LINKING GIRLS' EXPERIENCES IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO SCHOOL CULTURE AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS: ELEMENTS OF AN EXEMPLARY MODEL

by

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to examine the physical activity experiences of grade four girls living in a low income multiracial community, by taking into account how the school culture and the broader social and political contexts shaped (and are shaped by) these experiences. Research questions were posed in four areas: i) how did the girls experience physical activity? ii) how did the social context (e.g. low income, multiracial community and relationships with community organizations, police, and parents) influence these experiences? iii) how did the school culture shape these experiences? and iv) how did the political context (e.g. Ministry of Education policy, budget reductions) influence program provision?

The research methodology involved an examination of grade four girls' physical activity experiences, the practices and beliefs of the physical education instructor, principal, and two grade four teachers in the case study school, and an analysis of relevant documents to the planned physical education program. The data was analyzed using the qualitative software program, Q.S.R. NUD.IST.

Five prominent themes, two of which were seldom addressed in the literature, emerged from the experiences of the girls. Issues around safety and fair play were important to the girls, but were not recognized to the same degree by the literature or by others in this study. The importance of "having fun," gender relations, and the physical education instructor were factors that confirmed the findings of previous studies (Griffin, 1989; Jaffee & Manzer, 1992; Talbot, 1993; Humbert, 1995). Although the girls enjoyed the program, how the girls interpreted their experiences did not always correspond to the intentions of those providing it.

By situating the girls' experiences within the social and political contexts and school culture, additional insights surfaced. The teachers described high incidences of crime, and family and social problems, while an examination of the school culture revealed
a school that recognized that a planned physical education program could make a difference in these students' lives. It also revealed an acknowledgement of social class inequities, but at the same time gender and racial differences were ignored. The political context arose primarily through the strategies and policies designed to deal with social class issues.

Although the results indicated discrepancies between the girls' experiences and the school's intentions, the school's commitment to a planned physical education program reflected elements of an exemplary model.
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I extend thanks to my committee members, particularly Wendy, who joined in with enthusiasm and endless encouragement making the process all the more meaningful.

And finally, I wholeheartedly thank the grade four girls, teachers, and the principal at Parkside Elementary who allowed me to enter into their world and their lives. Without their support and trust, critical learning opportunities do not exist. I am especially grateful for the privilege and can only hope that more doors will be open in the future so that the learning continues to improve the situation for girls and women in physical activity and sport.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

As an advocate of physical activity who believes it is an integral part of improving the quality of one's life, I have participated in sporting activities during my leisure time, and have made a commitment to 'active living' through bicycle commuting. Throughout my life, these experiences have contributed to the lifestyle I have adopted, the career path I am pursuing, and have influenced the relationships I have with family, friends, and colleagues. I grew up in a white, middle class family and was always offered and provided with endless opportunities and choices in physical activity. Upon reflection, my family played a significant role in my feeling able to pursue any facet of the sport and physical activity domain. As an independent consumer of physical activity, I became more cognizant that as a female my physical activity experiences were privileged. I stopped assuming that inactivity was a choice that girls and women made. I began questioning and listening.¹

It became evident to me that girls and women in our society are not afforded equitable physical activity and sport opportunities or experiences. Supported by statistics that confirm the under representation of girls and women in physical activity beginning at a young age (Dahlgren, 1988; Fitness Canada, 1989; Health and Welfare Canada, 1990; Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 1991), I began to question why the situation existed. During my initial investigation into the area, what really intrigued me were the verbal responses from females about their negative experiences with physical activity. Smale and Shaw (1993) captured examples of these responses in their study on adolescent participation in physical recreation:

*I think that most sports are extremely boring and hard because people make fun of me in track and field and we have to run in gym.*

¹ I have deliberately retained the first-person pronoun to refer to myself as the researcher, woman, author, and subject in the text purposely to avoid withdrawing myself from the process (Roman & Apple, 1990).
It's not that I don't like activities, but my parents don't really think they're important.

I would just hope that all activities would be equal when it came to males and females.

I think lots of activities are geared towards males and their interests and not enough things for females to do.

The impetus for gaining a greater understanding about girls and their physical activity experiences comes with the desire for social change. Theoretical debate and critique about the representation and role of girls and women in physical activity and sport is ongoing and constantly contested (Dewar, 1993; Costa & Guthrie, 1994; Theberge & Birrell, 1994). Historically, feminist theorists identified sport as a culture that reproduced male hegemonic experiences and oppressed females by excluding and limiting their opportunities at all levels (Hall, 1990; Scraton, 1992; Scraton & Flittoff, 1992; Costa & Guthrie, 1994). The surge of feminist theory building in the 60's and 70's exposed a complex social network of diverse female experiences and knowledge bases, uncovering many more challenges than solutions to the social change process.

In addition to early liberal reform, feminists continued to seek other ways to improve the situation. A few issues remain key to the continuing critical debate that identify the importance of: i) understanding experiences of girls and women from their own point of view; ii) situating girls' and women's experiences within the social context; iii) recognizing a plurality of feminist standpoints; iv) acknowledging the role of the researcher; and v) linking theory, research, and practice (Harding, 1991; Roman & Apple, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Scraton, 1992; Dewar, 1993; Olesen, 1993).

Research has lagged behind theoretical developments and has left some gaps in our knowledge base. Since the 1980's, survey results painted a statistical picture by comparing male and female physical activity patterns, as well as perceived benefits and barriers to participation (Promotion Plus, 1991; Dyck & Wildi, 1993; Kirby &
LeRougetel, 1993; Peters & Murphy, 1993). Some of the barriers to participating in physical activity for girls and women described in the studies were a lack of time, family constraints, concerns about safety issues (e.g., late night programs), physical limitations (e.g., injuries or health related), social economic status, and a lack of skills, confidence, motivation, and programs that met their needs (Jaffee & Manzer, 1992; Smale & Shaw, 1993; Fenton, Kopelow & Viviani, 1994; Statistics Canada, 1994). Some of the findings suggested that girls and women preferred to be involved in physical activity in different ways and for different reasons than boys and men. For example, Smale and Shaw (1993) found that young women preferred individual pursuits, were more likely to enjoy the social aspects, and were less interested in competitive activities. However, most studies have focused on adolescents, leaving a void of information about the experiences of younger girls, an omission which is important because girls as young as six believe that boys are "better than girls at physical activities" (Dahlgren, 1988).

What appears to be missing from our understanding are more meaningful interpretations of the complex interaction of how gendered social relations account for the statistics. Traditional approaches to research, that isolate individuals from their social contexts, has limited the depth of knowledge and insight that might enhance our understanding of the patterns that have emerged. Moreover, a comprehensive feminist theory has yet to be developed. Therefore it is necessary to borrow from a number of alternative approaches, that often differ widely in their underlying conceptual base, in order to expose the multifaceted and complex nature of gender relations in sport.

The literature focused on physical activity experiences within schools is minimal and narrow. Most of the earlier focus was on the instructional process (instructional methods, class management) in a search for characteristics of effective teachers (Siedentop, 1983). Only in the last two decades has a body of research surfaced that acknowledges other variables such as the social context and presence of gender, social class, and race (Sadker & Sadker, 1984; Griffin, 1985a,b,c; Rizvi, 1992; Figueroa, 1993;
Talbot, 1993; Cutforth, 1994; Humbert, 1995). This development has brought the traditional approaches to teaching physical education into question and charted new directions for examining curriculum content and design, student-teacher interactions, and the meanings of physical activity.

The literature also identified the role of the school culture as a key factor that influences gender equity in the classroom (Griffin, 1985c; Rizvi, 1992; Talbot, 1993; Cutforth, 1994). This line of inquiry draws from the anthropological underpinning of the organizational culture literature (Morgan, 1986; Schein, 1991; Adams & Ingersoll, 1992; Meek, 1992). Rather than viewing curriculum delivery as a rational process, the cultural metaphor focuses on the values, beliefs, and actual practices of staff, and on how these are, in turn, interpreted by students (Rizvi, 1992; Whitaker, 1993).

The school culture is also embedded in a social and political context as identified particularly by Griffin (1985c). She emphasized the importance of examining aspects of the school culture to situate individual experiences by exploring the shared cultural patterns and analysing them in relation to their social and political contexts. While this approach has not seen much research activity, the adoption of this critical emphasis could lead to more fully understanding how to implement change in the provision of physical activity in schools for girls.

We still know little about how young girls interpret their experiences in physical activity and how the roles of the school culture and the social and political contexts shape these experiences. Not only are girls forming beliefs about and leaving physical activity at the age of 10 (Dahlgren, 1988), but this age group also represents the pre-adolescent stage that has been essentially neglected in the physical activity literature. One reason for this gap is the assumption that girls in this age group will not be able to articulate their experiences. However, Deatrick and Faux's (1989) claim that school aged children make excellent interview subjects because their cognitive and linguistic abilities allow them to share their experiences quite objectively.
A. General Purpose Statement

The purposes of this study were three-fold: i) to gain insight into grade four girls' experiences by listening to and observing them in a planned physical education program; ii) to hear from girls from multiracial backgrounds who were attending a school in a low income community; and iii) to give more meaning to their experiences by making links to the school culture and the broader social and political contexts.

B. Research Questions

The research questions were formulated in relation to the four interrelated rings of the conceptual framework that was developed to guide this study (see Figure 1):

1. **Girls in Physical Activity**
   How did the girls experience physical activity in their school's planned physical education program? How did they place value on physical activity?

2. **Social Context**
   How did the social context which situated the girls' experiences influence the provision of the planned physical education program?

3. **School Culture**
   How did the physical education teacher, principal, and the two grade four classroom teachers describe their role in the provision of the planned physical education program for the girls in their school? How was this reflected in their actions and practices? How did the findings relate to the girls' voices and experiences?

4. **Political Context**
   How did the political context influence the school culture and therefore the provision of the planned physical education program for the girls?
Linking Girls' Physical Activity Experiences
To School Culture, Social
and Political Contexts

Figure 1
C. Definition of Terms

In this study, the term "girls" referred to each individual grade four girl in the study and does not imply a generalization across all girls within or external to the study (hooks, 1990; Roman & Apple, 1990; Harding, 1991; Dewar, 1993).

Physical activity referred to those experiences which were associated with the planned physical education program (e.g. regular gym classes, interscholastics, house games, leadership opportunities, outdoor pursuits, community programming).

The school culture referred to Schein's (1991) model of organizational culture that illustrates the existence of three inter-related layers within an organization: i) observable artifacts (e.g. visible organizational structures and processes); ii) values (e.g. strategies, goals, and philosophies) and; iii) basic underlying assumptions (e.g. habits of perception, thought and feeling). The levels move from general to specific, from surface impressions to deeper more intimate interpretations of actions and how meanings are constructed within and espoused by the organization.

In this study, the social context was composed of information about the low income, multiracial community in which the girls lived and the school was situated. It also included relationships with community organizations, police, and parents. The political context situated the school and the planned physical education program (Griffin, 1985c) and consisted of the influences of the Ministry of Education, the School Board, and corporate agents (e.g. private companies).
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review sets the stage for the proposed study. The conceptual framework illustrates that experiences for girls in physical activity are not passively formed or independent from the organizational culture, social or political contexts in which they were bound. The circular rings of the conceptual framework are meant to be permeable, reflecting the interrelationships among the rings (see Figure 1). The following review will acknowledge these interrelationships.

A. The Social Context and Girls in Physical Activity

I have framed the literature on gender and physical activity within a social historical context. The purpose of this format was to help situate the current issues facing girls, as a product of the evolution of gendered social relations over time. Many authors have referred to the relevance of the historical legacy when examining gender and physical activity (Evans, 1990; Thomas 1991; Scraton, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994) and its importance is further exemplified by Rizvi (1992) in the following quote:

Girls need to become aware of the worth of their own histories so that they can value their own precepts and insights. They need to challenge the history of the dominant culture to validate their own experiences and truths so that they can look at themselves as useful members of a cultural tradition that empowers them to speak with their own voices (p. 211).

