally enjoy other things...for most girls, being less assertive, sports are not their thing." Despite evidence to the contrary, Josh was dismissive of the role dance and other content might play in girls' physical education enrollment, "they have plenty of opportunities to dance, in here isn't one of them...that's not my job...we do volleyball and softball for the girls."

Unlike Bill and Annette, Josh's stance, however, did not go unchallenged. During my first visit I witnessed Josh accuse a girl of "faking sick" because "she just doesn't want to play dodgeball" and the girl subsequently confirmed to me that she was indeed faking sick. In another example, a group of girls approached Josh asking why he did not teach field hockey, hip hop dance, the Wii, swimming, lacrosse, or tennis. These girls made powerful arguments for the inclusion of each activity, such as their desire to engage in it, that they had access via after school and community programs, and that these activities were "cool." Josh deployed many reasons for not teaching these activities, from lack of equipment and time, to large class sizes, to disconnect with the official district curriculum, to lack of widespread student interest. The group of girls questioned each of these rationales, most forcefully about the lack of equipment by pointing out: (a) how expensive and little utilized the ping-pong tables were, (b) that field hockey supplies were in the equipment closet, (c) that the school had tennis courts, racquets, and a pool, and (d) that they could bring in a Wii and music to dance to and *run the dance class themselves*. Josh abruptly ended the exchange and instructed the girls to "go play."

*Suburban resources: Affluence as a convenient base of support.* I found that all eight teachers worked in suburban communities that had wide ranges of programs and facilities available for adults and youth to participate in many physical activities. When I asked the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers if they had considered the resources available to their students when they made decisions about the content they included in their curriculum, I found their answers shifted depending on whether they taught that physical activity. Exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers often highlighted the heavy presence of competitive youth sport programs in their surrounding communities as justification for their sport-dominant curricula. At the same time, however, they also considered the numerous suburban resources available for

students to be physically active in non-sport physical activities, as the reason for not feeling obliged to include this content in their curricula.

The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers were of the opinion that their students came from “sport heavy” communities which included a significant amount of competitive and elite travel teams, in conjunction with recreation leagues, and felt that by teaching sport they could support their communities’ values. Annette claimed her students had ready access to sports in the community, and that her teaching of an exclusively sport curriculum made intuitive sense and showed that she supported the values of her students and the community. Annette stated,

Sports are very prevalent in the community. Most kids have easy access to teams. Even for the kids who don’t have a lot of money, school teams are cheap, and I know scholarships are available for the club teams. It makes sense to me to teach what they know, what they are good at and what they are doing in the community...it shows I support them.

Susan shared a similar belief,

Our communities have a lot of sports teams, lots of travel teams, for boys and girls, and for all different sports. My teaching it kind of reinforces what many of them are already doing, and for others who are not already playing, if they really liked one of the sports I do, it could motivate them to join or try out for a team or start playing.

The same exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers pointed to the equivalent community resources as absolving them from teaching various non-sport physical activities. For example, Ken discussed not teaching camping because he believed a variety of familial and community resources were available for kids who wanted to participate in that activity,

A lot of the families have parents with white collar professional jobs and money to take time off if they want to do things, like camping...I bet many of them have cabins and

camp already, so I really don't worry about teaching it...and there is plenty of scouting troops around for kids to do that.

In another example, Bill positioned the significant resources many of his students had to draw from as a reason why he avoided teaching non-sport physical activities. He said,

Just because I don't teach it doesn't mean it's not available through the rec and ed department...there are so many things out in the community, if I don't teach it someone does, and there are plenty of resources, in the families and the community, for kids to do different things.

Josh expressed a similar position,

I may not teach everything that students want to do, but that is why we have the Rec and ed department...to fill that gap...besides, this area is soo well off, if kids want to do something you know the parents will find the money to do it.

*Student culture: 'This sport covers that.'* Another student factor accentuated by all the teachers in support of their curricula involved their students' culture/ethnic/racial identities. Just as was seen with the teachers' perceptions of their students' socioeconomic resources, the cultural/ethnic/racial meaning associated with specific physical activities was used by the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers to support their curricula. All of the teachers taught in schools with a predominately Caucasian student population, and most treated any questions of student culture as meaning cultures and ethnicities 'other' than their own. While many teachers expressed an awareness of particular connections between certain non-sport physical activities and cultures, when I asked them why they did not teach these activities, all the teachers immediately indicated a sport or sports in their curriculum that met the criterion of cultural consideration.

Annette discussed having a considerable number of African American and Hispanic students. When I asked her if she considered teaching, and why she did not teach, activities such as hip hop dance or various forms of Latin dance, she pointed to the sports she had in her curriculum as meeting this criterion. She said,

I'm don't know any of that stuff you just mentioned...I know that [hip hop] is a big thing in their community, but basketball is big too and we do that, and plus we do swimming...and soccer is big in Mexico and other countries, and I do all of those.

Bill shared a similar perspective in a conversation we had on stepping,

I: Do you teach any stepping in PE?

B: No, it's too close to dance...I need to find a new club leader or it isn't going to be around.

I: Why don't you do it?

B: Me? No. That really isn't my thing.

Bill was receptive to the idea that various ethnicities and cultures had historic connections with particular physical activities, “at the end of the day, I agree that those connections are going on, and they might be important” but, “my thing is, I'm the teacher, here are your choices, and that is that.” In addition, Bill noted, “the stepping club was mostly Hispanic and African American students...we do basketball and soccer, and those are big in those communities, so we address that.” Ken demonstrated that he was aware of a high school in his district that had a stepping club for students, that this club was comprised solely of African American students, that he understood the historical and cultural connection this activity had for these students, and supported their being able to have the club, to the point that he would have to explain to other teachers who critiqued the club's existence why it was a beneficial outlet for these particular students. When I asked Ken why he did not also organize a similar club, or teach stepping in his physical education classes he claimed a lack of content and pedagogical knowledge, his own

racial/cultural heritage, and the sports in his curriculum as the reasons for not doing so. He explained,

I could, but I'm not comfortable with that activity...I don't know any routines, let alone how to teach it...and for a White man to be teaching that, I don't know, seems kind of not right...I know that basketball has been an important sport in the African American community and we do that.

Jill, like Ken, Bill, and Annette maintained that teaching basketball and football was how she addressed considering her African American students' cultural connections with various physical activities. She observed, "I know club and hip hop [dancing] are important in their communities, but so is basketball and football, I do both of those."

*Popular/adolescent physical activity culture: "that's not dancing."* During my conversations with teachers, and observations of their interactions with students, it became readily apparent that students did indeed desire to participate in a number of non-sport physical activities. Some of these activities included skateboarding, Yoga, contemporary dance (e.g. hip hop, bolly hop, expressive, house/club), and swimming. These are some of the same activities found to be especially popular in adolescent physical activity culture, yet, some of the exclusively-sport, no-sport, and mostly-sport teachers dismissed including these activities on the grounds that they were too controversial due to concerns over religion, stereotypical reputations (i.e. skateboard culture), peer dynamics, or sexuality.

For Bill, Josh, and Susan hip pop or club (i.e. house) dance was deemed "not appropriate" for school physical education based on their perceptions that it was "sexual" in nature. This was Josh's response to my question about whether or not he would ever teach this form of dance to his students, "all that stuff...you see on TV...it's garbage...that's not

dancing...so, no”, he continued, “all the athletes would hate doing that, and who could blame them, so would I.” Similarly, Susan argued, “I really question how appropriate dancing like that is...I can’t see teaching it.” and Bill observed, “A lot of kids at dances dance this certain, um, way to rap and pop music...it’s so... sexually suggestive, I can’t believe it happens...I can’t believe that actually gets taught in PE...not in my room, it’s not appropriate.”

Yoga was another activity some of the exclusively-sport, no-sport, and mostly-sport teachers found to be too controversial. Susan shared that some of her students inquired about doing Yoga in PE, from which she expressed reservations due to the perception of Yoga as a “religious practice.” She said, “some students...three girls and a boy...asked about doing Yoga. I don’t know, the whole question of whether it would be teaching beliefs from a specific religious practice makes me nervous.” Joe expressed similar reluctance,

Some kids have put that [Yoga] down on their exit slips...things are hot enough with all the Muslim hysteria... I know you can teach Yoga in a secular way, but the last thing I need are parents accusing me of teaching some eastern religion in class.

In another example related to the school’s clubs, Bill (as the school’s student club supervisor) expressed reluctance to teach or run a skateboarding club that a group of students had inquired about, due to his own fears that this activity could lead to anti-social behaviors, “My thinking with skateboarding was it can lead to drugs and being destructive. No way was I doing it in PE, but if they really wanted it, at least an adult could supervise instead of them running around lawless.” Bill declared that he would not supervise this club himself and did not actively search for an adult to do so. The club never met.

Josh explained that he no longer taught swimming in his elective classes because of enrollment issues. When we discussed swimming, a variety of student factors emerged as



contributing to Josh's perceptions that his students disliked swimming, particularly the complications presented by some students' religious practices and peer dynamics. When I asked why he felt students did not want to swim, Josh said, "one reason is all the boy-girl stuff...boys, especially the ones with some chub, didn't want to wear suits in front of the girls, and the girls did not want to wear suits in front of boys." Josh later elaborated more, "and with who likes who, I'll be honest, I don't deal with that stuff, and being in a pool amps all that up." Religion also complicated matters, Josh revealed,

We have a good number of Muslim students and religious families, and there were just too many calls coming from parents saying this and that...my kid can't swim with others or boys, my kid needs to wear a special suit...that lowered numbers in a hurry.

Josh felt addressing these issues was not his responsibility and instead chose to drop swimming from his elective curriculum. He declared, "not my job to deal with all those issues, I don't think it's worth the headache to force kids to swim and I won't deal with every little thing."

The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers discussed perceptions of their students in ways that almost always confirmed and supported their sport-dominant curricula. The student perceptions that these teachers pointed to in defense of their sport-dominant curricula materialized and were reinforced from six different vantage points concerned with; the physical activities the teachers thought were popular among their students, student gender dynamics, the resources accessible to many of the suburban students, physical activities known to be culturally valued by students from non-white cultures and ethnicities, and specific non-sport physical activities popular among their students. The mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers' account of each vantage point functioned to preserve their sport-dominant curricula and to marginalize many non-sport physical activities.

*Moving Out of The Safe Zone: 'I know they like it'*

While it was clear that the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' perceptions of their students often functioned to confirm their sport-dominant curricula, there were on occasions student factors that swayed the no-sport and the mostly-sport teachers to move out of their curricular safe zones. The no-sport and mostly-sport teachers, while staunch in their belief that sport was the most popular genre of physical activity among their students, demonstrated an awareness of wider student physical activity interests. These teachers acknowledged knowing that students, especially girls and non-dominant males, already participated (or desired to participate) in activities such as yoga, hip hop dance, and martial arts. This awareness helped spur teachers out of their curricular safe zones, and the subsequent perceptions of students' positive responses to non-sport content helped create new safe zones for the no-sport teacher and some of the mostly-sport teachers (Susan and Tracy). At the same time, continued resistance from dominant and athletic male students contributed to other mostly-sport teachers (Ken and Jill) moving back to their sport-dominant curricular safe zones.

*Factors that led out of the safe zone.* The no-sport and mostly-sport teachers cited a number of student factors that helped spur their decision to leave the safe zone of sport-dominant curricula. Joe and the mostly-sport teachers knew that some students were interested in participating in non-sport physical activities that were popular in wider physical activity culture, and wanted to address these students' interests as best they could. In my prior discussion on the powerful role played by dominant and athletic males in the teachers' curricular decisions, one of the more pronounced and interrelated reasons they taught particular non-sport physical activities was an effort to "do something for the girls." For Joe, his decision to completely leave the safe zone of sports curricula, included consideration of gendered physical activity participation, but

went much deeper, and was spurred by the negative and anti-social behavior he witnessed from students when he taught particular sports in his classes.