I have highlighted the main theoretical developments (with an emphasis on feminist theory), research themes, and some practical initiatives (in Figure 2). Most of the literature reflects the work of Canadian, American, British, and Australian scholars. The practical initiatives reflect mainly those occurring in Canada and British Columbia.
### Literature Review of the Social Context and Girls in Physical Activity

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Figure 2
It was beyond the scope of this review to develop each area thoroughly or to provide an exhaustive review of this vast and complex field. The main purpose was to link theory with research and practice and develop a sense of existing academic discourse, how this discourse is exemplified through research, and how these efforts are reflected in the realities of social practice.

**Late Nineteenth Century to 1950**

**Theoretical Developments and Research Themes**

Scholarly thought in the late nineteenth century has had a lasting impression on today's western women and the role of physical activity in their lives. Even in the following quote, elements of current issues facing women in physical activity and sport are evident:

> This priority of bodily training is common to both sexes but it is directed to a different object. In the case of boys the object is to develop strength, in the case of girls to bring about their charms. Women need enough strength to act gracefully, men enough skill to act easily (Rousseau (1890) cited in Scraton 1992, p. 26).

Vertinsky (1990) provided an intriguing account of the British and American medical establishment and its powerful control over women's bodies and their involvement in physical activity. Through the collection of medical reports and literary debates, she concluded that:

> knowledge and beliefs that women have today about their physical capabilities have been partly constructed in a socio-historical framework, those images of the past that have been captured in permanent form and are known to have been widely disseminated can display unique and important clues for our understanding of this phenomena (p. 8).

The dominant theories presented during this era were social Darwinism, the vital energy theory, and the menstrual disability theory. These theories shared the fundamental premise that differences between males and females could be easily explained by biological and natural factors. The research themes, during this time, resulted in socially constructed
biological extensions of women's physicality based on the "scientific knowledge" learned about males.

Science provided a vocabulary and a sense of imagery to express and support these beliefs, and from among them, physicians selected those scientific plausibilities which fitted most conveniently into their professional paradigm (Vertinsky, 1990, p. 58).

The latter theories supported the claim that female bodies were created primarily for purposes of reproduction and were adamant that physical activity would harm their critical role in life. Patriarchy and socially constructed knowledge ensured that female experiences in physical activity were defined as being inferior to and much different from that of males (Vertinsky, 1990; Scraton, 1992). Adopting this 'truth,' the socialization process then perpetuated this myth through the teaching of stereotypic gender roles within existing physical activity and sport structures.

Within the physical activity field, Scraton (1992) and Kirk (1990) both provided historical accounts of the development of physical education programs and curriculum. Both acknowledged the importance of understanding historical developments as a key to a critical and reflective future. Their work identified Herbert Spencer as a strong advocate of the biologically based theories (Scraton, 1992). However, in contrast to most followers, he supported the notion of a healthy mind and healthy body for both boys and girls and encouraged improved physical education programs in the limited schooling for girls at the time.

Specific research involving females and physical activity was almost nonexistent during this time frame. However, Scraton (1992) reported that in the late 1800's the majority of the schools for girls offered walking, croquet, and dancing. The ability of the medical profession, representing the base of scientific knowledge production, to control and construct knowledge about female's bodies over the years was quite a remarkable example of dominant power and continues to be debated today.
Practical Initiatives

All was not bleak, however. The burning of the corset and the introduction of bloomers started women on the move. Just before the turn of the century, Martina Bergman-Osterberg established teacher training colleges specifically for women in physical education. The training colleges and private schools promoted a Swedish gymnastics form (Ling) which was readily accepted by able and willing female participants (Kirk, 1990; Scraton, 1992). Ling replaced most of the current 'gentle exercises' for girls and founded physical education as a curriculum subject for girls. This represented a period when women physical educators were the norm (although, at the time teaching was considered to be a lower class occupation). Other milestones included permission for women to compete in track and field in the Olympics and the success of the famous Edmonton Grads, a female basketball team who challenged the biological stereotypes of female capabilities in sport and physical activity (Long, 1995).

1950's and 1960's

Theoretical Developments and Research Themes

The four main theoretical perspectives that emerged during this time frame provided new ways of viewing gender relations: positivism, liberalism, radical critique, and human capitalism.

Positivism had its roots in the natural science model which sought to test correlations between variables resulting in the creation of universal laws (Silverman, 1993). Hammersley (1992) explained that in this perspective:

A theory is treated as a statement which explains what will happen and why under given circumstances, and whose validity can be tested by checking whether or not its predictions are accurate (p. 36).
A major criticism of this model was that by relying on 'observable facts', the role of social and cultural contexts and the notion that knowledge was socially constructed were overlooked.

Research from a positivist perspective dominated this era. It mainly consisted of quantitative studies on males with a focus on human mechanics and exercise physiology (Scraton, 1992). This type of research emphasized the production of scientific knowledge with verifiable results and tended to view sport abstractly, as non-problematic, and divorced from social issues (Hall, 1990). This research approach did not question the entrenched values surrounding sport (e.g. aggression, competition, power, and control) that are exclusionary for many.

Due to a dissatisfaction with positivism, a liberal feminist view emerged to find ways of including women within existing systems. The liberal approach directly challenged gender discrimination and advocated equal opportunities through women's rights. Some of the inequities this view encompassed were the socialization of girls into 'female-type' activities (e.g. gymnastics and aerobics); sex-role stereotype by teachers; unequal access to facilities, resources, and extra-curricular time; and inequities in the career patterns of males and females in the profession (Hall, 1990; Scraton & Flintoff, 1992; Scraton, 1992). Even though liberal feminism remains a dominant approach today, the paradigm has been heavily criticized for failing to account for the ways that the broader social context creates inequities and barriers for women to gain equality with men. The theory ignores the need for systemic change, and reinforces dualistic thinking about physical activity where activities of the mind are valued more than the activities of the body (Costa & Guthrie, 1994).

The radical feminist perspective rejected both the positivist and the liberal paradigms because they believed the locus of the problem exists in prevailing social

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2 The term sex will be used when referring to another reference while the term gender (referring to the social construction of sex roles) reflects the author's preference.
structures. The radical critique focused on the dominant role of patriarchy, a system of relations in society that accords value and power to men and oppresses women by virtue of their gender (Strachan & Tomlinson, 1992). When applying radical feminism to physical activity, Scraton and Flintoff (1992) explained that:

male sexuality or hegemonic masculinity functions to control women in work, leisure, school, and social space thus radical feminist research in physical education emphasizes the means and processes by which physical education reinforces and reproduces female and male heterosexuality. Girls and young women learn through physical education a female 'physicality' which emphasizes appearance, presentation and control while their brothers are encouraged to develop physical strength, aggression and confidence in their physical prowess (p. 173).

The radical approach contributed to alternate and critical ways of thinking about physical activity, sport, gender, and social change. A major weaknesses of the early radical feminist paradigm was that it treated women as unitary subjects, thus ignoring the diversity of women's experiences within their social historical context (Hall, 1990; Costa & Guthrie, 1994).

The human capital theory emerged in reaction to the other theoretical perspectives that divorced the mind from the body (Shilling, 1993). Since the very essence of physical activity is the body, it seemed ludicrous to some, not to have the body as a focus of explanatory theories (Shilling, 1993; Gilroy, 1994). Human capital production refers to the social formation of the body through the physical activity opportunities that are shaped by one's social class. Seccombe and Beeghley (1992) described the theory as one that:

tries to account for gender variation in occupation and income by suggesting that differences in the investment in skills (such as education level, job training, and job tenure) affect one's ability to produce on the job (p. 285).

The differential "capital features" and opportunities presented to males and females in physical activity and sport can be translated in the same way. Furthermore, because the social construction(s) of the female body were historically produced, this allowed those in control of the provision of knowledge about bodies to ultimately have control of the
bodies as well. Many feminists believe that until females have more control over their own bodies, their access to social power and "empowerment through physical activity" will be limited (Dewar, 1991; Gilroy, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994). The human capital theory has been criticized, as was the liberal stance, for seeking social change without problematizing traditional structures.

**Practical Initiatives**

Sport was placed on the political agenda in Canada with the creation of the Fitness and Amateur Sport Act in 1960. The Ling gymnastics approach to teaching physical education began to phase out and Laban's analysis of movement was introduced. Laban's approach to movement was based on the premise that repetitive factory work was denigrating the 'quality of movement' and that this dance form was a type of therapy (Kirk, 1992). Because of this, Laban opened more doors for physical activity for girls and women, yet Scraton (1992) suggested that it incorporated elements of beauty and grace that contributed to the perpetuation of traditional notions of femininity. While there seemed to be some progress in terms of the numbers of physical activity opportunities for girls and women, these were often closer wed to their reproductive role as mothers and wives, or to their social class.

**1970's**

**Theoretical Developments and Research Themes**

The 1970's marked a time of copious production of academic and feminist debate about gender and physical activity. Several key theories emerged out of this critique including: Neo-marxism, role socialization, socialist feminism, and black feminism. While theoretical developments flourished, research lagged behind.

Neo-marxists claimed that the oppression of women was a result of the political and social economic class system which defined their role within the family unit and
perpetuated the sexual divisions of labour (Acker, 1984; Scraton, 1992; Costa & Guthrie, 1994). Eliminating class privilege was central to this view but many felt that neglecting gender and the role of patriarchal domination in the analysis was a weakness. Hall (1984) contended that the Marxist-feminist analysis was useful for analyzing gender inequalities in sport because issues were examined within broader contexts such as voluntarism, liberation, and domination. Structuralist neo-marxism was another dominant approach in educational scholarship that extended Marxism to incorporate elements of culture and individual experiences (Roman & Apple, 1990). Criticism stemmed from the premise that the structuralist feminists still "treated [these] merely as reflections of economic interests and class-based power relations" (Bernstein, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976 cited in Roman & Apple, 1990, p. 42).

Role socialization theory focused on the acquisition of gender roles, that is, how males and females learn to behave according to a given society's expectations about appropriate attitudes, beliefs, and values for males and females (Acker, 1984; Geadelmann, 1989; Sport Canada, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994). Many theorists believe that even before birth, children are presented by parents, peers, schools, and the media with a certain social path representing gender specific choices as well as material objects. The role theory is subject to criticism due to its propensity to reproduce stereotypes that perpetuate dominant ideologies about gender roles in society (Hargreaves, 1994).

Socialist feminists argued that a revolution must occur to overcome problems associated with patriarchy and capitalism in sport (Costa & Guthrie, 1994). They attempted to combine structure and agency approaches supporting the belief that both genders are oppressed in the system of power relations that distributes knowledge differentially to each group (Wharton, 1991; Scraton, 1992). This critical paradigm validated the everyday experiences of girls and women while recognizing the myth of homogeneity. However, it has been criticized for separating capitalism and gender into distinct entities rather than viewing them as interacting forces (Wharton, 1991). Others
take issue with the lack of concern for women's control over their own bodies and because other forms of oppressions such as racism are ignored (Costa & Guthrie, 1994).

Black feminism emerged after an intense critical debate about the exclusion of women of colour from the theories mainly espoused by white women. Women of colour viewed this theorizing as speaking to and for the dominant powers and they began investigating how their versions of reality could be represented within feminist theory (Birrell, 1990; Smith, 1992). Their work focused on expanding the knowledge about relations among racism, gender, and class through the lives and experiences of women of colour. In sport, the absence of race relations was especially pronounced, except perhaps stereotypic ones that labeled black athletes into universalized athletic categories (Lovell, 1991; Figueroa, 1993; Cahn, 1994).

**Practical Initiatives**

As a result of the feminist movement and probably mostly due to liberal reform strategies, the 1970's boasted the proclamation of several government policies raising the gender equity profile within the sport and physical activity system. Probably the most predominant initiative was Title IX (USA) of the Educational Amendments of 1972 that prohibited the segregation of physical education by gender. It was the first "federal legislation to include the rights of students, as well as employees to be free of sex discrimination" (Durrant, 1992, p. 60). It was intended to create a more equitable playing field for girls and women. However, despite Title IX's intentions, gender equity is still more of an illusion than reality (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992). Research over the past twenty years has shown that sex-segregated physical education is preferred by girls because it offers a more safe and less intimidating environment (Griffin, 1981, Macdonald, 1990; Wright & King, 1990; Scraton, 1992; Vail & Berck, 1993). However, Griffin (1981) found that in many cases, the perpetuation of gender stereotyping and other
discriminatory practices were still present within the sex-integrated structure of most physical education classes.

In 1970, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada proposed that: i) policies be reviewed to ensure equal opportunities for school activity programs; and ii) policies and practices be established to motivate and encourage girls to be active in sport. The direct results of these initiatives are as yet undetermined.

1980's

Theoretical Developments and Research Themes

A surge of critical thought about gender and physical activity occurred in the 1980's resulting in the emergence of cultural and feminist standpoint theories. During this time criticism was directed at academic feminist work for being "elitist and exclusionary" (Dewar, 1993). Feminism, as were most traditional paradigms, was often guilty of marginalizing and oppressing women by universally applying knowledge about some women to all women. Challenged by this awareness, many feminists engaged in the process of developing more comprehensive theories and research practices to avoid reproducing or protecting dominant interests (Birrell, 1990; Dewar, 1993).

A product of the evolution of this critical analysis was the birth of feminist cultural studies that focused on:

the ways in which culture and ideology are relatively autonomous in relation to economic and political processes, and perhaps more importantly, the mediating role of human agency in the making of culture (Hall, 1990, p. 231).

Cultural studies was "the critique of essentialist notions of difference" (hooks, 1990, p. 130) and included critical analyses of race, multiculturalism, social class, and the beliefs formed from within any group of humans within a bounded context. As Birrell (1990) emphasized, the direction of cultural theory was one that maintained a broad perspective that was:
sensitive to the complex of subordinate and dominant relations, but, for now, privileging the most overlooked example of those relations (p. 199).

The feminist standpoint theory also emerged during the flurry of critical feminist work (Hartsock, 1984) and was built upon the notion that women share similar experiences of oppression as a result of their shared biological bodily functions (Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1994). As articulated by Birrell (1990), the standpoint theory also emphasized:

those who have been systematically excluded from or only marginally involved in the cultural discourse - the oppressed - stand in a truer relation to social reality than do dominant groups. Having no stake in reproducing dominant repressive cultural forms, and thus free of the illusion that such forms are natural and good, they render a more complete analysis (p. 192).

Hartsock (1984) was criticized for her narrow definition of bodily experiences (i.e., reproductivity) that reinforced the patriarchal and universal ideologies and omitted reference to physical activity and sport (Guthrie & Castelnuovo, 1994).

Another interesting theoretical development during this time was "men's studies." This approach was aimed at "developing an analysis of men's problems and limitations compassionately, yet within the context of a feminist critique of male privilege" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 13). This alternative theoretical approach set out to critique the relationship of men to sport and focused on liberating men as well as women from sexism within this arena.

This era of contested theoretical developments stimulated research within the sport and physical activity domain to include and value experiences and viewpoints of girls and women of diverse backgrounds (Hall, 1990; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Cole, 1991; Scraton, 1992; Talbot 1993). The role of gender, leisure and culture, and teachers of physical education came to the forefront during this time. Examples included Greendorfer and Ewing's (1981) study on race, gender and socialization and Acker's (1984) discussion paper on the possible links between sociology, gender, and education. In the area of women's leisure and culture, a good example was Raval's (1989) critical response to
Carrington, Chivers and Williams' (1987) exploratory investigation of factors affecting the physical activity patterns of young people of South Asian descent. Raval claimed that Carrington’s model was based on Eurocentric framework and definitions, and failed to grasp the leisure experiences of Asian women or address racist practices in British society (Carroll & Hollinshead, 1993).

Probably the most relevant to this study was the work of Griffin (1984, 1985a, 1985b) who conducted a series of qualitative studies on gender socialization within physical education classes. Griffin’s main discovery was that there were differences in participation in physical education within genders as well as between genders. She was concerned about the wrongful generalization of behaviours attributed to gender and applied taxonomies of participation styles to support her observations that not all boys or girls participated in the same way within genders. Within each gender there was a variety of participative styles. However, she did find that the aggressive, hostile behaviour demonstrated by some boys was detrimental to girls and other low skilled participants.

She concluded that:

> how a teacher structures a class and the kind of example a teacher sets for students can either encourage or discourage fair participation and respectful interactions among students (Griffin, 1985a, p. 108).

She later broadened her research to include school contextual factors affecting the instructional quality of physical education in an urban multiracial high school (Griffin, 1985c). This study identified four limiting factors: i) limited outdoor activity space; ii) a centralized office policy development that limited teacher input; iii) a lack of professional development for teachers to improve their skills; and iv) the unique qualities of an urban, multiracial junior high school that resulted in a great "range of diversity among students" (p. 162). She claimed she was able to make a more realistic assessment of the program by examining the systemic and political contexts in which the program was taught.

Teachers and physical education pedagogy in schools formed another focus of
research during this time. One strategy was to search for the characteristics of effective
teachers in order to guide the development of teacher education programs (Siedentop,
1989). However, it was acknowledged that a focus on teacher characteristics ignored the
complexities of social relationships and social context within the class environment.

Other studies examined teacher-student interactions and discourse, teacher
expectations and role modeling utilizing questionnaire and survey research on older
children and teens. These studies uncovered teacher interaction biases that favoured males
through the use of praise, criticism, discipline, and higher perceptions and expectations of
ability (Griffin, 1984; Griffin, 1985a, 1985b; Knoppers, 1988; Macdonald, 1990; Wright &
results were found in teaching physical education. In some instances, as a result of this
research focus, some teaching behaviours could be altered dramatically with the
introduction of interventions (Sadker & Sadker, 1984). Sometimes all the teachers needed
were to review the video-tape which explicitly illustrated their biases and then they were
able to alter their approaches.

Even though we have learned that at a young age biology can no longer be used as
an excuse for physical activity differences between boys and girls, physical activity
performance differences still exist between genders (Greendorfer, 1987). One explanation
for these patterns that has been explored, was the lack of role models for girls in physical
activity (Griffin, 1984; Griffin, 1985b; Greendorfer, 1987; Knoppers, 1988; Strachan &
Tomlinson, 1992). However, it could be argued that since the majority of elementary
school teachers are female, that females role models do exist. However, as one study
found, female preservice teachers had negative memories of their physical education
classes that were caused by embarrassment and gender inequities (Allison, Pissanos &
Sakola, 1990). If these teachers are now in our system, they may be drawing in part on
their past experiences when teaching physical education. Greendorfer (1987) suggested
that although the direct influence of the teacher or a coach is unclear, she proposed that
schools act as a reinforcement agency, reinforcing social orientations embedded in history. Even though schools are only one aspect of girl's lives, the lack of role models for girls in physical activity and sport at all levels (e.g. participants, leaders, officials) is significant (Larkin & Baxter, 1993).

**Practical Initiatives**

Three federal policies in Canada were passed during this decade: the 1981 Charter of Rights and Freedoms which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex; the 1986 Women in Sport Policy by Sport Canada; and the 1989 Federation of Municipalities Equity Policy. These policies implied that the sport system needed to take social responsibility for inequality. Educating females about these policies and how they could affect their opportunities and access, and encouraging girls and women to demand their rights be recognized, has to be an integral part of the social change process. Alongside policy developments, publications (i.e., Fair Ball: Towards Sex Equality in Canadian Sport, 1982) describing sport inequities signified a turning point in the conceptualization of gender and sport.

Two significant physical education support programs were also launched. The Premier's Sport Awards Program (PSAP), developed in British Columbia in 1980, was responsible for designing resource materials to empower teachers and instructors with limited knowledge in physical education to teach basic sport skill development. This government funded program has been very successful, awarding annually over 70,000 crests and registering over 100,000 participants both in community programs and elementary schools. Although the program could be criticized for maintaining a traditional sport specific framework, its revision process reflects current gender equity developments and its philosophy of encouraging personal skill development regardless of gender is sound.
A federal initiative, Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) was launched in 1982. QDPE referred to an individually planned program of instruction and activity for all students on a daily basis throughout the entire school year (CAHPERD, 1993). QDPE was created by the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (CAHPERD), in response to a decline in mandatory physical education programs, an apparent lack of support in school administration, and a growth in children inactivity rates.

The QDPE program includes a Recognition Award Program as a way of encouraging action, recognizing success, and monitoring progress. Schools apply for this award and are assessed against set criteria which include: the designated minutes per week of instructional time, percentage rates of participation for intramurals, and a lengthy questionnaire that encouraged a more detailed description of the program. Some questions were directed at the promotion of gender equitable practices within their program. Definitions of what "quality" and "gender equity" encompass and how they are assessed in practice remain unclear. This, along with the rational approach of criterion-based assessment, were criticisms of QDPE.

Currently neither PSAP or QDPE have undergone client-driven evaluations. These programs may be popular with teachers and administrators, but how the recipients interpret them is still undetermined.

1990's

Theoretical Developments and Research Themes

Discussion continues about the strengths and weaknesses of various feminist theories that have been applied to sport. Relational theory suggested that combining the strengths of existing theories is needed to arrive at an inclusive, meaningful explanation through unequal power relations between men and women are constantly constructed and
contested (Messner & Sabo, 1990). According to Dewar (1991), the relational theory of
gender:

begins with the assumption that sporting practices are historically produced,
socially constructed and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of
powerful groups in society (p. 20).

The aim of this theory was to ask questions about "who is not being represented." In
practical terms it referred to "programming for those who are not there" (Lay, 1990).

Another theoretical variation identified the notion of "gender order". It was based
on the assumption "that gender is better conceptualized as a process than as a thing that
people have" (Messner & Sabo, 1990, p. 11). It implied constant change, within a
dynamic relational structure. These evolving concepts promise great intellectual debate,
but how do these theories relate to practice and ultimately social change?

The research theme of the early nineties responded with a focus on debating the
practical implications of the issues around the approaches of 'equality' and 'equity'.

Equality as defined by the Sport Canada Policy (1986) implied:

that women at all levels of the sport system should have an equal opportunity to
participate. Equality is not necessarily meant to imply that women wish to
participate in the same activities as men, but rather to indicate the activities of their
choice should be provided and administered in a fair and unbiased environment.
At all levels of the sport system, equal opportunities must exist for women and
men to compete, coach, officiate, or administer sport.

The desire for equality has been linked primarily to the efforts of liberal feminists, hence,
some argued that its potential to improve the situation for girls and women was limiting.
In the Canadian sport circles, equity was seen as adopting a more encompassing vision and
has been defined as:

synonymous with fairness and justice; to be equitable means to be fair, and to
appear to be fair. The equity umbrella covers many forms of discrimination
including discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ability, age, national or ethnic
origin, and religion (Kent, 1995, p.5).
A popular analogy, offered by Bruce Kidd (a well known Canadian sporting advocate), clearly articulated a difference between the two terms:

Equality focuses on creating the same starting line for everyone. Equity has the goal of providing everyone with the same finish line (Kidd cited in Larkin & Baxter, 1993, p. 4).