Joe and the mostly-sport teachers felt that while “most” of their students desired sport-dominant curricula, that “some” of their students were interested in participating in non-sport physical activities, and they explained a desire to address these students’ interests. Ken said,

We have kids who dance, who do scouting, skateboard, and who aren’t very athletic sports-wise...we definitely wanted to do some things they were asking for, like dance and yoga, and adventure...things that allowed those kids to put their talents on display.

Tracy shared a similar awareness,

Not all students like sports, I know kids who do bmx, mma [mixed martial arts], I have a lot of skateboarders, a lot of girls have in-line skates, girls ask to dance and do Yoga...some kids are really into club dancing, I see them do it in the halls all the time...I really wanted to do some things for them.

The teachers’ awareness and desires to address their students’ diverse and non-sport physical activity interests were most often explained as a way for them to “do something for the girls,” as well as their male students who may have been interested in non-sport content. Tracy noted that her motivation to teach the strength and fitness course in her student teaching was out of concern for her female students, “I thought about trying to reach students, well girls really, who didn’t like PE, and so after talking with some of them, I heard they wanted to be fit, so I created the course around that.” Jill explained that she and Ken taught Yoga and intended to teach dance for this very reason. Jill reflected, “We felt strongly about doing dance, adventure, and Yoga... really to do something for the girls, and the not super athletic boys...the kids who

don't like sports got a chance to be the skilled ones for once." Susan also expressed that her creative dance and step aerobics units were mostly for her female students,

Step aerobics and creative dance are for the girls...I have some boys who like to dance, but really it's for the girls. Most girls are not into playing sports with the boys, and so those units give them, especially my dancers, a chance to shine.

Joe also felt that his not teaching sport was especially beneficial for his female students, as he believed his focus on flexibility and muscular and aerobic strength and endurance exercises removed much of the gender stereotyping and physical ability hierarchies in his classroom. He believed,

The only time I see gender differences is during sports, and it is because of the expected social role where girls are not supposed to be competitive, some girls are, but again they risk being called names. That is a great thing with fitness, it is an equalizer, there are no gendered dominant stereotypes for most all the fitness activities I do, so that pressure is gone for them [female students].

The perceived gendered hierarchies that Joe thought was blatant with sports participation, was part of his larger platform for choosing to abandon teaching sports in favor of his fitness focused curriculum. Joe felt that teaching sports in physical education was often times teaching kids "what they already know," namely, which students were good or bad at sports. He explained,

I think the number one thing socially, with identity, and how kids are known in school, is with sports...football player, golfer, basketball player...athletes already have that exposure and experience, so they don't need those things. Teaching sports in PE is teaching kids what they already know...who sits where on the physical hierarchy.

To illustrate his position, Joe shared the immediate challenges he faced during his first year teaching an elective basketball class at an urban city charter high school, in particular the racial

and cultural distance that existed between himself and his students as it pertained to basketball. He said, “You couldn’t talk to them about how to play basketball, they knew it all already, and they were not going to have this White guy tell them how to play.” In response to the lack of impact Joe felt he had on the class, he immediately drew from his PETE program’s teaching of the Sport Education model and noted some improvement. He felt, “it was certainly better, but only by half...half the students bought into it, and the other half were resistive to the roles, following rules, being referees...there was still way too much arguing and fighting.” Joe then explained how he abandoned both basketball and the Sport Education model in favor of content that he felt would remove the anti-social behaviors he witnessed,

I was just sick of the fighting, so I changed the content to something that wasn’t competitive, and I said we are going to do strength and conditioning, which is my bread and butter, and if they met benchmarks then they could go hoop.

*Student factors that led to new safe zones.* Joe and the mostly-sport teachers cited their students’ positive responses to their teaching of non-sport physical activity, as the most important factors contributing to the creation of new curricular safe zones. They rationalized that despite the resistance they witnessed from dominant, vocal, and athletic male students, the overwhelmingly (and sometimes surprisingly) positive responses they received from almost all students, female and non-dominant males in particular, was critical to their decision to continue teaching these non-sport physical activities in the future.

Joe reflected on the marked differences he saw in his classes when he dropped basketball in favor of strength and conditioning content. Joe believed a key component to the positive difference he saw in his students’ participation, concerned the switch in content to something the

students found “cool,” yet were not self-described experts, which provided Joe space to teach. He explained,

It’s their familiarity, they think they know it all with basketball...if you do something they find cool but they know they’re not experts in, that is where you can really make ground and teach things...when we switched to strength and conditioning the whole vibe in the room changed, my rapport was phenomenally better, I could actually teach them.

Joe felt that with basketball some of the boys had too much “on the line socially” which was the reason why there was so much arguing. He believed that switching the content “eased this.” He explained when he, “switched to strength and conditioning they responded much better...I felt there was too much on the line socially with basketball, and that lifting weights and doing conditioning drills eased that for most of them.” Joe admitted that after this experience he had become convinced that teaching sports in physical education was, again, teaching kids what they already knew and not beneficial. He stated, “we live in such a sports crazy society and kids know plenty about sports long before they get to me, and the kids who don’t probably aren’t interested...it just isn’t beneficial to teach kids sports in PE.” Joe continued, “I’ll never go back [to teaching sports] unless I have to...if someone makes me.” Susan too explained that the positive response she gets from her female students when she taught creative dance and step aerobics helped sustain a new curricular safe zone. She said,

I could have very easily just drop it, or shortened both units to a day, but so many of the girls get into it, you should see them, it’s like they get their chance to do what they want and they don’t mess around with it...how could I take that from them.

Susan also shared a story of a particular male student whose positive response reminded her that there were boys who liked to dance as well. She offered,

I had one boy, he really was a tough student, he never participated, I knew he had an uncle who would take him to the city to underground street dancing things...and when we did the creative dance unit he was amazing...the whole class was going nuts for him...for the rest of the semester we had a much better relationship, and that showed me that some boys do like to dance, it was important he got that chance, so again, that makes it tough to really consider shortening or dropping that unit.

Susan's students' positive reactions to martial arts was yet another instance where they affirmed her desire to teach this activity in the future. During the martial art lesson I witnessed, nearly every student significantly engaged with the activity. Students listened and watched intently during demonstrations, and were eager to ask a wide range of questions. At the conclusion of all four of the lessons students filled out reflection forms Susan had prepared. In response to the first question ("did you like today's activity?") all 150 students, except two, answered yes. In a free response section, one student put that they "liked it a lot and that that was good cause they normally didn't like gym class." Many students expressed interest in doing the activity again in both PE and possibly at the instructor's studio. Many students took information sheets and business cards when they left. I over-heard many students describe the activity as "very cool," "sweet," and "awesome." When I discussed the actions and words I saw and heard with Susan, she confirmed my interpretation of most students' positive experiences and said, "yeah, it went really well, they really liked it...I'm a bit surprised...I wasn't sure they would...I'll have to do it again." Ken and Jill also discussed the positive response they got from students when they taught Yoga and adventure. Ken stated,

With all the different things we taught last year, seeing that most kids enjoyed it, and a lot of our competitive/dominant males didn't, but many girls and boys who aren't competitive did, and they would often tell us how much they enjoyed it, and ask when we would do those activities again.

Ken also felt that these positive responses “encouraged us to keep adding things because we saw how the students liked it.” Tracy also felt that the positive responses she received from her students, in particular her female students, in spite of resistance from specific male students, confirmed to her that she needed to continue teaching Yoga and non-sport physical activities. She stated,

From the first time, they [female students] loved the Yoga and some of the cardio things we did, and they told me so...it is so rare kids tell you they love something you did, how could you not keep teaching it, even if some of the boys make it ridiculously tough.

Tracy, however, also speculated that some of her male students enjoyed Yoga as well. She said, “They may follow the lead of the alpha males, but I see their faces when we do certain poses, I know they like it.”

*Factors that led teachers back to sport-dominant curriculum.* Joe, Susan, and Tracy expressed that the new non-sport safe zones they created were all but sure to stay. Ken and Jill, however, explained how one particular student factor contributed to their retreat back to a sport-dominant curriculum; a curriculum that they both claimed to be more comfortable teaching to students. This situation was complicated for Ken given the institutional factors discussed earlier in theme one. Regardless, the crucial student factor that contributed to Jill and Ken’s move back to a sport-dominant curriculum concerned the resistance from dominant, vocal and athletic male students.

Jill stated a major reason why she was so reluctant to teach Yoga as a stand-alone unit anymore was the response from particular male students when she and Ken had taught it in the past. Jill said,



The things those boys were doing, screwing around just enough that I couldn't really say much, you know what I mean...like every pose was too easy, or too hard, or it hurt, or they didn't like it, they would do it wrong on purpose, or didn't want to do it, I didn't know to respond to any of that...so now I just integrate poses in the warm-up.

Jill elaborated on the particular boys that were being disruptive

It's the ultra competitive boys who get on their peers' case the most, and the ones who I have to talk to about putting others down...Their liking sport so much is a big reason they don't like Yoga, and were so resistive to adventure. It's cause they're not skilled, or the best at it, so they ridicule others to make themselves feel better.

Jill went on to say that the response from these male students not only made her hesitant to teach Yoga in the future but also to teach other non-sport physical activities. She admitted, "That makes me not want to do Yoga and adventure again...and if they act that way for Yoga, why would it be any different for stuff like dance and kickboxing." Ken also identified resistive responses from students when he and Jill taught Yoga,

When we taught Yoga, it did not look like a yoga class. They [specific male students] were very uncomfortable. They laughed and talked...it's hard to tell them that yoga has a silence and calm to it, and it's hard when they break the silence, and not everyone is there by choice, it certainly didn't look like the classes I've gone to.

The resistive disruption from particular males and an inability to "recreate" a typical Yoga session left Ken with reservations about teaching it in the future. Ken said,

It makes me uncomfortable if people come and watch and those boys who are continuously disruptive...it makes me think they are judging my ability to control the

class. That makes me hesitant to teach things in the future where it looks that way...like Yoga, dance, or kickboxing.

This subtheme explained that while it was clear that the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' perceptions of their students often functioned to confirm their sport-dominant curricula, there were on occasion student factors that swayed the no-sport and the mostly-sport teachers to move out of their curricular safe zones. The no-sport and mostly-sport teachers' knowledge that students, especially girls and non-dominant males, already participated (or desired to participate) in a variety of non-sport physical activities helped spur them out of their curricular safe zones. While the subsequent perceptions of students' positive responses to non-sport content helped create new safe zones for Joe, Susan, and Tracy, continued resistance from dominant and athletic male students contributed to Ken and Jill's move back to their sport-dominant curricular safe zones.

### *Summary*

This third theme synthesized how the teachers' perceptions of their students affected their content negotiations, and cited several student factors as being especially important to this process. These factors, however, were most often positioned in ways that supported the teachers' sport-dominant curricular safe zones. Especially pronounced was the influence aggressive, vocal, and athletic male students had on a teacher's willingness to include non-sport physical activities in their curriculum. The first subtheme demonstrated how teachers interpreted their students in ways that supported their sport-dominant curricular safe zones. The second subtheme explained how perceptions of students impacted some teachers' willingness to venture outside their curricular safe zones, their ability to create new safe zones, as well as why some teachers chose to return back to their sport-dominant curricula.