Teachers and curriculum were another focus in the discussion of equity. A study by Luke and Sinclair (1991) which focused on attitudes of secondary students towards physical education, pointed to the influence of the teacher and the curriculum as the predominant indicators of attitude. Thomas (1991) and Williams (1993) called for a "whole school, whole community" approach emphasizing the importance of teacher commitment towards the issues of gender and equal opportunity policies. Hellison and Templin's (1991) book on reflective approaches to teaching also placed an emphasis on the role of the teacher as being integral to the outcomes of students. Talbot (1993) mentioned the important role of teachers as well, but included in her conclusions the critical role of contextual factors such as school and community support for equal opportunities initiatives in physical education. Following Griffin's (1984, 1985a,b,c) lead, she too felt that these factors strongly affected the teachers' ability to apply and implement gender equitable principles. Griffin (1989) further recognized that in order for a teacher to act as the change agent they must have a commitment to equality, a willingness to learn new activities, an ability to perform self-evaluations, and the presence of administrative and professional support.

Carroll and Hollinshead (1993) utilized a case study approach to examine race and gender in physical education in a school. They concluded that teachers needed to be better informed about multicultural issues, that stronger antiracist and antisexist policies should be in place, and that stronger links with the community are needed so that students' situations can be greater understood. According to Rizvi (1992), a multicultural program "must utilize the social context of children's lives outside the classroom" (p. 208). He
drew our attention to how schools interpret multiculturalism within their structure and curriculum and referred to studies that indicated that schools tend to "silence" identities as opposed to acknowledging and validating them.

There is a tendency to view culture in very narrow terms, to dwell on the 'traditional,' to celebrate festivals and foods, even if these have little significance for minority youth (p. 208).

Studies that focused on how girls' interpreted their experiences are few. Much of the literature focuses on self-esteem and body images of adolescent girls and the relationship to sport and physical activity (Lenskyj, 1988; Edwards, 1992; Orenstein, 1994). However, recently projects have utilized a qualitative approach designed to offer a forum for the girls' voices. Jaffee and Manzer (1992) conducted a study of girls ages 9 to 12 to examine the relationship between physical activity and positive self-esteem. Their results indicated a positive correlation between self-esteem and physical activity participation levels. Overall, the girls participated in physical activity to "have fun" and for the health benefits. The main obstacles to involvement identified by the girls were attributed to inequitable treatment by the boys, a gendered belief that girls were not good at sports, an inappropriate level of challenge (i.e., sport skills too difficult for girls initially), and personal time conflicts with home and outside responsibilities. These findings build on and provide more detail to earlier studies.

Humbert (1995) analyzed grade 8-12 young women's experiences and feelings about physical education. The results indicated that there was a desire to be physically active, but that the physical education programs were not addressing their needs. The main incentive to participate was "to have fun." The young women also said that they wanted to learn skills from non-traditional curricula activities (e.g. step aerobics, bike riding, walking, and hiking) and to have the opportunity to participate in sex-segregated environments.
The consistent finding of "having fun" as a benefit of participating in physical activity, has elicited discussion in the field about the appropriateness of "fun" in the curriculum. Griffin, Chandler and Sariscsany (1993) posed the question to teachers and received a "lack of conceptual clarity" on the positioning of fun within physical education. They concluded that the debate should really focus on:

fostering the intrinsic satisfaction among ourselves and our students to help promote life as being for education in general, and physical education in particular (p. 66).

The results of these studies identified a demand to create a more gender sensitive physical education curriculum working with the girls' interpretations. They also exposed a lack of information about linking girls' interpretations to physical education teaching practices and how these practices have been socially constructed and reproduced within the school culture. The ability to link theory to practice illuminates an ever-present gap in the knowledge about girls and physical activity.

Practical Initiatives

Debate about how to apply feminist perspectives in practice is gaining more attention by scholars (Dewar, 1993; Smeal, Carpenter & Tait, 1994; Rowe & Brown, 1994).

The feminist role of questioning the conduct of research, the definition of program objectives, and the preparation of teachers has illuminated the weaknesses in the traditional or dominant teaching perspectives (O'Sullivan, Siedentop, & Locke, 1992). However, O'Sullivan et al. (1992) point out that the radical perspective "is short on descriptions of what a radical physical education would look like" (p. 275). There are also questions about whether this approach would actually be liberating. Even when physical education teachers have a feminist agenda, the "technocratic content" demands and the "misogynistic" nature of the physical education curriculum make change beyond the liberal democratic paradigm very difficult (Smeal, Carpenter & Tait, 1994). To believe that
dealing with gender issues in physical education will be a simple process is naive. From
the above analysis it is clear that the complexities of linking theoretical rhetoric with the
realities of teaching within a school context is a significant challenge.

Most school curriculum traditionally has been designed to reflect the development
patterns of "white, able-bodied males." For example, the curriculum does not reflect the
fact that girls tend to mature earlier, have control of small motor skills sooner than boys
and are ready for math and reading skills at an earlier age than boys (Shakeshaft, 1986).
Many researchers suggest that the physical education curriculum, embedded in the
"androcentrism principles of sport," contributes to the socialization process and the
production of knowledge passed onto students (Smeal, Carpenter & Tait, 1994). As such,
it sends gendered messages to students through the choices of activities provided and the
The main limitations to the existing dominant curriculum model are centred around its
rational and non-contextual approach to learning which supports traditional performance
oriented programming. Many claim that the traditional model ignores the roles of the
broader social context, politics and power, personal self-interests and values, rewards, and
resources (Arrighi & Young, 1987; Sparkes, 1990; Hellison & Templin, 1991; Tinning,
1991; Scraton, 1992). The result is the process in which the purpose remains
unquestioned and becomes more ambiguous in "contemporary professional practice that is
increasingly unpredictable, complex, situation specific, and value laden" (Schon cited in

Griffin (1989), Scraton (1992), and Talbot (1993) have been dominant
contributors to bridging the gap between theory and practice with their insights on how to
interpret and implement the curriculum to achieve gender equitable physical education.
Griffin (1989) offered a practical description:
each student, regardless of gender, race, or motor ability has the opportunity for successful and full participation and instruction in a variety of physical activities in a supportive interpersonal environment (p. 19).

Scranton (1992) suggested that policy merely focusing on an equal opportunity approach will not provide a long term solution to equity issues. Instead, schools need to critically evaluate and restructure in order to:

- transform the power bases of gender. Changes within physical education may concentrate on improving girls' experiences, but ultimately boys and men must take up the challenge (p. 31).

Her recommendations for implementing gender equitable physical education included: student-centred and girl-centred learning, varied learning situations and activity offerings, leadership opportunities through student driven initiatives, clothing choices, flexible evaluative procedures, and consciousness-raising about girls' capabilities and roles. In a similar vein, Vertinsky (1992) offered a critical case study discussion about the merits of the 'Active Living' movement and its potential in fostering gender-sensitive physical education. She also concluded that a student-centred approach may be a key component.

Talbot's (1993) work complemented and extended that of Griffin (1989) and Scraton (1992). Based on her critique of adopting an equality stance for physical education, she proposed a model for change. She borrowed a business acronym SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) as a framework to analyze existing physical education programs. Talbot recognized that not all social historical variables are necessarily controllable, therefore she proposed to apply the analysis to variables that were changeable (e.g. teacher and instructional practices and contextual variables such as school and community support).

The focus on equal opportunity is reflected in the growing number of policies which have been adopted and continue to be adopted as a result of liberal advocacy. Although this approach has been criticized for not changing systemic inequalities, it has
heightened awareness of change through policy development particularly in an era of economic restraint. Liberal feminists could claim success for placing aspects of gender and physical activity on the political agenda. The value of this political activity cannot be dismissed. I have to agree with Messner and Sabo (1990) when they stated that in spite of other offshoots of feminist thought, liberalism may be the first step to all the others. Representation and voices within the system are not necessarily an indication of complacency toward the dominant structure, but should be looked upon as a strategic step towards creating change from within. The next step to learn is how to capitalize on these formative steps.

A milestone policy for BC was initiated by Promotion Plus - the BC Organization for Girls and Women in Physical Activity and Sport. Promotion Plus represented the first provincial organization of this nature in Canada and spearheaded the first provincial gender policy in physical activity and sport. In addition, in the space of three years, Promotion Plus placed a woman on every sport or physical activity provincial board or advisory committee in the province (R. Steen, personal communication, 1994). Furthermore, another physical activity partner in the field of recreation, the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association passed a gender equity policy at the 1995 Annual General Meeting.

Another major initiative emerged from the first International Sport Conference for Women. The Brighton Declaration, in May 1994 was created by women representatives from all over the world coming together to create policy to be adopted by governments anywhere. It provided the principles to guide action intended to increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles. So far, both the Canadian and British Columbian Ministers Responsible for Sports have publicly endorsed this Declaration.

Many additional grassroots 'equity' programs have been initiated in the start of this decade. An example included the Equity Schools Project produced by the CAHPERD.
This project emerged from a growing concern about equity in the physical education system. Their policy stated that:

all Canadians regardless of sex, age, ability, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic level are entitled to equitable access to and engagement in physical activity (Physical Education Society of BC, 1992, p. 21).

A weakness foreseen in this document was that it was created in isolation of other influential projects and the distribution, marketing and monitoring plans remain unclear. It cannot be assumed that schools believe that the issue of equity is a concern of theirs.

Another initiative, entitled "On the Move," was designed to encourage non-active adolescent girls to participate in a fun-filled, supportive, low skill level, team recreational physical activity (Fenton, Kopelow & Viviani, 1994). The project was spearheaded by Sport Canada Women's Program, pilot tested in Ontario and British Columbia, and its inclusive female-centred concept is gaining support across the country.

The recently launched provincial curriculum for physical education (Ministry of Education, 1995) included a section on strategies towards creating an equitable physical education program. The strategies reflected many of the research findings. It's positive to see this included, however, from this literature review, we know that policy statements can have limited success. How the strategies are implemented and assessed remain in question.

What appears to be missing from the literature are the links between individual experiences in a school culture embedded in social and political contexts. The proposed study attempted to make the links through the examination of grade four girls' experiences within a planned physical education program.
B. School Culture and the Political Context

School culture represents another ring of the conceptual framework (see Figure 1) and signifies a growing area of interest in the field of physical activity and gender which guided this study. Schein (1991) defined organizational culture as:

1. A pattern of shared basic assumptions,
2. invented, discovered, or developed by a given group,
3. as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration,
4. that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore,
5. is to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 247).

This section will be approached by adopting Schein's (1991) notion of organizational culture to explore school culture in light of two of the research question areas. Culture is a complex concept to define and decipher. The task was simplified in Schein's model which outlined three inter-related layers: i) observable artifacts; ii) values and; iii) basic underlying assumptions. These three layers indicate a movement from general to specific, from surface impressions to a deeper, more intimate interpretation of actions and how meanings are constructed within an organization. A period of time and a growing rapport with the study subjects often allows the journey from an initial impression, to a deeper level of assigned meaning.

A weakness of Schein's approach, as identified by Meek (1992), was that organizational culture was viewed as an homogeneous entity when within any organization multiple sub-cultures can exist. She also warned researchers against directly linking culture to leaders in the organization. Although their position in the organization may privilege them to decisions which affect the organizational culture, they do not have control over the forming of the culture. Culture is not passive, but negotiated, "reproduced," and "transformed" amongst many layers of power and through many social interactions.
Within the education literature, the definition of school culture shared elements of broader organizational culture definitions:

culture is about people in the organizational setting and is characterized by behaviour - what people say and do; relationships - how they work with and through each other; attitudes and values - how assumptions, beliefs and prejudices affect the formal and informal working of the organization (Whitaker, 1993, p. 92).

Rizvi (1992) contended that school cultures are socially constructed and tend to mirror the prevailing social structure when he wrote:

the organizational culture of schools in the United States is Anglo, conformist, gendered and middle-class and this often creates a social distance between teachers and families of the minorities (p. 207).

Rizvi's generalization draws attention to the multifaceted nature of culture and the inherent links to the social and political contexts in which schools are situated.

Morgan (1986) utilized a political metaphor to link an organization's culture to the broader political environment in which it is situated by focusing on "relations between interests, conflict, and power" (p. 148). Politics allows "individuals to reconcile their differences through consultation and negotiation" (p. 142). Politics as described by Houlihan (1991), can also be associated with the use of power which corresponds to the control of resources as "sources of power to influence the choices of decision-makers" (p. 4). Morgan (1986) explained that organizations often adopt a characteristic style or "rule" that guide the decision making processes. Within this negotiating framework, many relationships and interactions within and externally are subject to politicization as each entity exists in tension with each other. The multiplicity of tensions shape and are shaped by the organization.

In the area of physical activity and schools, few studies have incorporated the notion of organizational culture or political contexts (Griffin, 1985c; Rizvi, 1992; Talbot, 1993; Cutforth, 1994). Griffin's (1985c) study of a physical education program was
among the first to include aspects of the political context in her analysis. She claimed that if change was to happen in the teaching of physical education, then it was necessary to acknowledge the existence of the political context (e.g. resource support for program).

In the formation of organizational cultures, gender also plays a role (Morgan, 1986; Acker, 1990; Martin, 1990). Morgan (1986) linked gender stereotypes to the "traditional principles" or organizational logic of organizations and concluded that gender inherently biases the operation of the organization through the shaping of power relations. Organizations historically have been created within a patriarchal and bureaucratic system; two systems of oppression for women (Acker, 1990).

Martin (1990) outlined several feminist organization characteristics that address aspects of organizational culture. The dimensions appealed to issues such as feminist ideology and values, and aspects of structure, practices, and external relations. She pointed out that the "transformational" nature of feminism is subject to diverse interpretations of how feminism may be manifested within an organization, and in turn, reflected in the culture.

Scranton and Flintoff (1992) argued that organizational culture research fits the aims of feminist research which are:

- to examine how images of 'femininity' and the social construction of gender-appropriate behaviour are reinforced or challenged by the structure, content and teaching of girls (p. 178).

They too confirmed the existence of gender power relations and identified the need to examine physical education both in the institutional or structural form and in the practices of those who hold power. They also agreed that by:

- studying the structures of physical education alone would not necessarily reveal ideological positions and the aim, therefore was to examine structures and practices which might sustain or reproduce gender inequalities as well as the ideological underpinnings of this institutional form (p. 178).
Although not directly linking her findings to the organizational culture literature, Talbot (1993) alludes to values and underlying assumptions of the school and the teacher and makes reference to the role of the social context. In the goal to provide gender equitable physical education, she listed factors in the school context that affected teachers' ability to change. These included: the school's commitment to equal opportunities; the status of physical education and its effect on the priority of equal opportunities work; the attitudes and commitment of staff; the class norms; and community support for physical education. Talbot also referred to the importance of considering contextual variables linked to the teacher such as instructional styles, gender groupings, interaction patterns, and pupils' ability range. She concluded that elements of the school context are key to research that questions hegemonic practices.

An ethnographic case study by Cutforth (1994) revealed the role of social context in an urban elementary school culture. He observed a physical education teacher who was using a "harsh", "authoritarian", "competitive" style that upon first sight contradicted "prevailing academic ideology of effective teaching" (p. 171). Yet over the research period, solid support for this teacher from the students, parents, and teachers emerged and Cutforth concluded that the teacher's style of teaching and program development was "contextually effective" (p. 162). It was possible that Cutforth did not maintain a critical perspective as he infiltrated the school's culture. A further weakness of this study was that gender was not central to his analyses. His descriptors of the teacher's style perpetuate the androcentric characteristics of traditional forms of physical education and contribute to the reproduction of gender and class stereotypes.

The notion of 'hidden curriculum' within pedagogical circles links to the concept of organizational culture. Kirk (1992) defines hidden curriculum as "the learning of knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and assumptions" outside the formal curriculum (p. 37). Kirk suggested that the existence and role of a hidden curriculum must be acknowledged and investigated to ensure a heightened awareness and
understanding of the ambiguous and complex nature of the social meanings surrounding physical activity.

The inclusion of organizational culture as part of achieving a clearer picture of experiences of girls within their school is further supported by Adams and Ingersoll's (1992) statement that "characteristics of an organization will augment any study of personal experience" (p. 228). Rizvi (1992) neatly summarized that:

so long as organizational theory remains wedded to the fiction that school administration is somewhat separate from the more general processes of cultural articulation in society, we will continue to be thwarted in achieving genuine equity reform (p. 215).
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Five ethnographic techniques were employed to address the research question areas of this study. These techniques included: participant observation, focus groups, one-on-one interviews, informal discussions, and document analysis. The data collection sources from the case study school consisted of the grade four girls, the physical education instructor, two grade four teachers, the principal, the grade four planned physical education program, and relevant documents. To situate the study, the selection criteria for the case study site and for the six grade four girls who were studied in more depth are initially described. A detailed account of the ethnographic techniques and the research process are then presented.

All personal and organizational names and locations have been assigned pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the research subjects.

A. Site and Subject Selection Criteria

Site Selection Criteria

The case study school, Parkside Elementary, met three site selection criteria. These were: i) a Lower Mainland public elementary school; ii) situated in a low income, multiracial community; iii) that was committed to physical education as a means of improving the quality of student life.

The first criteria was established to ensure regular accessibility to the research site. The second criteria offered an opportunity to hear the voices from a sector within the social structure that are seldom heard from (Roman, 1993; hooks, 1990). Girls from low income, multiracial backgrounds often face the greatest barriers to improving the quality of their lives through physical activity. Not only do they face gender specific barriers, but this group's life experiences are often shaped by racism, poverty, physical abuse,
inadequate child care, and homophobia (Coulter, 1993). The third criteria offered the possibility to learn from a program that had gained a reputation of success from many different sources. In a time when physical education is losing priority within the school curriculum, a commitment to "comprehensive physical education" programming is rare. The case study school demonstrated its commitment in a number of ways which unfold in Chapter 4. How this value and commitment was interpreted by and reflected in the girls' experiences contributed towards the research goals.

Site Characteristics

The case study school exhibited the following features:

- a 355 student enrolment
- 148 immigrant status students
- 35 language groups
- 246 ESL students
- 43 First Nations students
- the majority of students live below the poverty line
- 85% participate in the school food program
- a female principal
- a female full-time physical education instructor
- a comprehensive physical education program

(Evans, 1994)

After obtaining ethical approval from UBC and the School Board, securing support from the principal was crucial to gaining access into the case study school. A detailed outline and research proposal were prepared and sent with a letter of intent and a request for a brief introductory meeting. The meeting clarified the research purpose and provided the forum to negotiate the school's role in the study and my role as a researcher in this site. After a level of trust developed and permission was obtained, the research process commenced.
Selection of Study Girls

To include all the grade four girls (N=31) in the case study was not practical nor feasible. Therefore six girls were selected for in-depth study through a purposive selection process. The purpose of this process was not to extract a smaller group to adequately represent the larger group. Instead, criteria meaningful to the purposes of the study were established to guide the selection process (Goetze & LeCompte, 1984).

After initial focus groups with all the girls who had parental consent (N=21), informal discussions with the physical education instructor, and observations of program sessions, it was decided to include three girls from each of two classes who varied in terms of: i) physical skill ability; ii) articulation ability; and iii) race. In consultation with the physical education instructor, the physical skill abilities of the girls were ranked from low to high on a 3 point scale. The articulation ability of the girls was rated using the same scale, and was primarily based on my assessments during the focus group sessions. Some girls seemed more confident expressing their ideas, and were able to share them in a way that was clear, while others used one word answers, facial expressions, or repeated others' comments. The final criteria of race was assigned by the physical education instructor and a grade four teacher. From this information I juggled the three criteria until I felt comfortable that my selection would provide my study with voices of different experiences. The final result included girls from six different races who varied in physical skill ability and articulation ability. I informed the grade four teachers about the selection process so they could explain it to all the girls to avoid potentially hurt feelings or misunderstandings.
B. Ethnographic Techniques

1. Participant Observation

Purpose

Participant observation is an essential component of most qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The goal of participant observation in this study was to partially address the first three research question areas.

This goal was fulfilled by utilizing participant observation in a two stage approach. The first stage involved gaining rapport with the study subjects, becoming familiar with the school routine and vernacular, and establishing a researcher role that was appropriate for and sensitive to the study site and subjects (Bernard, 1994). Once this was established, the second stage involved documenting detailed descriptions of grade four girls participating in the planned physical education program. Descriptions included the physical environment, the participants involved and their roles, conversations and discussions, the sequence of events within the program, the actions of the physical education instructor (with a focus on gender relations), and interaction patterns (i.e., teacher-student, student-student).

Implementation and Collection Procedures

The participant observations occurred in a random manner over a 6-month time period from November 1994 to May 1995. Consent to attend and observe grade four physical education classes and other planned activities was obtained regularly from the physical education instructor. Over the research period, I observed fourteen gym classes, two intramural house games, and two recess periods. The recording techniques consisted of scratch notes and fieldnotes, tape recording and transcription, head notes, and journal writing (Jackson, 1990; Sanjek, 1990).

On site, scratch notes (key words, quotes of conversations, feelings) were written in a notebook. Immediately following or within 24 hours, fieldnotes were constructed
from the scratch notes onto computer. The fieldnotes consisted of elaborate descriptions of events and interactions. Appended to these fieldnotes, were subjective head notes which included impressions, questions, concerns, feelings, and 'follow-up' reminders. In addition to this recording process, a journal was maintained (also on computer). The journal served as a personal account of the research process and of self reflections on the role of the researcher.

The initial stage of participant observation included four observations during November and December of the grade four classes. Observations were cut short because of the many special events that took precedence over the regular scheduled physical education program and the illness of the researcher.

As a neophyte in the world of research, I was initially paralyzed upon entering the research site. "Complexity before simplicity" were the words entered in my journal at this time. I doubted myself as a researcher and as a data collection tool. I was fluctuating between self doubt and self questioning which I see now was a healthy process. As time went on my growing familiarity with the subjects and the setting lead to greater confidence with the ethnographic process.

As a consequence of my early feelings, during my first two observations I was overly conscious of my own presence and felt uncomfortable pulling out a notebook and pen. Subsequently my fieldnotes were sparse. As I became more at ease, the quality and comprehensiveness of my fieldnotes improved with each observation. I also discovered that my initial descriptions were very much focused on the actions of the physical education instructor. Ongoing interpretation and journal writing alerted me to my bias and I was able to channel my energies towards the girls in subsequent observations.

In January, I began the second stage of observations over another six sessions where I focused on participative patterns of the girls, enjoyment levels, and gender relations (i.e., girl-boy, girl-girl, teacher-girl, teacher-boy). Once the subset of six girls were selected, they became the focus of the final six observations.
As a participant observer, I was also privy to some aspects of the daily life in the case study school. These moments usually occurred upon my arrival to or departure from an observation or interview, or during the interviews or focus groups. These opportunities contributed to the understanding of the school culture and context of the girls' experiences. I observed the organization of the school, the symbols that reflected values (e.g. decoration), and interactions of other teachers in the hallways, staff room, mail room, and in the front office area.