*Chapter Summary*

The main finding from this study revealed that the complex interplay of teachers' personal, institutional, and student factors, and the teachers' consideration of these factors, coalesced in ways that resulted in the perpetuation of competitive sport as the dominant content of their curricula. The first theme of this chapter explained how seven of the teachers' sport-dominant physical activity biographies strongly informed their emotional affinity and desire to include a large amount of sport in their curricula. These teachers repeatedly voiced being reluctant and uncomfortable teaching specific non-sport physical activities because their values, content knowledge and skill, pedagogical knowledge, and overall feelings of comfort and competence were heavily grounded in competitive sport, and they felt this did not translate to easily or fluently teaching non-sport physical activities. On the occasions that the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers attempted to move beyond the comfortable safe zone of sport variable success was seen, with Ken and Jill reverting back to their sport-dominant curricular comfort zone after losing one another as teaching partners.

The second theme expanded on the first and explained how institutional factors coalesced to privilege the mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers' sport-dominant expertise and curricula by creating an easy, comfortable, and friendly place to work and teach sport. Specifically, school administrators and classroom colleagues, their physical education colleagues, and the facilities, equipment, and resources that the teachers had available were particularly friendly to teaching sport and often inhospitable to the inclusion of non-sport content. The wider school contexts made teaching an exclusively-sport or mostly-sport curriculum a more valued and much easier choice for seven of the teachers.

The third theme, building from the first two, demonstrated how the mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers' perceptions of their students were most often positioned in ways that supported their sport-dominant curricular safe zones. Especially prominent was the influence aggressive, vocal, and athletic male students had on a teacher's willingness to include non-sport physical activities. While the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers shared perceptions of students that contributed to their willingness to venture outside their curricular safe zones, their ability to create new safe zones was heavily influenced by the combined effects of personal, institutional, and student factors which were all heavily skewed toward sport-dominant curricula.

The teachers in this study, to varying degrees, lacked some combination of the values, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, equipment, facilities, and (needed) support from colleagues that were seen as integral and/or required to teach certain non-sport physical activities. This perceived 'deficit', strongly contributed to the teachers' reluctance to integrate specific non-sport content at the risk of looking foolish and unknowledgeable in front of students, especially aggressive and dominant males. This reality also made the mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers hesitant to challenge comfortable and sport-friendly teaching contexts. The combined effects of factors from all three areas (personal, institutional, and student) made teaching non-sport physical activities particularly challenging for some of the mostly-sport teachers, and lead other mostly-sport teachers to return back to their sport-dominant curricula.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions during curriculum construction. Approaching this study from a qualitative and interpretive perspective was crucial in my ability to conduct an in-depth investigation of how each teacher's perspective of, and interactions with, a range of personal, institutional, and student factors influenced their decisions related to content and curriculum. The main finding from this study revealed that the complex interplay of teachers' personal, institutional, and student factors, and the teachers' consideration of these factors, coalesced in ways that resulted in the perpetuation of competitive sport as the dominant content of their curricula. In this final chapter I conclude the study by linking the findings to the previously reviewed literature.

### *Chapter Organization*

This chapter contains five sections. In the first section I look to tie the findings to the theoretical framework that informed this study. Sub-sections included in this first section will address Bourdieu's theories of habitus and field (1977, 1978, 1984, 1993, 1999), teacher socialization theory (Lawson, 1983; 1988), teacher ideology (Apple, 2004), teacher emotion (Hargreaves, 1998; McCaughtry, 2004), curriculum as a political text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004), and a variety of critical social theories (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1991) each focused on a specific topic (e.g. social class, gender, race/ethnicity/culture, popular culture, ability etc.). In the second section I explore the potential implications of this study for the larger field of physical education. In section three I consider the implications this study may have for

physical education teacher education (PETE). In section four I explain the limitations of this study. In section five I share plans for future research.

### Theoretical Framework

#### *Habitus*

Consistent with Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus, the teachers in this study sought to reproduce the very conditions in which they had been socialized, and occasionally did so in very unpredictable ways (Bourdieu, 1993). Just as other physical education scholars who have utilized Bourdieu's theory of habitus have observed, the teachers in my study revealed personal reflections that led each of them to pursue careers in physical education, as this represented a domain of professional occupation both familiar and receptive to their desires to employ the sporting habituses they had extensively developed through their lives (Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Brown, 2005; Hay & Hunter, 2006). Unlike Brown's (2005) teacher Pete who pointed to his physical education experience as the space most influential in his desire to become a physical education teacher, the teachers in my study explicitly specified that their affinity for and expertise with sport guided their decisions to become physical education teachers.

The desire to enter a profession where sport was a historical and central characteristic contributed to the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' assumptions of sports' place in the curriculum. Similar to the way in which Hay and Hunter (2006) described teachers' conceptions of ability as "innate", the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers portrayed almost all content decisions in ways that were inherent, instinctive, and indigenous. This process is partially clarified by Bourdieu's (2001) concept of "anamnesis of the hidden constants" which explains that the habitus' embodiment of historical and societal practices produces continuity over time and is acquired in a way where one assumes what is learned as a "natural" part of life.

For exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers, teaching sport in physical education was constructed and portrayed as a very natural reality. Bourdieu (1977) discussed that one's habitus will limit creative maneuvering, and indeed there were few examples of seriously creative and atypical content decisions. While Joe's highly unpredictable abandonment of teaching sport could be seen as one such example, it is notable that he admitted abruptly deserting activities as his typical reaction once he had lost interest. For Joe, then, his decision to not teach sport can in part be seen as a general characteristic of his wider habitus.

Also in accordance with Bourdieu's (1977) habitus, the teachers' explanations for why they were more or less comfortable teaching particular physical activities revealed the deeply embodied aspects of the concept (Shilling, 2005). For the exclusively-sport teachers these embodied comforts included only sport. For the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers, their cognitive understandings, ideological beliefs, and access to knowledge were often not adequate for them to choose to include particular non-sport physical activities in their curricula. As these teachers noted, unless the values, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and feelings of competency were already "engrained" in oneself to a particular degree, if it did not already "roll off the tongue," a teacher was very hesitant, and for the exclusively-sport teachers often overtly resistive to the prospects of including specific non-sport physical activities.

The unpredictable, malleable, and dialectical aspects of Bourdieu's habitus (1977, 1999) were exemplified in a number of ways, most readily when these teachers were set in particular cultural contexts where agents and settings expected and supported teachers to stretch their ability to teach non-sport physical activities, albeit, in less than 'radical' ways. Ironically, and more often than not, wider institutional contexts were also seen to significantly contribute to the orthodox position of sport dominant physical education curriculum. Brown (2005) noted that

Bourdieu (1977, 1999) maintained that change in one's habitus will likely be the result of "dialectical" interaction with other agents. Examples of this were witnessed by the uneasy and sometimes difficult process described by Susan, Tracy, Ken, and Jill when they learned to teach content with which they were previously uncomfortable. The distinct yet similar physical education cultures (school based, PETE program, etc.) in which the mostly-sport teachers found themselves served as both catalyst and support system for each teacher's willingness to teach non-sport physical activities. Again, however, the larger school culture of the mostly-sport teachers was also less than hospitable to their efforts at diversifying their curricula. In contrast, all of the exclusively-sport teachers' contexts afforded them space and freedom in which to enact the orthodox position of sport dominant curricula that was amicable and non-threatening to their habituses.

*Primary and secondary habitus.* Urieta (2007) in his Chicana/o discussion of Latina/o students, described youth who developed a primary habitus from working class backgrounds and later formed a secondary habitus as they learned how to "play the game" of education dominated by (White) middle class America. In similar fashion, the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers in my study developed a primary and secondary habitus. While youth engagement in sport served as the foundational and dominant basis for the primary habitus of all eight teachers, the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers revealed a secondary habitus that emerged as a result of their non-sport adulthood physical activity participation. Ken, Jill, Tracy, Susan, and Joe all recounted developing values, an emotional connection to, content knowledge and skill with, sometimes pedagogical knowledge, and a desire to teach their students particular non-sport physical activities which they had taken up as adulthood practices. Just as Brown (2005) specified that dimensions of one's habitus can be stretched and altered significantly, I see these teachers'



adulthood non-sport physical activity practices added a dimension of meaning (i.e. personal wellness and enjoyment, in contrast to competition and winning) not born out of their sport participation, and thus, warrants a distinction. The secondary habituses developed by the students in Urieta's study (2007) allowed them to successfully play the game of U.S. education, but only to the degree that they could reconcile this newer disposition with their primary Chicana/o habituses and the educational contexts in which they found themselves. In a very similar fashion, the extent to which the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers were able to include specific adulthood physical activity practices was influenced by the contexts (e.g. equipment, facilities, principal support, etc.) in which they found themselves, as well as how agreeably they were able to reconcile their primary and secondary habituses. Significant disjunctures between the primary and secondary habituses of the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers included sport-dominant pedagogical knowledge not transferring to non-sport physical activities, fear of not being able to manage resistance from dominant and athletic males, and a lack of deeply known and easily recalled content and pedagogical knowledge and skill.

*Habitus and "distancing."* Bourdieu's (1999) idea that the habitus is not deterministic and holds potential for agency is evidenced by the effort the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers undertook in attempting to teach physical activities they were not familiar with as concrete examples of this agency. Concurrently, and in line with Bourdieu's interrelated theories of habitus and field (1977, 1984), these actions were constrained within the parameters of traditional physical education, as there were no 'revolutionary' or 'shocking' examples of these teachers pushing curricular boundaries. When I asked all the teachers why they did not teach various non-sport physical activities their answers often pointed to a lack of content knowledge/skill, pedagogical knowledge, values, and feeling competent among students. In

addition, often embedded in their answers (especially among the exclusively-sport teachers) were swift attempts to distance themselves from the question, and/or list a variety of reasons why they could not teach these activities and/or why they would not seriously consider them. The teachers were quick to indicate a range of personal, institutional and student factors as the reasons why certain content was not taught, regardless of how the same factors were appraised previously or thereafter. Various institutional and student factors were rarely discussed upfront by the exclusively-sport teachers as the reasons why they did and did not teach specific content. It was only when they perceived my questions as critique that these factors were highlighted in support of sport-dominant curricula. This conforms precisely to how Bourdieu (1977) explicates the habitus' inclination to aspire to strategically manipulate and increase the space between itself and that which is unfamiliar and viewed skeptically.

### *Social Fields*

Similar to Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993) contention, the physical education teachers in this study were homogenous and largely conservative, yet variant in their content negotiations, supporting Bourdieu's (1993) notion that fields are slowly evolving. For example, the teachers noted "doing things differently" from their own physical education teachers and their cooperating teachers, including consciously deciding not to reproduce particular curricula (most notably dodgeball and gymnastics) and teaching physical activities they had not experienced in their own physical education programs (e.g. Yoga, martial arts, creative dance, adventure initiatives). However, simultaneously they taught many of the same sports they had practiced in their physical education programs. While there were many examples from Annette, Bill, and Josh of working within cultures where curricular decisions were ready made and supported, conversely, the willingness of Susan, Ken, Jill, and Tracy to teach various non-sport physical

activities (or in Joe's case not teaching sport), was mainly the result of their working within cultural subsets where this action was 'allowed' to some extent. These examples concur with Bourdieu's (1977) theory of contested doxic spaces where change within is possible, but will be dialectical in nature. Indeed, when the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers sought to make changes, there was often variable resistance from the institutional culture and particular students. Both factors fed the mostly-sport teachers reluctance to such an extent that two would-be curriculum innovators retreated back to sport dominant curricula.

Congruous with Bourdieu's (1993) theorizing, the teachers' curricula revealed influences from numerous interrelated fields including sport, education, wider physical activity culture, and public health. None appeared to be particularly dominant, supporting Brown's (2005) notion that physical education is a "weakly autonomous" yet independent field. Even the most powerful field, sport, was not reproduced to its professed ideals, such as students, "learning useful skills, cooperation, leadership skills, submerging individual interests to a collective goal, and perseverance" (Siedentop, 2009, p.53-54). Some students surely made progress towards one or more of these ideals, but my interviews, observations and the literature base lead me to see that it was the dominant and athletic males who most often benefited, not the remaining class population. One possibility for this is the inclusion of so many 'compulsory' students with little to no experience with, or desire to play particular sports, sports in general, or sports in physical education (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010; Portman, 1995; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). While this study did not explicitly examine student voices, I witnessed many instances where I interpreted students' behavior as indicating that sport participation in physical education was a less than pleasant experience (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011).

Regarding the wider field of education, the physical education teachers construed that classroom teachers and principals had “more important concerns.” Undoubtedly, these PE teachers found themselves working in larger educational cultures that afforded them freedom due to the marginal and stereotypical views held of their subject matter (McCaughtry et al., 2006b). An additional reason for these teachers feeling immense freedom to teach whatever content they desired was their impression that no one was holding them accountable, including their own district physical education coordinators. In contrast to Bourdieu’s (1993) notion that fields establish autonomy due to professed and well defined stakes, I witnessed these teachers having immense freedom to operate as they desired (Ennis, 1994), despite the presence of state and district policies (e.g., standards, curriculum, content expectations, etc.) and district level coordinators. In fact, Bill, Josh, and Joe not only noted the lack of influence these policies and co-professionals exerted over their content negotiations, but went further by challenging the possibility that such a dynamic should ever exist.

Paradoxically, while principals and classroom teachers criticized the value of physical education ‘as just a bunch of games and sports’, the PE teachers perceived a certain expectation from these individuals that they ought to teach this very content. These professional colleagues, in addition to fellow physical education teachers, were largely critical of the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers including non-sport physical activities in their physical education programs. In short, the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers were in a ‘no-win’ situation and contributed to the mostly-sport teachers’ reluctance and hesitance to teach various non-sport physical activities, which again points to Bourdieu’s (1977) theory that social fields contain stakes that are contested and dialectical.

Freedom to teach the content one wanted also provided the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers space to include the adulthood non-sport physical activities that they especially desired to teach, thus illustrating the impact (albeit limited) of wider physical activity culture in these teachers' content negotiations. The mostly-sport and no-sport teachers' desires to include particular non-sport physical activities were successful to varying degrees and was impacted by a number of factors including: that they had the requisite pedagogical knowledge, had requisite equipment and facilities on-site, administrators would not disallow the teaching of non-sport activities, and their anticipation that students would respond positively enough for the class to run smoothly. For example, running or cycling was not taught due to a lack of pedagogical knowledge, and disbelief that students would enjoy this activity, as well as a lack of facilities and equipment. Simultaneously, Tracy was able to teach Yoga, Joe fitness activities, Susan martial arts and creative dance, and Ken and Jill adventure initiatives because these activities fit adequately/sufficiently within their teaching contexts.

While Bourdieu (1984, 1993) noted that the stakes of a particular field were irreducible to other fields, my impression is that this is currently not the case for physical education. Set in the wider and present political context, where the value and accountability of all government-run education is being called into question amidst the understandable, yet fundamentally flawed, inaccurate, and arguably "manufactured crisis" of U.S. education (Berliner & Biddle, 1997; Ravitch, 2010), numerous agencies have pointed to physical education as being one of many valuable spaces in fighting particular societal concerns, none more notorious than the professed 'obesity epidemic.' Notwithstanding the (il)legitimacy of the 'obesity epidemic' (Gard & Wright, 2005), Tracy, Joe, and Susan discussed and demonstrated making content decisions based on the health concerns of their students. These decisions, however, were not grounded in

contemplating and integrating new content or physical activities that they were previously unfamiliar with and/or well-suited to meet these objectives (i.e. Zumba, Pilates). In 1988 Lawson outlined eleven assumptions of curriculum construction grounded in socialization theory and cultural studies. This study provides data to affirm much of what is included in these assumptions, and more specifically, adds clarity and nuance to assumption six. In assumption six Lawson (1988) speculates that curriculum is in part “an exercise in problem setting” in which professionals contemplate societal issues and then either reframe the curriculum as a way to “amend” its legitimacy, or enact curriculum “change [that] stems from novel conceptions of broader problems for physical educators to solve” (p.276, 278). The exclusively-sport teachers made no such contemplations, rather, they sought to ideologically “amend” their curricula to secure legitimacy. The mostly-sport and no-sport teachers also sought to “amend” their curriculum, yet struggled to enact “novel” curricular changes that were grounded in their contemplations. Rather, the vast majority of the “amending” that came from the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers was grounded in their adulthood physical activity practices. Furthermore, if the physical activities offered in physical education curricula remain disparate from wider youth physical activity participation, as identified in this study, then the effects that school physical education can have on issues and concerns related to health and obesity (especially in the long-term) becomes particularly questionable. Or put more fervently, if PE curriculum continues to clash with the participation and desires of many of today’s (inactive) youth, then “PE-as-we-know-it is part of the problem” when it comes to addressing the physical activity, health, and wellness of today’s youth (Lawson, 1998, p.8)

*Teacher Socialization*

The teachers in this study explained sport-dominant acculturation and subsequently demonstrated a strong subjective warrant with sport-dominant curricula (Lawson, 1983, 1988; O'Sullivan, 2003). Schempp and Graber (1992) highlighted the apprenticeship of observation as influential in how teachers develop a sense the appropriateness of particular practices and behaviors. Indeed, I found these teachers' sport-dominant physical activity biographies that were later confirmed by their PETE programs provided all eight teachers with a ready-made template from which to make sport-based curricular decisions. Also consistent with the teacher socialization literature, Annette, Susan, Tracy, Bill, and Josh came from PETE programs that affirmed their sporting dispositions rather than challenging them (Brown, 2005; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Green, 2000, 2002; Hay & Hunter, 2006; Placek et al., 1995; Tsangaridou, 2006). All eight teachers explained that their PETE programs only allocated content courses marginal space in the curriculum. This conjures up debate regarding the heavy focus on sub-discipline based coursework and the marginal attention attributed to coursework focused on content (O'Sullivan, 2003; Siedentop, 2002; Ward, 2009). The focus on the amount of coursework allocated to the subject matter of our field is not a new topic of conversation, but in light of my findings and the disjuncture between student physical activity desires and the secondary physical education curriculum I, similar to Ward (2009), am curious to see if this is a discussion the field of physical education desires to revisit again more thoroughly and seriously.

In my study, I found that the exclusively-sport teachers in their staunch defense of sport-only curricula had adopted a custodial orientation (Stroot & Ko, 2006). The mostly-sport teachers also displayed aspects of a custodial orientation with their sport-dominant curricula, yet also showed features of a content innovation orientation through their inclusion of various non-

sport physical activities. The no-sport teacher, from one perspective, had adopted aspects of both content and role innovation orientations (Stroot & Ko, 2006).

The idea that the mostly-sport teachers sat firmly in the custodial camp is evidenced by their unquestioned acceptance of sport-dominant curricula. These teachers also demonstrated leanings toward a content innovation orientation in their unwillingness to be limited by the curricular status quo of sport. In addition, since the mostly-sport teachers did not fundamentally question the place of sport in the curriculum, but instead wished to diversify (not replace) their curricula, I see them as falling short of the spirit of the role innovation orientation (Stroot & Ko, 2006).

Joe's desertion of sport curriculum in favor of a curriculum completely focused on fitness development activities that have gained popularity in physical activity culture was born out of his rejection that physical education should contain sport content. This rejection was based on the belief that, from his perspective and experiences, sport in physical education was not beneficial for his students. This conviction and other aspects of his perspective led me to see Joe as demonstrating aspects of content and role innovation orientations. At the same time, however, fitness and health related content has had a long history in physical education (Kirk; 1998; Phillips & Roper, 2006), and so in one sense Joe's teaching of fitness could be seen as a custodial action. I feel, however, that since the specific content Joe included in his curricula came from more contemporary forms of fitness related physical activity, were not akin to physical training, that he employed more student friendly forms of pedagogy, and his critique of sport-based physical education was partly based on past inequities (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Carlson, 1995; Chappell, 2002; Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Harrison, 2006; Tischler



& McCaughtry, 2011; Vertinsky, 1992), all together preclude his teaching from being labeled custodial.

### *Teacher Emotion*

A significant aspect of Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1993) theory of habitus indicates the deeply embodied aspects of the various social fields that one inhabits (Evans, 2006). While not explicitly communicated in his theory, regular discussion of various features of embodied living point to the emotions that color life (Shilling, 2005). Bourdieu (1977) stressed the importance of the family in the development of one's habitus and preferences for physical activities. Starting at a young age, through adolescence, and young adulthood, each of these teachers expressed familial support for sport participation in deep, meaningful, and emotional ways. The teachers disclosed emotional currents as central to their being drawn to multiple sports and distancing themselves from other physical activities (i.e. dance) as they grew up, and often chose to participate in physical activities that were most similar to their developing sport-dominant preferences.

Remarkably, most of the content that all the teachers included in their curricula did not contain activities they portrayed as current passions, as the mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers taught sport content that were largely portrayed as past participatory preferences. Current adulthood physical activity obsessions of the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers had largely moved away from sport, where the most emotionally laden conversations were reserved for their adulthood non-sport physical activity participation. This supports Brantlinger's (2007) use of Bourdieu's theory of habitus in her demonstration that as members of dominant groups age (in this case physical education teachers) their habituses will display increasingly fewer emotional responses to particular forms of capital because the capital (in this case sports) is

deeply known and no longer novel, is perceived to be deserved, and natural, and thus, does not tend to induce significant emotions, unless its legitimacy is challenged. I found this was very often the case for the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers anytime they believed or felt I was challenging their sport-dominant curricula, even through innocuous, non-judgmental questions.

Some teachers, drawing from a secondary habitus, sought to teach physical activities they claimed deep emotional connection to (e.g. Tracy and Yoga, Joe and muscular and aerobic strength and endurance exercise, Annette and Crossfit, Susan and Marital arts), while other activities that teachers engaged with on a regular basis (e.g. running, cycling) were not included. Emotional connections with particular non-sport physical activities did not always result in their inclusion, but significantly improved their chances. The deep and significant emotional connection teachers had for particular content appeared to be a crucial asset in their desire and ability to acquire resources and endure resistance to its inclusion. At the same time, emotional connections (new and vivid, old and deeply familiar) also seemed to impact some of the teachers' abilities to accurately identify or acknowledge the emotional experiences of their students, most often with competitive sport content. This is of concern since previous literature has cited accurate emotional understanding as critical for teachers in their crafting of beneficial and meaningful educational learning experiences for students (Hargreaves, 1998; McCaughtry & Rovegno, 2003).

### *Teacher Ideology*

In accordance with the teacher ideology literature in physical education, the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers displayed variable degrees of sport-oriented ideology (Kirk, 1999, 2009; Green, 1998, 2000, 2002). When discussing their inclusion of sport in the

curriculum, all teachers, except Joe, demonstrated sporting ideologies similar to the teachers in Green's work (Green, 2000, 2002). For example, just as Green (2000) found, the teachers' sport ideologies bore the hallmarks of their past sporting experiences, all the mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers believed that the majority of their students loved sports (especially the sports the teachers had the most expertise and experience with), and some exclusively-sport teachers went so far as to label certain non-sport physical activities as "not PE" (Green, 2000; Lawson, 1998). In addition, similar to Green's (2002) teachers drawing of "ex post facto" (p.66) justifications for their ideological views, the teachers in my study positioned particular factors (institutional and student factors specifically) as the reasons why they chose and taught the content they did, when it was obvious that they taught the sports and activities they knew the best and/or had available equipment and facilities. In addition, the teachers expressed ideological values that link with previous research done on curriculum value orientations (e.g. Ennis, Ross, & Chen, 1992). Specifically, the teachers in this study instead of framing content in a way to match the values and learning outcomes they hoped their students would attain as a result of participating in specific content, demonstrated that their own *content specific values and ideology* drove their values with respect to what physical activities they would include in their curricula.