2. Focus Groups

Purpose

Focus groups produce ethnographically rich data (Bernard, 1994), by encouraging participants to openly discuss their feelings and experiences about a particular issue in a group and in a safe and non-threatening environment (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993). This technique was chosen to gain further insights into the first research question area. In addition, these sessions were conducted near the commencement of the study as a strategy to establish researcher/subject relationships and identify issues important to the girls. This in turn influenced subsequent observations and interviews.

Implementation and Collection Procedures

All grade four girls (N=31) were invited to participate in the focus groups. I visited both classrooms to pass out the parental consent forms and describe the study (Appendix A). Permission to use a tape recorder during the focus groups and potential interviews was also requested. Because language was a barrier to gaining informed consent, a multi-language header supplied by the School Board was attached to the consent forms. Both grade four teachers encouraged the girls to promptly return the forms. After one week, at the teachers' request, I brought in another bundle of forms for
the girls who had apparently misplaced them. Those unable or unwilling to give informed consent were excluded from the research project.

Twenty one grade four girls from two classes participated in four focus groups. This was a high 70% response rate given the target group. The focus groups were conducted with groups of five and six girls and lasted for about one hour in length. The groups were chosen by the girls themselves (groups of friends) to increase comfort levels and to reflect their normal social groupings.

Each focus group session was tape recorded and then transcribed onto computer within a 24 hour period. Immediately following each focus group, I also audio-taped my immediate impressions and feelings. Consistent with the recording process utilized with the participant observations, I included head notes and follow-up reminders.

The focus group guide was prepared in advance and the question structure and meanings were pilot tested on individuals of the same age group, from a different school, prior to the study (see Appendix B). Pilot testing the language and meanings of questions was a recommended procedure (Bernard, 1994) and it provided the insight into a whole new vernacular. For example, I was using the term "phys ed" and one pilot participant later asked me what the "zed" word meant. The term more commonly used by this age group was "gym." My study subjects reinforced this finding.

As in the first observations, I experienced some uneasiness about the focus group process. I felt I was imposing my issues on them. I was concerned about their reactions to my presence and the questions. However, the first focus group was so exhilarating I was put at ease. The open ended questions, and small group format encouraged an abundance of dialogue and discussion. They were excited about sharing their experiences in their own words. Their unabashed commentary about their experiences was refreshing. For them there was only one reality - their own.

During the focus groups, I sometimes let them all speak at once, while at other times I went around the table to ensure that each voice was heard. I found that if
someone was exaggerating, others would call her on it. I also found that if someone did not agree to what was being said, her different voice was heard. I discovered that using echo probes (i.e., repeating the last comment and asking them to continue), were highly effective (Bernard, 1994). As well, using simple affirmative probes such as "oh really", "yes I see", or "oh yah, why's that?" often resulted in an elaboration or another voice relating her experience or story. I realized early on the girls were not very introspective (i.e., they often gave one word answers or nods and facial expressions instead of conversation), so I was patient, followed their leads, and probed to get at their issues. They did not appear to be intimidated by me or the focus group process. Most of the girls marvelled at the idea that their words were important enough to tape. They wanted to listen to their voices, their words, and their answers.

3. One-on-One, Semi-Focused Interviews

Purpose

The semifocused one-on-one interviews served as a strategy to obtain:

participant meanings - how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or 'make sense' of the important events in their lives (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 423).

Semifocused interviews are like guided conversations. The purpose was to set the stage and let the subjects converse about areas they felt were relevant to the questions proposed (Crabtree et al., 1993). This technique was implemented to address aspects of all four research question areas. One hour interviews were conducted with the physical education instructor, the six grade four girls, the two grade four teachers, and the principal.

The interview of the physical education instructor was conducted as a key source for determining the intent of the planned physical education program which related to the second research question area of the study. As well, it provided meaning to and interpretation of other findings from other ethnographic techniques. The purpose of
interviewing the girls was to obtain a more in-depth account of their personal physical activity experiences, once again responding to the first research question area and complementing the other techniques. Because I did not observe nor involve the grade four teachers or principal in the focus groups, the semi-focused interview served as the prime data collection technique exploring research question areas three and four.

**Implementation and Collection Procedures**

The interview questions were prepared in advance (see Appendix C) and were informed by the findings of the focus groups and participant observations. The questions guided the interview, however flexibility during the interview allowed room to chase leads or interesting tangents that assisted in creating a vivid picture of the individual's feelings and experiences about the topic. Along with using the echo probe, often the phrase "can you give me an example of what you mean?" followed subjects' responses.

I interviewed the physical education instructor before any of the other subjects. I felt that her perspective on the planned physical education program and her role in the girls' experiences should be heard early on in the research process to help establish the particulars of the context of which I was working. It helped me understand more fully the explicit goals of the program and it enhanced my interpretation of the observation sessions and relevant documents. The information also led to the refinement of the interview questions asked of the other teachers. The physical education instructor was so enthusiastic about participating in the study, she requested and was granted release time for the interview which she willingly let consume some of her lunch hour.

The interviews of the six girls were conducted during class time and were arranged through the grade four teachers. Some of the interviews lasted over the hour and some were shorter. In many cases the girls were not as talkative in the interviews as they were in the focus groups. The one-on-one interview process seemed too formal and made the girls uncomfortable. I sensed at times that they were searching for the "right" answers.
I interviewed the grade four teachers next in the sequence. At first they questioned why they would be involved in the study. I explained they were an important part of the school culture that influences, in part, the physical activity experiences of the girls.

I strategically interviewed the principal near the conclusion of the study because she was new to the school and I wanted to give her some time to become more familiar with the planned physical education program.

All participants who were interviewed signed a consent form for the interview and the tape recording. Immediately following each interview, I also audio-taped my feelings and impressions. Each tape was transcribed and the previous recording practices were followed.

4. Informal Discussions

Purpose

The purpose of conducting informal discussions with study participants throughout the research period was to corroborate observations and conversations or conflicting interpretations (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

Implementation and Collection Procedures

Having informal discussions were not as readily accessible as I initially anticipated primarily due to the hectic school timetable. The most success in accessing this data source occurred with the physical education instructor prior to, during, and after the observations of the gym classes. Even though these discussions were often limited to only a few minutes, they were informative. With the girls, I was disappointed to find that due to their tight school schedules it was not possible to interact with them more often on an informal basis. They arrived on time at the gym with their classroom teacher and left with the bell accompanied again by their classroom teacher. From the gym, they were escorted
directly to the lunch program held in the cafeteria. After twenty minutes for lunch, they were then expected to go outside for the remainder of time. I joined them during recess, but found it to be a crazy time for them. They stopped their natural forms of play, acted silly, and climbed all over me. I also found it difficult to informally meet with the grade four teachers or the principal because of their busy schedules.

5. Document Analysis

Purpose

The purpose of the document analysis was to uncover procedural or policy information relevant to the purpose of the study.

Implementation and Collection Procedures

The documents reviewed included: the School Board's physical education curriculum outline, the Quality Daily Physical Education Application Form, the Intermediate Grade Physical Education Report Card outline, a Vancouver Sun article, a recent copy of the Inner City Education Society minutes, an article written by the physical education instructor about the school's planned physical education program, the School Board's Multicultural and Anti-Racism Draft Policy, the Role of the Principal and Vice-Principal in the School System - Supplementary Report - Reference Document, extracurricular school directives, and a school survey (see Appendix D, Documents Reviewed). These were all fully transcribed.

C. Time Frame

The study was initially designed to be conducted within four months. It was extended to a six month research period through a process of evolution often typical of

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3 Because complete bibliographic detail was not available, all the documents collected from the school appear in Appendix D.
qualitative studies. I found that I needed to be flexible around the needs and schedules of the subjects and of the school. I recognized my study was far more important to me than it was to the research participants. The start date of September was also the start of a new year for school and therefore gaining access to a new principal was not easily obtained. The proposed start date was further postponed in order to collect the permission forms from the subjects. It was necessary to arrange with each teacher to meet with the classes, hand out the forms, and then wait for their return. I then had to collect the forms and meet with the teacher to match class lists against the returns.

Initially, I also needed to gain permission to attend each of the planned sessions from the physical education instructor. With changing schedules due to field trips, assemblies, and guest appearances, I had to allow more time to attend more sessions. The stretch in time, however allowed me to observe many different situations and activities and to get to know the girls a little better thereby building a trust and rapport before I interviewed them. I received incredible support from the teachers who were flexible with the arrangements and permitted me access to the girls during class time.

The study naturally came to a close when I felt the data I was collecting through continued observations became repetitive (Bernard, 1994) and the variety and amount of data lead me to believe that I would be able to address the four research question areas. Of course in any qualitative study, there is always more to learn, but after six months I felt confident in the quality of data and the thoroughness of the collection process.

D. Ethics

Purpose

Ethics refers to the researcher's role of demonstrating that the research will not be harmful to the subjects of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The data in this
study was collected and treated with the utmost respect, care, and confidentiality. I was sincere, honest, and sensitive to the study subjects and study site.

Implementation

The following steps were taken to deal with ethical concerns arising from the study:

1. Institutional Approval

   Ethical Approval (Appendix E) was obtained from:
   a) UBC Behavioural Sciences Screening Committee For Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects; and
   b) School Board.

2. Informed Consent

   As already outlined, informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

E. Inductive Analysis

Purpose

Based on the study's underlying feminist research principles, and methodological design, analytic induction was deemed the most appropriate approach.

Analytic induction, based upon deviant-case analysis and the constant comparative method, offers a powerful tool through which to overcome the danger of purely 'anecdotal' field research (Silverman, 1993, p. 170).

Strauss and Corbin (1994) also stress the importance of the continuous interplay between analysis and data collection through the constant comparative and deviant-case analysis process. Thus the patterns are meant to emerge during the research and analysis phases rather than imposing them on the data prior to data collection.
Implementation

Qualitative data is by nature abundant, unstructured, and complex and therefore requires a systematic approach for recording, transcribing, and interpretation. The data were organized using the qualitative software entitled Q.S.R. NUD.IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing), which was designed to manage, explore, and search for patterns in the data.

After perusing the data repeatedly, I began the analysis process by writing the informants' words (one word or a short descriptive string) in the margins of the data. This quickly brought the study participants' voices to the surface and identified possible themes. I then launched into a series of timed writings (Goldberg, 1990), which focused on different aspects of the data and encouraged free writing about "what I thought I knew about" the area or the subject. The timed writings increased my familiarity with the data.

The data were then converted and transported into the Q.S.R. NUD.IST software program where the more formalized data analysis began. Once the data were housed in Q.S.R. NUD.IST, I began segmenting and indexing the data into themes or referred to as nodes. The software program was used to organize the themes that I developed into index trees, much like an organizational chart (see Appendix F). As each document was thoroughly indexed (line by line), a data tree was formed creating a visual image of the data that was accessible, dynamic, and comprehensive. As the process evolved, I was able to link the nodes in a meaningful way, thus decreasing the overall number of nodes and simplifying the abundance and complexity of the data.

The nodes on the tree indicated prominent theme areas which I was pulling from the data. Within the themes I was able to employ the constant comparative and deviant-case analysis techniques. Essentially these techniques ensured that I interpreted the findings based on the data, not just based on hunches or intuitive inclinations. Sometimes a comment or observation is atypical. As a researcher, I needed to know if this was significant in its own right. For example in one focus group, a concern was raised by one
girl about how the physical education instructor "yelled!" However, when I searched all other data sources this concern was not corroborated. Therefore, it could be just an anomaly, one girl with bad experiences of teachers, or perhaps a testament to a family situation. In this case, I was unable to value 'yelling' as a theme to pursue.

F. Assessment of Data Quality

This study addressed three main criteria to assess the quality of the data which included credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hammersley, 1992).

Credibility

As defined by Marshall and Rossman (1989), credibility ensures the data accurately reflects the study subjects or subject matter. To address credibility, the following points were considered and incorporated into the design of this study:

1. employing multiple data collection strategies;
2. seeking the participants' voices;
3. collecting data over an extended time period (six months); and
4. collecting data on the same subjects at different times.

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Brink, 1989)

Transferability

Donmoyer (1990) suggested that one of the purposes of research was to "expand the range of interpretations available to the research consumer" (p. 194). Transferability refers to the ability of research consumers to take the study's findings and apply it to their own situation when it is deemed "sufficiently similar." Thus, responsibility lies with the researcher to provide explicit study parameters including methodological details and theoretical inclinations so that the reader is equipped to assess transferability.
Confirmability

Confirmability broaches the subjects of objectivity and researcher bias. In qualitative research, subjectivity is acknowledged as inevitable, yet with care and concern is appropriately accounted for in research design. This study implemented four strategies designed to limit bias:

1. searching for negative instances;
2. practising value-free fieldnotes (i.e., separating objective description and subjective head notes);
3. explicit bias representation; and
4. data collection and analysis methods.

(Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Gummeson, 1991)

G. Reciprocity

In appreciation for the school's participation, I arranged with the grade four teachers to personally thank all the students in each grade four class. I handed out juice boxes (with a physically active design) to everyone (including the boys) and a pair of sport socks with coloured stripes to all the girls who were involved in the study. The grade four teachers were given clipboards and pens, and the physical education instructor and the principal were given hand made wooden picture frames and a formal letter of appreciation. A report of the findings were forwarded to the school and school board.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND ANALYSES

This chapter begins by situating the school in its social context and then brings the voices of the girls to the forefront by addressing the girls in physical activity ring of the conceptual framework (see Figure 1). Next, the voices of the physical education instructor, the principal, and the two grade four teachers are presented to provide a more in-depth exploration of the school's culture. The surrounding rings, which situate the girls' experiences and the school culture, focus on the broader social and political contexts. The chapter concludes with an examination of the links among the four rings.

A. The Social and School Context

Parkside Elementary was an inner city school in a low socio-economic, multiracial community. It was designated as a Neighbourhood School, where the integration and mainstreaming of children with disabilities was mandated. In addition to typical school demands, an inner city school must contend with educational and social issues affecting children and families who live in poverty. In this neighbourhood, housing is "mainly rental and substandard" and located within a section of the inner city which has a "high recorded incidence of crime" (Johnstone, 1994). The teachers described high incidences of transiency, refugees, single parents, family and social problems. The school extended its services and programs to the members of its community to increase and enhance the educational opportunities for these students (Inner City Education Society, 1994). One program deliberately designed to address some of the social needs of the community was its planned physical education program.
The Physical Activity Setting

Parkside Elementary, a two storey building constructed in the 70's from concrete bricks and wood, sat in the middle of a fenced area. The outdoor facilities included two grass fields surrounded by a very high wire fence - one small, one large with soccer posts; one all-weather field including two softball diamonds; three sets of soccer posts, and a long jump pit; two basketball courts; an adventure playground; and numerous painted lines on blacktop and school walls (e.g. hopscotch, squareball, paddle ball, numbers). On one side, two portable trailers were joined together serving as classrooms and creating the boundary between the school yard and a community park of grass, trees, benches, and tennis courts. The indoor facility consisted of a typically designed gymnasium, although its large size and sensation of comfort made it unique. The gymnasium served as the main participant observation area for this study. The following description sets the scene in which most of the planned physical activity programs for the grade four girls have taken place.

Arriving at the Gym

As usual I enter the gym through a door which takes me through the lunchroom. A pungent aroma of a hot lunch wafts through the air. The time is 11:15am and the hot lunch is served at noon. Tables and benches are set up along one side of the room with one big plastic container filled with apples cut in half and another overflow with cheese bread sticks. The lunchroom is actually 1/3 of the gym separated from the remainder of the gym by a heavy, yellowish, collapsible wall with a door.

I take my place on a bench against an off-white painted brick wall situated between the girls' and boys' change rooms. I settle myself, take off my coat, and take out my notebook and pen. This side of the gym is where Ms Haines addresses the class before each lesson.

The gym is typically rectangular in shape with three brick walls and one collapsible. (I never saw this wall opened or removed.) The remaining walls are white-washed and the top third consists of natural coloured wood slats, horizontally arranged. The north wall (where I sit) has entrances to the girls' and boys' change rooms, the equipment room, and double doors to the hallway respectively from west to east. Where there are no doors, benches line the walls.
The east wall has one set of doors to the outside paved playground and a set of circular and square painted targets. The south wall has three sets of ladders and ropes, benches in front of them and a small chalkboard. At the west end of the south wall there are double doors also to the outside paved playground. Basketball hoops are fixed to the ceiling at both the east and west ends.

The room feels warm, comfortable, and safe. The aroma from the lunch program enhances this sensation along with the colourful commercial posters and handmade computer printouts of motivational quotations, cluttering the wood slat region of the walls. Someone cares. Many posters highlight athletes performing an activity such as baseball, hockey, rock climbing, and aerobics. Some of the inspirational expressions include "Welcome", "Have Fun", "Good Luck", "Play Fair" and "Be a Good Sport". Posters produced by the Premier's Sport Awards Program illustrating children performing sport skills such as the basketball dribble, set shot, lay-up, and overhead pass are placed strategically on the lower portion of the north and east walls. Hanging from the ceiling are two matching red banners (similar to the ones hanging in hockey arenas) indicating two years of recognition from the national Quality Daily Physical Education Program. There are carefully hand made signs on the open equipment room doors, advertising lunch hour games and basketball schedules. Beside the equipment room doors, and against the wall, sits a ghetto blaster on a handmade, wooden portable stereo cabinet. Reminding me of the not so warm social realities, a large chain attaches the ghetto blaster to the cabinet.

The equipment room appears uncluttered yet full and colourful. All the equipment is on shelves or in movable bins. Most items on the shelves have been labelled and the number of items indicated in brackets. There are four milk crates filled with different coloured pinnies and a couple filled with miscellaneous clothing items (gym strip substitutes). Several clipboards hang in rows holding lists of divisions, names, teams, and equipment.

I walk in just as the other class is leaving and as the grade four class I am to observe is scurrying out of their change rooms and forming their assigned lines of four teams facing the equipment room. There's lots of chatter and squirming as the kids sit one behind the other waiting for the rest of the class to emerge. I make eye contact with Ms Haines and she nods with acknowledgement. I scan the room to pick out my study girls and gain contact with a few pairs of eyes. A few other girls wave at me with smiles. I smile back. Only Kelly acknowledges me, Shanna and Susan do not make eye contact. Shanna is on the other side of the gym and Susan is interacting with a friend. Ms Haines begins the lesson...

(Fieldnotes)
B. Girls' Experiences in the Planned Physical Education Program

This section addresses the research purpose and the first research question area. I begin by briefly introducing the girls selected for in-depth case study, so that the reader will be able to differentiate between them as their stories unfold. In addition to the following descriptions a summary display chart has been provided (see Figure 3). The pseudonyms for the other study participants that the girls refer to are their physical education instructor (Ms Haines), their principal (Ms Evans), and their two grade four teachers (Ms Fletcher and Mr Wong).

The Girls

**Shanna**, who born in Iran, was a tall, thin, healthy looking girl with long, thick, dark, wavy hair, often pulled back in a loose pony tail. She wore cloth hair bands of various colours and always displayed a bright yellow gold necklace and earrings. Shanna was polite, quite articulate, and voiced a liking for gym class, the house games, and for Ms Haines. During gym she was often quiet, co-operative, and participated at a moderate skill level. Her main concern about participating in physical activity was about sweating. She wanted to comply with her mother wishes to not sweat when exercising because she could get sick.

**Kelly** was First Nations and born in BC. She was medium build and height with longer than waist length, dark, straight hair which she was constantly placing behind her ears. She often wore bright colours and admitted that she liked to wear different clothes every day. Because of this desire, Kelly said that her mother insisted that she do her own laundry. Her fondness with clothes seemed to play a role during her gym classes. Many times I would observe her distracted by and playing with her clothes rather than concentrating on the skill or activity. She was a calm, confident, mildly introverted girl who spoke proudly of her mother who "likes sports." With the occasional smile, Kelly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Four Study Girls</th>
<th>Family Situation</th>
<th>Motivators for Physical Activity</th>
<th>Barriers To Physical Activity</th>
<th>Supports Girls-Only Gym</th>
<th>Values of Physical Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Shanna               | - Home Language: Iranian and Kurdish  
|                      | - Family of 5  
|                      | - Lives in a house  
|                      | - Parents learning English  
|                      | - Activities: special and thematic games, house games  
|                      | - Ability: "Volleyball because it is fun and I am sort of good at it."  
|                      | - Safety: "Mom says if I sweat a lot that I will get sick - so I try not to sweat."  
|                      | - Gender: girls are not good at sports  
|                      | - Gender Bias: PEI favours boys  
|                      | - A way of being with friends  
|                      | - Healthy  
|                      | - Fun  
| Kelly                | - Home Language: English  
|                      | - Family of 7  
|                      | - Lives in an apartment  
|                      | - Single working Mom  
|                      | - Activities: basketball, running, tag  
|                      | - Enjoyment: "I like all sports."  
|                      | - Gender: boys are more aggressive and girls are weaker  
|                      | - Fun, energy, and results  
|                      | - Important to education: "If we didn't have gym my mom would have to take me to a different place."  
| Susan                | - Home Language: Romanian  
|                      | - Family of 4 (plus grandma arriving soon)  
|                      | - Lives in an one bedroom apartment  
|                      | - Mom learning English, Dad works  
|                      | - Activities: house games  
|                      | - Family Encouragement: "I have tons of sports at home."  
|                      | - Body Image: "Mom said I should start at school doing sports because she thinks I am getting fatter."  
|                      | - Safety: worried about getting tired and about her heart beating too fast during physical activity  
|                      | - Gender: "Boys have more energy."  
|                      | - Fun: "everything we do is fun."  
|                      | - Doing activities with her family  
|                      | - Fair Play: shaking hands after team play  
| Boonlai              | - Home Language: Cambodian  
|                      | - Family of 7  
|                      | - Lives in a house  
|                      | - Whole family picks berries during summer  
|                      | - Activities: special and thematic games, house games, roller skating  
|                      | - Fair Play: "Everyone's a winner in our gym class."  
|                      | - Gender: boys are stronger by birth; provide more encouragement than girls  
|                      | - Physical Limitation: too short to be successful at sports  
|                      | - Clothing: having to wear shorts  
|                      | - Not really that important  
|                      | - To have fun with friends  
| Yeesoon              | - Home Language: Cambodian  
|                      | - Family of 9  
|                      | - Lives in an apartment  
|                      | - Whole family picks berries during summer  
|                      | - Activities: tag, gymnastics, cross-country skiing  
|                      | - Enjoyment: "It's fun."  
|                      | - Safety: worried about getting hurt  
|                      | - Gender: boys don't listen and they tease girls when they "can't shoot it in."  
|                      | - Self-Esteem: concerned about letting her team down and getting yelled at  
|                      | - Not really that important - would rather be a spectator  
|                      | - "Makes me smile every day."  
| Jasmine              | - Home Language: Indian  
|                      | - Family of 5  
|                      | - Lives in a house  
|                      | - Working parents  
|                      | - Activities: dancing in a school assembly  
|                      | - Enjoyment: "It's fun"; "it's like a playroom."  
|                      | - Gender: Boys help her learn how to perform a skill  
|                      | - Safety: getting hurt, getting dizzy  
|                      | - Self-Esteem: worried about being embarrassed in front of others  
|                      | - Competition  
|                      | - Aesthetic pleasure: "I like badminton. I like it because I like the way it sails across the air."  