In contrast to Green's (1998, 2000, 2002) extensive work, I also found that no-sport and mostly-sport teachers had developed a secondary habitus grounded in their adulthood physical activity practices and held ideologies less conservative than the teachers from Green's research. For example, I found that the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers did not use physical activity and sport as interchangeable descriptors, and did not equate physical education and sport as completely synonymous. The mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers certainly assumed and

privileged sports' place in the curriculum, but the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers' curricular ideology included space for the physical activities they had taken up as adults, and in the case of Ken and Jill, content they had learned in their PETE program. Ken, and to a degree Jill and Tracy, even problematized aspects of their sport dominant content negotiations, and Joe deployed a convincing platform for why sport should not be taught in physical education at all.

### *Curriculum Politics*

Apple (2004) and others (Giroux, 1997; Spring, 2008; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004) have demonstrated that curriculum is anything but unbiased and neutral, and this was certainly the case in how the teachers in my study characterized aspects of their curricular negotiations. None of the teachers in this study cited any forms of policy (e.g. standards, content expectations, district curriculum, etc.) as influential to their content negotiations, and instead taught the content with which they were most comfortable. Unlike Sparkes (1991), I did not see the teachers' perceptions and lack of attention paid to the state's new content expectations, state standards, or district curriculum result in their feeling like their school-level reputations had been damaged or enhanced. The politics that seemed to matter the most for these teachers concerned those embedded within the institutional culture present at their school. Power dynamics between the teachers, fellow physical educators, classroom colleagues, and school administration proved to be the most important channels they needed to navigate when making curricular decisions (McCaughy, 2004, 2006).

Despite the professed irrelevance of various policies, significant in this study was the way teachers cited these same policy documents when they felt I was questioning their content decisions. Here the teachers deployed "cover stories" and "strategic rhetoric" to highlight the same documents and policies as a way to profess legitimacy for their content decisions, further

demonstrating how one's habitus will reactively seek to defend that which is close and dear (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Curtner-Smith, 1999; McCaughtry, 2006).

This dynamic foreshadows potential concerns with policy creation, implementation and evaluation and may relate to reporting and measurement, as detail and accuracy in reporting is crucial in assessing and evaluating schools and educational programs. For example, Fairclough et al. (2002) reported the type and number of physical activities that teachers included in their curricula. They did not discuss, however, *how much* of each activity was taught, nor was there any data on *how* the content was taught. In my study, I found that teachers would initially discuss their inclusion of specific non-sport content, but further investigation revealed marginal inclusion of certain activities, and less than 'ideal' teaching of others. For example, many teachers told me they taught fitness content to their students. When I observed exclusively-sport teachers, and Ken and Jill's teaching, however, the fitness I observed was more akin to a warm-up or traditional calisthenics in preparation for sport participation. Also, Annette initially told me she included Yoga, Tae-Bo, and Dance in her curriculum, but time spent with her revealed that she did not teach these activities, rather, it was local university pre-service PE majors who taught the content. Finally, while Susan claimed to teach students about water safety and hiking and camping etiquette, I question how much is learned in one day lectures on these topics.

Like Curtner-Smith's (1999) finding that the teachers in his study fell into conservative, eclectic, and innovative roles, I too found that teachers exemplified aspects of each role. I also found that some teachers did not fit into a specific role so neatly, and the personal aspects of the teachers, their secondary habitus, and contexts made classification particularly difficult. For example, Joe's criticism of sport instruction could imply that he was innovative, but that belies his complete abandonment of sport coupled with a total lack of content diversity outside of

activities focused on fitness development. Furthermore, Jill and Ken demonstrated adopting an innovation role as well, but not working with each other functioned as a serious detriment to this development. Ken and Jill's reversion to teaching largely sport content might lead one to see them as conservative, but in the absence of the hypermasculine and sexist perspectives that Curtner-Smith's conservative teachers held, makes classification from this perspective problematic.

### *Perspectives on Student Engagement*

The teachers in this study readily acknowledged the role that particular social issues played in students' general engagement in school and physical education, but struggled to acknowledge or demonstrate that these same issues had impacted their curricula. Hay and Hunter (2006), drawing from Bourdieu, theorized that individuals are embodied within fields and fields are simultaneously constituted by the various habituses that are a part of them. This study showed how the teachers privileged and bent to the will and desires of athletically minded students despite the acknowledged presence of students who came from and embodied aspects of a wider variety of social positionalities. Teachers often considered student factors in contradictory and marginal ways when they negotiated their content decisions. Anytime they felt their curricular negotiations were being questioned, these teachers readily pointed to the inclusion of specific sports as addressing various student concerns, and often discussed issues such as social class, gender, race/culture/ethnicity, popular culture, and ability in ways that confirmed their curricular decisions. The most troubling aspect of this is how students' desires and perspectives were knowingly and unknowingly marginalized. Like Hay and Hunter (2006), Chen (1999), and Cothran and Ennis (1997), I witnessed students attempt to resist and impact (with variable success) their teachers' curricular choices in a number of ways that confirmed the

students' physical activity dispositions. In every instance requests for sport won out, while requests for non-sport physical activity were met with far less success. This further emphasizes the questionable benefit sport-dominant physical education curriculum is to an ever diversifying student population that is rapidly developing interests in non-sport physical activities (Flintoff & Scranton, 200; Lawson, 1988, 1998; McCaughtry, 2005; Olafson, 2002; Sandford & Rich, 2006).

### *Social Class*

The most revealing finding from a social class perspective concerned how these teachers used the significant resources possessed by the communities in which their students resided as the reason they did and did not teach particular physical activities. That is, when discussing their inclusion of sport, the teachers identified the school's own sport teams, and the vast array of sporting opportunities students had available in their community as a significant 'reason' why these teachers taught sports. Again, this 'reason' was not volunteered during specific questioning about socioeconomic status or social class standing of students, rather, it surfaced when a teacher felt their curriculum was under attack that they positioned the wealth and access their students had as a reason for teaching sport. In contrast, when we discussed content that these teachers did not value and/or did not have the ability to teach, the same communities and their affluence were positioned as reasons teachers did not feel compelled to teach particular non-sport physical activities; the implication being that if students wanted to do it, there was plenty of access and opportunity in the surrounding community. This finding is unique to the education and social class literature, as it is extremely rare that teachers would claim the absence of content and curriculum in their teaching was because the surrounding community provided ample learning experience in those areas (Apple, 2004; Brantlinger, 2007; Urieta, 2007; Van Galen, 2007).

*Gender*

In congruence with the literature, female students and their physical activity desires were largely marginalized as female students appeared to continue to be faced with a ‘false choice’ with respect to physical activity options and participation (Humberstone, 2003; Flintoff & Scranton, 2006; Vertinsky, 1992). Exclusively-sport teachers were ready and willing to discount the role of content in marginal female participation. In contrast, mostly-sport teachers willingly acknowledged their marginalization of female physical activity desires was due to fears of reprisal from aggressive, vocal, and athletic male students (Cothran, 2001). The exclusively-sport teachers often treated male physical activity desires as monolithic; never considered as problematic the lack of female participation that I witnessed; and (despite my repeated asking) did not connect marginal female student participation and low enrollment in classes with content issues. While mostly-sport teachers admitted not teaching non-sport content that females desired because of their fears of male resistance, all mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers readily named sports like volleyball, softball, and soccer as at least partly meeting their female students’ content desires.

Just as McCaughtry and his colleagues found (2006b), the teachers in this study cited student resistance (real or perceived) as significantly impacting their willingness to teach content with which they were both familiar and unfamiliar, especially non-sport content. Also, the mostly-sport teachers in their discussion of implementing aspects of the Sport Education model, Yoga, dance, and adventure initiatives, disclosed various degrees of hesitation and reluctance in teaching this content. The root of this was frequently seen in the feared and perceived resistance from vocal, aggressive and athletic males, which sometimes influenced teachers to abandon particular non-sport content and move to a “curricular zone of safety” dominated by sports



(Cothran & Ennis, 1997; Rovegno, 1994). This more comfortable curriculum was heavily informed by, and congruent with, these teachers' primary sporting habitus. For the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers, willingness to endure aggressive male resistance to non-sport content was partially mediated by the support teachers felt from a colleague, their degree of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and level of emotional connection they had with a particular activity. These similar yet distinct and multi-dynamic situations consistently lead the teachers to marginally consider the content desires and requests of their female students' and non-athletic males.

### *Race/Culture/Ethnicity*

The White teachers in this study were slow to discuss considerations of students' race, culture, and ethnicity in relation to their content decisions. In contrast to much of the literature on White teachers (Lewis, 2001; Sleeter, 2005), when they did finally open up, most of the teachers acknowledged racial and cultural differences existed within their schools, and believed this impacted their students' general education experiences including physical education, although they struggled to explain exactly how. While teachers were more willing to talk about students' gender in relation to content, they were much slower and cautious to venture into issues of race, culture, and ethnicity. This is understandable given the literature's documented "common sense" understanding of race amongst White teachers, as well as a fear of being branded as some kind of "racist" (Lewis, 2001; Sleeter, 2005). I feel, however, that while they were slow to engage in conversation around race, ethnicity, and/or culture the teachers did not demonstrate considering students' race, culture, or ethnicity, any more or less than many other student factors. I might suggest that this is because, again, the teachers' content decisions were largely based on their own desires, expertise, and institutional culture. Similar to the positioning of other factors, and

the habitus' tendency to protect itself, students' race/culture/ethnicity was most often used to defend content decisions. Specific sports and physical activities taught by all teachers were quickly nominated as evidence that they were meeting any cultural consideration they were obligated to make.

### *Popular Culture*

Over time, researchers have increasingly considered the role that popular culture plays in the desires, interests, and schooling of adolescents (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; Flintoff & Scranton, 2000; McCaughtry, 2005; Sandford & Rich, 2006). Although the initial entry and longstanding place of sport in the physical education curriculum was largely the result of its rapid and widespread popularity among the U.S. population (Phillips & Roper, 2006; Mechikoff, 2010), physical activity culture has shifted considerably in recent times (Green, 2004; Flintoff & Scranton, 2001; Sandford & Rich, 2006). In my study, the more dominant a teacher's primary sporting habitus was, the less likely they were to acknowledge or consider teaching physical activities that recently gained popularity among adolescents or wider physical activity culture. Exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers were at times dismissive of the possibility of teaching various non-sport physical activities, such as hip hop dance, skateboarding, swimming, Stepping, and Yoga, and sometimes argued the "inappropriateness" of an activity and/or fear of parent complaints as significant reasons they did not teach these activities. The speed and defensiveness with which these activities were rejected, once again reveals the teachers' primary and dominant sporting habituses and their immediate rejection of anything that threatened them (Bourdieu, 1977). Instances of approximating current trends in physical activity culture were seen only among the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers who had developed a secondary physical

activity habitus, but even they were hesitant to teaching certain activities. Examples were seen in Joe and Susan's reluctance to teach Yoga, and Ken's reluctance to teach Stepping.

### *Ability*

The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers largely constructed their curricula based on their primary sporting habituses (Brown, 2005; Evans, 2004; Hay & hunter, 2006; Hay & Macdonald, 2009). Their primary sporting habituses were instrumental in their decisions and explanation of how unfamiliar sports were easy to include because of the similar nature inherent in almost all sport, and also, the abilities required for productive participation. Not having a secondary habitus with either specific or general non-sport physical activities prevented exclusively-sport teachers from seriously considering the inclusion of content that was not already part of their curricula. In addition, the mostly-sport and exclusively-sport teachers' primary and/or secondary habituses were instrumental in how they perceived the abilities of their students (Evans, 2004; Hay & Hunter, 2006; Hay & Macdonald, 2009). Contrasts are seen in how the exclusively-sport teachers' conceptions of students' abilities were completely grounded in sport-related views; whereas, the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers' conceptions of ability had expanded to include aspects of physical competency and skill conducive to participation in non-sport physical activities. The exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers' perceptions that some aggressive and athletic males did not have the "ability" or desire to participate in non-sport content was often a reason why these teachers were reluctant to teach specific non-sport physical activities. In addition, no-sport and mostly-sport teachers also pointed to the non-sport abilities of other students as a reason why they desired to teach and subsequently taught other non-sport physical activities. In this respect, just as Hay and Macdonald (2009) found, competitive sport-based competencies were dominant in the exclusively-sport and mostly-sport teachers'

conceptions of ability, while non-sport abilities remained marginalized. In contrast to Hay and Macdonald's work (2009), and Hay and Hunter's study (2004), non-sport abilities, while marginalized, were done much less so among the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers in this study.

### Implications for Physical Education

In this study I have attempted to address Evans' (2004) call that we as a field begin to question our most native assumptions by investigating how a group of middle school physical education teachers negotiated content decisions. This study has also attempted to address Lawson's appeal that we create knowledge that is "responsive to societal change" (Lawson, 2009, p.249) by investigating the disjuncture that exists between the sport dominant physical activities included in secondary school physical education curriculum and the increasingly diverse physical activity culture present in wider society. To my knowledge this is the first empirical study that addressed how teachers' make curricular decisions in light of a variety of personal, institutional and student factors. This study revealed that the teachers' personal factors were the central set that informed their thinking, decisions, and perceived expertise when it came to choosing specific physical activities for their curricula. The teachers' personal factors developed in, and were informed by, educational and cultural contexts that were similar to the same sport friendly institutional contexts in which they found themselves. On the other hand, the teachers' consideration of student factors, can be seen as the set of factors that were the least influential in the teachers content negotiations, or perhaps said another way, the set of factors that could be overcome or ignored most easily. This study builds on the work of others who have utilized Bourdieu's theories, most notably those concerned with habitus and field (e.g. Brown, 2005; Green, 2000, 2002; Hay & Hunter, 2006). While my study confirms much of what this

research presents, the findings of this study highlights the work of a less monolithic set of teachers that included mostly-sport and no-sport teachers.

Despite instances of cultural innovation, the sporting habitus demonstrated to be particularly powerful among seven of the teachers in this study as sport content dominated their curricula. This is in accordance with how Bourdieu (1977, 1984) proposed and others demonstrated (Hay & hunter, 2006; Green, 2002) that physical education teachers are/were staunch in their defense of sport content and curricula, as sport content sits at the core of their expertise and identity. While their position, and the defense of it, might not be a surprise, I feel it should give us pause for a number of reasons.

Findings from this study provide evidence that the gap between secondary school physical education curriculum and wider physical activity culture is alive and well (Kirk, 1999), and that the call to teach more diverse content, while fairly young, has struggled to gain traction (McCaughtry, 2009). As discussed in the introduction, the U.S. has an adult population that is largely sedentary, and when active, adults have been shown to rarely spend leisure time engaging in sports (Ham et al., 2009). This challenges both the value and utility (e.g. overweight and obesity reduction) of the sport-dominant curricula found among seven of these teachers, especially when all the teachers acknowledged, even celebrated, easy access to the well entrenched prevalence of youth sports in the surrounding communities. Furthermore, the marginalization of female students' physical activity desires (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Oliver & Hamzeh, 2010) and some boys (Portman, 1995; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011) should be of continued concern given the previously mentioned precipitous drop in physical activity as children enter adolescence, especially among females (Le Masurier et al., 2005; Welk, Eisenmann, & Dollman, 2006). Despite documented evidence that adolescents desire non-sport

content (Carlson, 1995; Green, 2004; Olafson, 2002; Sanford & Rich, 2006; Streaan, 2009), the mostly-sport teachers did not provide a significant amount of such content, and the exclusively-sport teachers provided none. This dynamic positions the field and profession of physical education in a dangerous location by opening itself up for competition with other physical activity professionals and organizations who are willing, even excited, to teach youth non-sport physical activities that they find “cool” and are likely to participate in as adults.

In addition, this same dynamic may lead interested policy makers, informed citizens, and health professionals to question how powerful a role sport dominant school physical education can play in addressing concerns of overweight and obesity, and inform their decision making with respect to the degree of support they afford these programs. The findings of this study demonstrate that school physical education comprised of sport dominant curriculum provides space for a particular set of students (sport minded boys and girls) to engage in regular physical activity, which can contribute to maintaining or altering body composition and fat amounts. At the same time, however, teachers who work with sport dominant curricula continue to disregard the non-sport content desires and practices of students who do not desire to engage with sport, and so the possibility and potential of these students to maintain or modify their body composition during adolescence is severely limited when compared to their sport-minded peers (Carlson, 1995; Hay & Hunter, 2006; Green, 2004; Olafson, 2002; Sanford & Rich, 2006; Streaan, 2009). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, since recent research has documented that adults most often participate in non-sport physical activities (Ham et al., 2009) physical activities learned in sport dominant physical education are not likely to help address adulthood physical activity levels or the prevalence of overweight and obesity in society.

Regardless of the 'reasons' for secondary physical education teachers' reluctance to teach non-sport content, be it their own practices, participation, expertise, personal values, believing other social institutions already take care of curricular diversity issues for them, or perceived and/or real resistance from athletic and dominant male students, continuing to focus the majority of the curricula on sports that sport-minded students already participate in frequently, which other students have little interest in engaging with, and that few students are likely to participate in as adults, seems to be little more than "self-interested programming" (Lawson, 1998, p.8), and all leads to an opportunity for other interested stake holders to pose questions concerning the value physical education provides them and society. For all of the teachers to say that they did not teach specific non-sport physical activities because they did not have the ability to do so, that students did not and/or would not participate in them, and because the presence of vast community resources provided such opportunities already, confirms the autonomy physical education teachers are believed to have (Ennis, 1994), and is a precarious viewpoint in current times where increasingly neo-conservative factions are rabidly seeking to dismantle anything they perceive as liberal, costly, public, and democratic (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 1997; Spring, 2008). The exclusively-sport teachers' refusal to teach non-sport content, and the no-sport and mostly-sport teachers' limited curricular diversity, gives some weight to the neo-conservatives' argument that public schools are not nimble enough to meet the demands of changing public interests and thus, from one perspective and in one area, could be perceived as not providing a relevant or quality education.

One of the most compelling factors in the mostly-sport and no-sport teachers' willingness and desire to add content they had previously not taught emerged from their own adulthood non-sport physical activity practices, and so this might be one space on which to draw from when

trying to encourage teachers to enact the form of agency that Brown (2005) calls for and conceives as possible. Brown (2005) broadly and emphatically made the case for the existence and possibility of agency involved with Bourdieu's habitus. Bourdieu is explicit that restructuring one's habitus (or developing a secondary habitus) is likely to be a difficult process. In fact, if we are talking about asking physical education teachers to expand their curricula to include non-sport content when they have little motivation or desire to do so (McCaughy et al., 2006b), then we as teacher educators are posing a difficult challenge, that I speculate will require particularly radical, rigorous, and potentially painful approaches. In my opinion, Brown (2005) is correct in characterizing habitus alterations as a slow process. However, I question how much time we have given our field's increasing marginalization and popular negative views of our relevance within education and society.

Not long ago Lawson (1998) (as Kirk, 2009) warned an inevitable 'crisis' moment for physical education was either on the way or had already arrived. The main thrust of Lawson's argument was the concern over the lack of congruence between the methods and content of school physical education and wider social and cultural currents, trends, desires, needs and the like. As noted earlier, physical activity preferences have diversified greatly in recent years (Ham, et al., 2009), yet the curricular decisions (as demonstrated in this study and elsewhere) continue to reside largely with those who wish to engage in and reproduce elite and competitive sport environments. In this respect we are failing to heed Lawson's (1998) warning,

As diversity grows in the U.S. and around the world, homogeneity in thought and practice poses a mismatch between PE and the heterogeneous people and places it seeks to serve. This is a flaw that contributes to the coming crisis. (p.8)



In short, as long as sport-minded teachers and aggressive and athletic male students preserve the dominant place of sport in the secondary PE curriculum, PE will struggle to be relevant to a population that has departed to engage in more emergent and diverse forms of non-sport physical activity (Lawson, 1988).

Given this situation, the “emotional groundwork” McCaughtry and his colleagues (2006b) established as crucial to teacher change might be especially important because of the largely non-liminal state that teachers find themselves (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). An adult habitus is less likely to be malleable to change without structures and settings in place to make such an effort as emotionally safe as possible. This is because all stages of psychodynamic development, especially those that have had time to “cement” into more enduring dispositions are inherently resistive to change (Wilber, 2001).

In order to make change possible and palatable, McCaughtry and his colleagues (2006b) suggested that a central concern is helping teachers “find resonance between change and their own beliefs and values for teaching” (p.114). In a similar way, I contend that if we want teachers to teach content other than the sports they are comfortable with, then we must provide opportunities for them to find resonance between curricular change and their own values and practices regarding physical activity participation. One way to do this would be to provide teachers with experiences to authentically engage in deep and significant ways with unfamiliar physical activities in order to bridge the gap between contemporary sport-dominant curriculum and wider physical activity culture. It may not be a bad idea to consider providing physical education teachers with professional development credits in return for developing a significant participatory practice and adequate pedagogical knowledge with a non-sport physical activity that they then include in their curricula.

### Implications for Physical Education Teacher Education

Bourdieu notes that both habitus and field can always be reflected on and transformed by the agents involved (1984, 1993, 1999). Jill and Ken (and to a lesser extent Tracy in her student teaching experience) pointed to the powerful and even transformative role PETE programs can play in teachers' content negotiations. Some of the methods Ken and Jill cited as being particularly beneficial included consistent messaging across faculty, content and methods courses, required attendance at professional development events, and bringing in physical activity professionals to teach non-sport content. Many of these deserve consideration when constructing and revising PETE programs. Ken and Jill's story provides a powerful example of how teachers might be set-up to work against the "wash out effect" (Stroot & Whipple, 2003). Their ability to teach with each other when they graduated demonstrated a synergistic effect where they took their knowledge and enthusiasm into a situation that afforded them space to begin implementing what they learned. This is not to suggest that all PETE programs could immediately reproduce this in a widespread manner, but it warrants asking if this is a beneficial and desirable situation; and if so, what we might do as teacher educators in our work with school districts to facilitate transitions akin to this one.

In contrast, the other teachers asserted their PETE programs reinforced their sport dominant curricular assumptions (Brown, 2005; Doolittle, Dodds, & Placek, 1993; Placek et al., 1995; Tsangaridou, 2006). If we continue to attract and recruit PETE students that possess only or even mostly sport dominant dispositions we might need to consider more rigorous and 'upfront' methods for ensuring they are well equipped and willing to teach diverse content. One method might include entry interviews as a way to assess students' initial aspirations and ideals about teaching content apart from sport and/or content in which they do not have a biographic

experience. From here, program faculty can decide to either counsel students who appear to be “too far” from the program’s requirements into a more suitable major, and/or, share this information with faculty. I envision faculty being able to use this information as a starting point to lay the emotional groundwork necessary before more seriously challenging students’ comforts and assumptions in relation to teaching particular non-sport physical activities. I understand that at a time when universities are increasingly being managed in accordance with economic markets that counseling out potential revenue might not be in the best interest of physical education programs, but neither is graduating students that are anything short of the best representation of our products and theoretical principles (Bok, 2003).

Just as Siedentop (2002) and Ward (2009) have called for previously, I see the need for a significant increase in coursework focused on content knowledge acquisition. My amendment would be to ensure that this coursework is significantly diverse, and increasingly more aligned with contemporary physical activity culture. I question, however, how realistic this is given the historic focus on sub-discipline coursework. Perhaps a more realistic and practical approach would be an increased urgency in the approach taken in content courses, specifically, in challenging head on the sport dominant curricular expertise and affinity PETE students bring to our programs (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997). Part of this effort could be requiring students to enroll in a number of non-sport physical activity courses offered by the kinesiology programs at many universities. Not only would this provide students with some practical experience with non-sport physical activities, but may also help bridge the content gap by taking advantage of already established university/departmental resources.

Another option might be for PETE faculty to recruit potential majors and market our programs to physical activity professionals outside of sport. The assumption here is that these

professionals already have knowledge, pedagogical expertise, values, and desires to teach diverse non-sport content, and so would already be well-equipped to do so once they enter and leave their PETE program and student teaching. These professionals might also serve as role models for fellow sport-oriented PETE students and can help faculty steer the PETE student culture in a direction more friendly to diverse curriculum. Another method might be to allow students to ‘minor’ in specific genres of physical activity. This would not only make clear to school districts and potential principals where a new graduate’s expertise lies, but also to make more explicit the values inherent in teaching a variety of content.

### Study Limitations

One of the central arguments I make in the introduction of this study is the existence of a disjuncture between physical activity culture and the physical activities that actually get taught in physical education. In my study, I explored how teachers negotiated their content decisions with respect to this phenomenon. In doing so, I forwent the collection of student data as I felt (and still feel) that majoritive power over curriculum rested with the teacher. In retrospect, while not the focus of this study, having spent time with students at each teacher’s school could have added another layer of understanding to what I gleaned from talking with each teacher and observing their students. The instance of Annette dismissing the teaching of hip-hop dance, Susan’s adamancy that her students loved volleyball, and the conversation I witnessed between Josh and a few of his female students, are all examples that if investigated in explicit depth could have provided talking points for more rich conversation between myself and the teachers. Moving forward it will be prudent to investigate the connections between student and teacher curricular perceptions.

While including only suburban schools and teachers as participants certainly does not preclude one from conducting analyses of social class (Brantlinger, 2007) or racial/ethnic perspectives (Lewis, 2001), my inclusion of only White middle-class teachers certainly limits the vantage points from which these teachers talked about particular phenomena. A more variable participant population by social class and race/ethnicity/culture (Noblit, 2007) would have, at least, provided the potential for more varying viewpoints. For instance, when conversing about gender there was a distinct difference in how the women and men engaged in issues associated with female student participation.

The length of time that the teachers in my study had been teaching physical education might be seen as another limitation. All of the teachers were either fairly new to teaching physical education (Tracy, Ken, Jill, and Joe) or very experienced (Bill, Josh, and Susan), with only Annette falling somewhere in the middle. Seeing and hearing more from teachers who were in the early-middle or middle points of their careers would have likely added a different perspective. Despite having significant general teaching experience and/or at least three years of teaching, some of these teachers still discussed their contexts and pedagogy in ways that suggested they were still figuring things out.

Finally, the focus of this study was on a wide range of factors (institutional, personal, and student) that could potentially influence the choices teachers make with respect to the content they include in their physical education curricula. While the explicit focus of this study was not related to specific instructional approaches or teaching styles, the strategies that these teachers had an affinity, comfort, and expertise with could have influenced what content they had decided to include in their curricula. That is, their largely direct/ command teaching approach and biographically based sport dominant pedagogy could have limited and narrowed their conception

of what was possible to include in their programs. While I witnessed no evidence of this potential dynamic the degree to which this was and was not the case was not investigated, but should be addressed and studied in future research.

#### Directions for Future Research

One of the central hopes I had for this study was to learn about the ways in which the more durable aspects of the habitus could be addressed in such a way that teachers would indeed be more open to, willing, and able to learn and then teach, content in which they considered themselves as lacking significant expertise. Indeed, I found that physical education department culture, and PETE coursework explicitly focused on curricular diversity, when coupled with authentic professional development, and individuals being ‘open’ to the message of teaching non-sport content could have a marked effect. Nevertheless, I was hoping to find a teacher who demonstrated a more significant degree of agency. Specifically, I had hoped to work with a teacher who learned and taught previously unfamiliar non-sport content of their own volition. Findings from this hypothetical teacher could have provided insightful hints to help understand how one might express radical agency regarding one’s habitus. While I am sure teachers like this exist, I was not able to locate and recruit one for this study. Future research might focus on teachers who fit this description, or at the very least, teachers who willingly teach non-sport content in the absence of significant experience or emotional ties. Joe’s abandonment of teaching sport could be seen as an example of this, but his general propensity to “drop” things and move on without thought, and his strong emotional desire to teach fitness does not demonstrate a form of ‘stretching’ but rather only of release.

In addition, seeking more socio-ecological designs (Ennis, 2003) could better reveal the contextual interconnections between and among teachers, contexts (local sports programs,

physical activity spaces and resources, parental and community values and culture), and other social actors (students, principals, district coordinators, parents, friends, coaches etc.) and how these affect teachers' curricular decisions. For example, it took much time and energy to tease out how much influence Susan's district physical education coordinator had on her content decisions. Time could have been saved, perspective gained, and data confirmed by seeking to work with this person directly.

Moving forward it will be important to study and address student perspectives. Much in the same way that McCaughtry (2004) and McCaughtry and Rovegno (2001) suggested the importance of addressing student voices in study design as a way to account for accuracy in teachers' knowledge and/or perspective, it would be beneficial to investigate significant instances of connection/disconnect between the content desires and affinities of teachers and students. Working with students, young women in particular, who do not enroll in physical education, could provide useful insights into the interconnected role that content and habitus play in students' decisions to enroll and/or engage in physical education.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Interview Guide

#### Content and Middle School Physical Education

##### *Introduction*

I'm here to learn about the content and curriculum teachers teach in PE. I'm interested in all the different things teachers consider when they/you create their curricula. I suspect that there are some interesting things that you have to say regarding how and why you teach the content that you do, and so I'm pleased that you are willing to participate in this project.

Contact information: email, phone, best?

##### *Demographic*

Before we get started I would like to ask some background questions:

- How long have you been teaching? PE? At this school? Other schools?
- How did you come to decide to be a PE teacher? Take me through that process.
- What are you certified to teach? What area(s)?
- What are your primary responsibilities at this school?
- What would you say is your underlying philosophy in teaching PE?
  - Where did this develop? What are the ideas/experiences that have most strongly shaped this?
- What content do you include in your curriculum?
  - Have you adopted a particular curriculum here? What makes up your curriculum?
  - How would you characterize your teaching style?
  - What role do you think PE plays in students' education? Development?
  - What content do you teach during the year at each grade?
  - Why do you choose to teach this content?
  - Are there any activities that you don't teach now that you would like to? What is keeping you from teaching them?

##### *Habitus (gut reaction)*

- What if someone asked, or told you, you had to teach...(Yoga, hip-hop dance, golf, tennis, martial arts, basketball, soccer, softball, football, Stepping, Pilates, Tae Bo), what would your gut reaction be? What would be your initial thoughts and feelings be?
- What would you think of a sportless physical education?
- Can you envision a sportless physical education?
  - Why or why not?

##### *Social/Cultural Forces at Work*

##### Personal Biography-PA,PE

- +How would you characterize your childhood PA experiences? PE?



- What was your PE experience like? Elem? Middle? High? College? Are there things you learned then that you teach now, even if you have tweaked it? Are there things you learned then that you purposefully don't teach now? Why?
- Where did you grow up? What were the popular physical activities in your community? Amongst your friends?
- When you were growing up, what relationship did your family have with physical activity?
- Does what you liked and are good at affect you as a teacher? How so? Content choices?
- Did you play sports growing up? Which ones? In what capacity (competitive, club, high school)?
- What about other physical activities? Cycling, swimming, hiking/camping? Others?
- \*What were these experiences like for you?\*

### Teacher Education

- +What did you think of your PETE program?
- Tell me about your experience in your PETE program? (When, where, BS/MA)
- What were your content classes like? What did you learn to teach? What did the faculty value?
- What were the kinds of field experiences you had leading up to student teaching?
- What was your student teaching experience like? What content did you teach? Who dictated this?
- \*What were these experiences like for you?\*
- How do you think your teacher preparation experience affects your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

### State/Local Dept. of Education-GLCE's, State Standards, District Curriculum

- +What is your opinion of the Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs)?
- Do the GLCE's affect what you teach? Why or why not?
- Are you familiar with...
- The state PE standards? Do they affect what you teach?
- Do the policies coming from the State Dept. of Ed. affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?
- Do you feel like they inhibit what you can teach?
- How do you think the larger field of education affects what goes on in physical education?
- Do you have a district curriculum?

### National Standards

- +What do you think of the NASPE National standards?
- Are you familiar with the content standard?
- Do you belong to any professional organizations? Does what they present as valuable content influence how you think about and choose content?
- Do the NASPE national standards affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

### PE Colleagues

- +How do you feel about working with your colleagues? (Specific/name)
- How do you decide what to teach?
- Are your classes coed? Split? Why?

- What do your colleagues like to teach? Do you agree with their choices?
- How do you think fellow teachers view what you teach and how you teach it?
- Do your PE colleague's opinions about physical education affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

### Professional Development

- +What do you think about your professional development opportunities?
- What kinds of professional development opportunities are available to you? What is the quality of these opportunities like? Have any of them influenced what you choose to teach?
- Are there other development opportunities you wish you had, or would like to see? What? Why?
  - MAHPERD? State? Regional Workshops?

### Personal/Autonomous/Agency/Comfort

- +How do you feel about teaching:
  - Sports (list specific)...lifetime/team/individual\_dual?
  - Fitness activities (Weight/resistance training, Running, Walking, Aerobics)?
  - Dance?
  - Adventure and outdoor activities?
- Personally, what do you like to teach most? Least? Indifferent?
  - Why do you think this is?
- Does the ease of content (i.e. ease of set-up, prep, instructional considerations) affect what content you teach?
- Do your own personal physical activity interests affect what you choose to teach?
- Does your skill at performing and/or teaching certain content affect whether it gets chosen or not?
- What is your personal philosophy about how to best teach students? About physical activity and their bodies? Does this philosophy affect what you choose to teach?
- How much freedom do you think you have to teach what you want to?
- Do you prefer to teach activities you are more comfortable with?

### Fields/Physical Education

- +What is your opinion of the physical education profession broadly?
- +How do you think the fields of Sport, Fitness, Outdoor recreation, and dance affect physical education? In the past? Now?
- Do the 'traditions that surround what is taught in PE affect what you choose to teach?
- Do you feel the larger field of Sport has/continues to dominate what gets taught in physical education?
- What about Public Health, especially in terms of obesity? Do you see those larger messages affecting what goes on in PE?
- What about the larger physical activity culture?

### Principal

- +What do you think about your administrators? Their attention/support to PE?
- What does your School administrator think about your program?
- Do you get any subtle hints about what they might think re your curriculum?

-Does your principal's views or actions affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

#### School District PE Administrator

+What kind of relationship do you have with your district PE admin?

+What do you think of your district's curriculum?

-Does your district PE administrator's thoughts and views affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

-Do you feel like they inhibit/help what you can teach?

#### Parents

+How would you characterize the parents of this school?

-What have parents communicated to you regarding your program?

-What have they said? How have they responded?

-Do parental values affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

#### Student interests

+That you are aware of, what activities do students participate in outside of school?

+If your students could design the curriculum what do you think would they include?

-What content do you see as being the students' favorite?

-Do different students like different activities? Why do you think this is?

-What kinds of things do your students say to you about PE? Specifically, the content you teach?

-What physical activities do your students engage in outside of PE? Before school? After?

Intramurals? Clubs? Athletics? Local community activities?

-Which types of students tend to like which types of activities you teach?

-Which activities that you teach get the most eager student participation? What about the least?

-Have students ever asked you if they could do activities other than those you teach? How did you react?

-Do the religious affiliations of your students affect what you choose to teach in any way?

-Do the physical activity interest of your students influence your thinking and decisions about what content you teach? Does this vary by groups of students?

#### Facilities and Equipment

+What is your opinion of your school's facilities? Equipment stores?

-When was this school built?

-In particular, what do you like about your facilities? Dislike? Would you like to change it? How?

-If you were to design and build a space for PE, what would be included? Not included?

-Does the design of your building and facilities influence your thinking and decisions about what content you teach? Does it restrict what you can teach?

-Do climate and seasonal change influence what you teach?

-Do you use off campus locations to teach content during school hours? Why? Which ones? Any barriers to this? Any you would like to add?(Things like: climbing walls, bowling alleys, driving ranges, golf courses, ice rinks, etc.)

-What equipment do you have? What kind of budget do you have to buy new equipment?

-Does any lack of resources influence what you teach?

Climate

- +How do you feel about teaching in the Midwest? Climate? Winter? Seasons?
- Does the climate affect what you choose to teach? Maybe when you teach certain content?

Liability/Risk Management Issues

- +How do you feel about the risk associated with teaching particular physical activities?
- How do safety concerns affect your content decisions?
- When compared to classroom based school subjects, PE is a very different school subject, in terms of safety?
- Do you avoid teaching any content because of safety concerns? Or liability concerns? Why or why not?
- What people, if any, raise concerns: Principals, parents, students?
- Have you ever had a safety/liability issue happen that caused you to rethink teaching certain content?

Popular Culture/ Media Influences

- +What physical activities do you think are most popular in youth culture? (TV shows, movies, magazines, marketing, etc?). What is your opinion of them?
- Do you teach any of them in PE? Why or why not?
- What types of physical activities get a lot of attention in the media? Do you think this has an influence on how students view different physical activities?
- Do students' perceptions of physical activity in popular culture and media affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

SES/Class

- +How would you characterize the socioeconomic status of your students? Are they middle class? Lower class? Upper class? Mixed? Urban? Suburban?
- Free and Reduced numbers? Minorities? Are you an open enrollment school?
- +What role do you think SES plays in students PE experiences? PA experiences?
- Do you see the SES of your students affecting what you teach? Or not?
- What kinds of resources and opportunities do your students have to transfer what they learn in PE and use this to be active outside of school?
- What kinds of neighborhoods do your students come from? Are there parks? Rec centers? If so, what kinds? Are they community/local government or private?
- Does the physical activity opportunities in the community that students might use to extend the content you teach them affect your decisions about what content to teach?
- Does the fact that your students come from ?? socioeconomic and family backgrounds influence your thinking and decisions about what content you teach?

Race/Culture

- +How do you think different content is received by students who embody different cultural and ethnic beliefs/practices?
- +How would you characterize the ethnic breakdown of your school?
- What do you see as the most relevant physical activities for certain racial and ethnic communities?

- Do certain ethnic/racial groups in your school like/dislike certain activities you teach?
- Do you think racial identity influences how students perceive particular physical activities?
- Does the racial make-up of students at your school affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

### Gender

- +How do you think/feel gender affects physical education?
- Tell me about how boys and girls participate in your PE program. Are there any differences? What is different about how they participate in PE? What things are the same?
- Are there differences between the activities that boys and girls like to do in PE? If so what?
- Does the gender differences of your students at your school affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?
- Is your PE program always co-educational?
- Does one gender tend to dominate PE? Who? Why?
- How do girls respond when you teach activities that more boys like? How do boys respond when you teach activities that more girls like?
- Do students' reactions to your choosing of activities affect which ones you choose?
- How do you view the PA participation patterns of adult men and women?

### Religious Institutions

- Are you aware of your students' religious affiliations? Does it affect their participation in PE in any way? If so, How? Is there content you steer away from, teach on purpose, or schedule at certain times because of religious factors?
- Do students' religious affiliations affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach? (Christian/Islam)

### (Spiritual (Experiences, lessons, action))

- Do students ever demonstrate or share deep and meaningful experiences when they engage in certain activities? Do they ever share or display examples of being deeply moved in a positive way? What were those activities? In or out of PE? Do you teach it?
- Do student expressions of freedom and joy affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach?

### Obesity Crisis

- +Do you believe that there is an obesity crisis occurring in children?  
Why do you think that? What sources serve as your evidence?
- If so, how did this crisis occur? How do people become obese?
- Have children's bodies changed since you started teaching? If so, why?
- Are certain groups of children getting fatter than others?
- How do you see obesity affecting people? Children especially? Your students?
- What are the potential effects of children becoming fatter?
- Does this proposed crisis affect you as a PE teacher? Did it affect your decision to be a PE teacher?
- Do you think PE can help address the Obesity crisis? If so how? What are you specifically doing in PE?
- Should PE teachers publicize their role in solving this crisis?

- Has the rise in obesity affected how you view yourself as a PE teacher?
- Has it led you to change any of your teaching practices? Content? Methods? Communication with parents?
- Is there certain content you feel that more readily addresses this? Do you teach it in PE? If so, when and how? If not, why not?
- Do you feel any pressure to get kids to be more fit and active?
- What might be some of the positive outcomes if PE teachers were to frame their goal as addressing youth obesity in PE?
- Negative outcomes?
- In your teacher Ed training or in-services training, was understanding and addressing obesity covered?
- Is it more acceptable for children to be overweight now than in the past?
- What role if any should a PE teacher play in educating overweight children about obesity and potential negative health outcomes (if you believe there are any)?
- One might think if more children are becoming fat or overweight, then there should be a greater prevalence of fat bias and children bullying one another about fat issues. Have you seen this among your students? How have you dealt with it?
- What is your first reaction when you see an overweight child in one of your classes?
- Have you ever used obesity as a way to motivate children?
- Have you ever used obesity as a way to obtain support or equipment/resources from parents, administrators or other influential groups?
- Has youth obesity led you to get involved with or start out-of-class physical activity programs?
- What role should the PE teacher play in education or working with parents of overweight children?
- At what grade or age does it become appropriate for a PE teacher to address obesity with children?
- Is obesity more acceptable in certain communities or cultures?
- How does a PE teacher address obesity in ways that are sensitive to different communities or cultures?
- Do you have students in PE where because of their life situation being active is not a high priority because they have other responsibilities that take precedence? Do you teach these students differently? If so, how? If not, why not?

**APPENDIX B: SAMPLE OBSERVATION GUIDE**

Content Study Observation Guide

Date:

School:

Time:

Teacher:

Class:

Focus of Lesson:

Teacher presentation of the lesson/content:

How are the students and teachers interacting and responding to the each other in relation to the activities presented?

How are 'different' groups of students engaging with the activities. (Peer affiliation, student dispositions, (dis)ability, gender, race/ethnicity, prior experience, religion):

Other relevant events:

## APPENDIX C: HIC APPROVAL LETTER

**WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE  
87 East Canfield, Second Floor  
Detroit, Michigan 48201  
Phone: (313) 577-1628  
FAX: (313) 993-7122  
<http://hic.wayne.edu>




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**NOTICE OF EXPEDITED CONTINUATION APPROVAL**

**To:** Nathan McCaughtry  
Kinesiology, Health and Sport Studies  
125.1 Matthaei Building

**From:** Dr. Scott Millis *SMillis* *(Name)*  
Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

**Date:** November 03, 2010

**RE:** HIC #: 1010709B3E  
Protocol Title: Detroit Healthy Youth Initiative (5yr Resubmission)  
Funding Source: Sponsor: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Protocol #: 0911007701

**Expiration Date:** November 02, 2011

**Risk Level / Category:** 45 CFR 46.404 - Research not involving greater than minimal risk

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Continuation for the above-referenced protocol and items listed below (if applicable) were APPROVED following Expedited Review by the Chairperson/designee of the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board (B3) for the period of **11/03/2010 through 11/02/2011**. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

- Research Informed Consent Form for Teachers and School Personnel (revision date: 10/29/09)
  - Adolescent Assent Form
  - School Information Sheet (revision date: 10/29/09)
- 

- Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. You may receive a "Continuation Renewal Reminder" approximately two months prior to the expiration date; however, it is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval **before** the expiration date. Data collected during a period of lapsed approval is unapproved research and can **never** be reported or published as research data.
- All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the HIC **BEFORE** implementation.
- Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the HIC Policy (<http://www.hic.wayne.edu/hicpol.html>).

**NOTE:**

1. Upon notification of an impending regulatory site visit, hold notification, and/or external audit the HIC office must be contacted immediately.
2. Forms should be downloaded from the HIC website at **each** use.

\*Based on the Expedited Review List, revised November 1998



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**ABSTRACT****SECONDARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATORS'  
CONTENT NEGOTIATIONS**

by

**MATTHEW DANIEL FERRY****December 2011****Advisor:** Dr. Nathan McCaughtry**Major:** Kinesiology**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

In light of growing concern over the relation between physical inactivity and a variety of biomedical and psychosocial conditions and the disjuncture between larger physical activity culture and secondary school physical education curriculum, the purpose of this study was to examine how middle school physical education teachers negotiated content and curricular decisions. A variety of theories guided this study, including Bourdieu's theories of habitus and field (1977), teacher socialization theory (Lawson, 1983; 1988), teacher ideology (Apple, 2004), teacher emotion (Hargreaves, 1998; McCaughtry, 2004), curriculum as a political text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004), and range of critical and post-structural social theories (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1991; Wilber, 2001). This qualitative study was grounded in the interpretive tradition. Eight middle school teachers were observed and interviewed for five whole days over the span of one school year. The main finding from this study revealed that the complex interplay of teachers' personal, institutional, and student factors, and the teachers' consideration of these factors, coalesced in ways that resulted in the perpetuation of competitive sport as the dominant content of their curricula.

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

**MATTHEW DANIEL FERRY**

Matthew D. Ferry completed his PhD in Kinesiology in the College of Education at Wayne State University in 2011. He maintained a 4.0 GPA and received numerous awards during his time at Wayne State, including the 2011 American Kinesiology Association Graduate Scholar Award and the 2011 American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Ruth Abernathy Presidential Scholarship. He received his Bachelors degree from the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh in 2003, and a Master's degree in Kinesiology from Arizona State University in 2007.

Matt's current research draws from a wide range of critical and post-structural social theories in examining how various social and cultural issues (e.g. race, ethnicity/culture, social class, gender, sexuality, popular/market culture, religion, public health and policy, disability, globalization, etc.) inform school physical education. In his dissertation he investigated how many of these same social and cultural issues informed the curricular decisions made by secondary school physical education teachers. He has also examined how elementary school physical education teachers' social and emotional knowledge of their students impacted their pedagogy. Matt is an active member in the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) as well as the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

Matt is currently an Assistant Professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA where he conducts scholarly inquiry, teaches courses, and provides service to his university, field, and community. He lives with his wife Meghan and daughter Rebecca Charlotte in Centreville, VA.