Figure 3
exposed her teeth which appeared unhealthy. Kelly expressed herself with a limited vocabulary. She mentioned that she liked participating in basketball, running, games, karate, and Chinese skip. Even though in the observed activities Kelly demonstrated a low skill level and a somewhat disinterested manner, she claimed to have no concerns about participating in physical activity in her remark that "all the things I do are easy."

**Susan** was born in Romania and then lived in Switzerland before moving to Canada only one year ago. She was quiet and shy, yet responded to the focus group and interview questions with clear thoughtful expressions accompanied by smiling dark brown eyes. She fondly referred to her family, especially her father. She was very well groomed with large solid healthy teeth and thick, shiny, shoulder-length hair with bangs. Her favourite activities in gym were volleyball and gymnastics at which she was moderately skilled. Her favourite gym class outfit was a patterned turquoise sweater and red turtleneck with green loose sweat pants and white running shoes. She was quick to separate "boys' sports" from "girls' sports" and mentioned that her mother thought she should do sports at school since she was "getting fatter." Susan was more physically mature than some and was one of the taller girls in her class.

**Boonlai** came to Canada from Cambodia about eight years ago. She was a small solid girl with a very round face and vibrant complexion. Her hair was shiny, black, straight, and cut in a short page-boy style. She was often feisty and quite cynical at times. Boonlai responded to questions confidently, maturely, and was not hesitant to state her opinion. She wore black tights most often with a variety of tops. She was quiet during gym class and mainly worked independently and demonstrated a high physical skill level. Baseball, volleyball, and thematic games were Boonlai's favourite physical activities. Basketball and gymnastics were her least favourite.

**Yeesoon** was born in Thailand, raised in Cambodia and moved to Canada about four years ago. She was a very thin, fragile looking girl with lank, dark hair and a warm smile filled with fragments of teeth. She appeared needy and was constantly hugging
friends or me from time to time. She really seemed to enjoy my attention to her ideas of which she enthusiastically struggled with the language to share, while at the same time she was not overly keen on participating in physical activity. Yeesoon was most concerned about "getting hurt" and if she had a choice, she would rather just watch gym class (although she demonstrated a solid skill base). Yeesoon fantasized about being a ballerina, being smart and maybe becoming a scientist.

Jasmine, an Indo-Canadian, always wore her thick, black hair in a braid down to her waist. She frequently wore a pastel green polyester top and matching tights for gym class. Her distinct raspy voice was easily detected amongst the other voices. She was physically mature, yet during gym classes she moved awkwardly. She frequently referred to watching sports on television and often provided examples of physical activity experiences from the spectator's perspective. She was also very imaginative with her stories revealing a high level of introspection as illustrated in this quote:

_I like Badminton. Because, it's like, this bird, right, little thing...birdie. Yeah, birdie. And you throw it around and you have to try catching it and...I like it because I like the way it sails across the air. It's so cool._

Throughout the study, the girls demonstrated their individuality, unique lives, and diverse experiences. However, they lived within a shared catchment area and school setting. Although family relations was not a focus of this study, aspects of their home life emerged from the interviews and informal discussions. Many of the girls were part of large families. Kelly, Susan, and Yeesoon described living in small apartments, sharing beds with siblings or parents, while the others said they lived in houses. Kelly's mother was a single parent. Except for Kelly, all the girls indicated they lived in a dual language culture and spoke a different language at home. Interestingly, even at this young age, both Boonlai and Yeesoon worked with their families in the summer months picking berries. Transiency was also apparent in this group as both Susan and Kelly mentioned they would be moving to a different school next year. Although limited in its comprehensiveness, the
girls' comments about their home lives acknowledges the complexities of researching and interpreting individual experiences.

The Girls' Experiences

It is critical to note that the findings represent a synthesis by the researcher and that alternative interpretations by others are possible. My priority was to allow the voices of the girls to guide the interpretation and where the voice was supported by a multiplicity of voices, I noted this to be an important factor. Contradictory voices were often shared, a reminder that although there may be a majority voice, the girls were not a homogeneous group. Softer or weaker voices need to be heard and incorporated into our understanding of the diversity of experiences. From the girls' lively discussions and descriptions and watching their participation during the participant observation sessions, five prominent and interrelated themes emerged during the data analysis process.

Theme 1: "Mostly to Have Fun"

*Everything we do is fun.* (Susan)

*Cause it's fun.* (Kelly)

The grade four girls of the case study school were very supportive and enthusiastic about participating in the study. I visited their classrooms to pass out the consent forms and describe their potential involvement with the study. From that day on they treated me like a celebrity, calling my name across the school yard or smiling and secretly waving during gym class. The excitement of being involved in a study could have been founded on their perceptions of getting some extra attention. From their comments and questions, I think they thought I would be doing some extraordinary field trips with them. One girl persistently enquired about when I would be taking them on a picnic, as I had "promised"
on that first day. I am not sure what they "heard" that day (for there were no promises for
a picnic), but was nevertheless relieved by their enthusiasm.

"Having fun" emerged as the main reason for participating in and enjoying physical
activity. The girls expected to "have fun" during their physical activity classes.
Understanding what this meant to the girls was crucial. The most common response to
questions such as "why do you look forward to your gym class?" or "why or what do you
like about your gym class?" was "it's fun." One definition of fun seemed to be described
in a dualistic nature pitting physical education or "gym class" against their classroom
"work" as one girl described, "when you work you have a headache and then when you
play you have fun" (Focus Group 2). Shanna affirmatively responded with:

It's fun, I like it. I like to play in the house games. The teams are red, blue and
green. I like to play cause then I miss school work.

Having fun in gym was also associated with having more energy. Kelly
commented, "it's fun because you get more energy when [you] play." Another girl
confirmed this view about energy enhancement when she stated that it was important to
have gym, "so we don't get lazy in the classroom" and that if there was no gym class,

then nobody would have fun because the whole day is sitting down. We wouldn't
have exercise; we wouldn't feel great. (Focus Group 2)

Fun was also associated with thematic games like the ones they had for Halloween
and Christmas:

I like it on Halloween and we play dracula and all kinds of things. (Focus Group
1)

I like when you play Halloween games. I like the games. (Focus Group 2)

I like holidays games, Christmas games, and spring games all those kinds,
Valentine games. (Yeesooh)
As the study progressed the importance of having fun was linked to most every aspect of physical activity. It became apparent that having fun was not contingent on one variable, but rather on an intricate weave of several crucial elements. In the subsequent themes the girls described experiences in terms that either compromised or fulfilled their ability to have fun.

**Theme 2: "We Just Play Safety Stuff"**

The issue of safety was an unanticipated and intriguing theme that figured prominently in the data. It became apparent that issues around "safety" were antithetical to fun. Safety issues were associated with *getting hurt*, feelings of fatigue, and with interactions with boys who were participating in an unsafe manner.

"Getting Hurt"

Descriptions of injuries such as sprains, cuts, or scrapes and being hit with the ball in the head (in volleyball, basketball, or soccer) or falling on their heads (during ice skating and rollerblading) were frequently expressed. Many of the incidences shared did not involve significant bodily harm but resulted in bruising or temporary pain. I witnessed only one such occurrence during the participant observations, when a basketball hit Susan in the face during a basketball drills lesson. Susan removed herself from her group, sat on a bench for a few moments, and then joined in again quite readily. When I asked her how she felt she responded, *"it hurt...I just rubbed it over, I just continued. Sometimes I just continue, sometimes I just go sit on the bench."* She made it sound as if this was a frequent occurrence.

Even though incidences of being hit in the head with a ball or falling on one's head appeared rare and inconsequential, the preoccupation with personal safety often influenced decisions to play or participate in an activity. Consequently, a comment made about "getting hurt" was often followed or preceded by a comment about not liking the sport.
For example, "I don't like soccer because when I kick it my foot hurts" (Focus Group 2) or Boonlai's concern about soccer, "sometimes when you kick you might slip." I asked Yeesoon why she did not like ice hockey and she responded, "because, you know, on the ice, whenever you fall your head gets banged on the ice."

Other times a connection was drawn between getting hurt and learning a sport. This experience was associated with not wanting to pursue that sport again.

I'm not very good at ice skating, I fall down. I hate ice skating, I hate falling down, actually I don't even know how to do ice skating. (Focus Group 3)

Others felt strongly that they were wise to choose activities that involved less hazard such as Yeesoon's comment that "we just play safety stuff" or Jasmine's reason for liking beach volleyball, "if you fall down it doesn't hurt and it's a soft ball."

Many of the girls associated "getting hurt" with feelings of fatigue. They referred to feeling "tired, sweating," or experiencing "fast beating hearts" while participating in physical activity. There appeared to be some lack of understanding about how the body functions. Shanna claimed she did not like soccer "because [she] gets tired." She also adamantly added:

Mom says if I sweat a lot that I will get sick and I sweat a lot really easily, so I try not to sweat.

She wanted to comply with her mother's wishes to avoid exertion because she knew that she "all the time [gets] a cold." Many girls agreed with Shanna that sweating was something they carefully avoided. Susan voiced her concern about running, in her remark, "when I run and my heart starts beating very fast, I get tired." Boonlai also associated injury with fatigue when she explained her reasons for not liking football, "I think you get hurt, get crunched, get tired." Jasmine also mentioned feelings of dizziness while playing basketball. Mr Wong mentioned that curriculum on physiological responses to physical
activity were not introduced until grade five. In the meantime, these girls were including physical myths and fallacies in their decision making process about physical activities.

"Boys Do Dangerous Stuff"

Interactions with boys also entered into the safety equation. Comments about participating with boys in sports created images of "dangerous stuff." The girls had watched and listened to boys during class, at recess, on television, and were concerned about their behaviour. Many comments conveyed that particular sports were not appropriate for girls:

- Boys don't let girls play football cause football they get hurt too much. (Focus Group 3)
- Boys always go so fast - they're going to kill themselves. (Focus Group 4)
- Boys like playing rougher sports. Girls don't. (Boonlai)

When asked if girls could play football, the response was, "girls can do any sports." Yet in reality, concern for personal safety conflicted with that belief. The safer, more gender stereotypic sports were still chosen as their favourites (e.g. many types of dancing, Chinese skip, and gymnastics). However Yeesoon knew what the real difference was between girls and boys with her idea:

- If the girls play football versus the guys, I suppose the girls would win because they're way better with their minds, they're smarter.

The boys were described as being "rough" and "aggressive." The girls also commented, "we think they're going to hit and stuff" (Focus Group 1). The girls said they wanted to avoid the sports or activities when they encountered this behaviour. Shanna explained that:
Girls are more delicate cause boys they're, they're kind of more...like they're more aggressive than girls...[we] like to play games that are not too rough and aggressive.

The girls' concern for safety was blurred by the almost unanimous fondness for gymnastics. Only Boonlai disliked gymnastics because she was "not a good climber" and "[did not] know how to do a headstand." Gymnastics has been well documented as a high risk activity for schools. Because of this, many elementary schools will not offer the activity. However, to most of the girls, concerns about safety were outweighed by a liking for the variety, the gym set-up, and the mat routines of gymnastics.

* I like gymnastics because you get to do all different kinds of things. (Focus Group 3)*

*Yeah gymnastics. I remember when you go up the ropes and handstands.* (Susan)

In contrast to the girls' comments, the programs I witnessed were highly controlled for safety and the gym class routine exemplified high standards for behaviour and equipment control. Their concerns about safety are, however, a significant factor that influences their choices about participating in physical activity.

**Theme 3: "Boys Are Kind of Lousy"**

*Boys are better than girls at almost everything. Well they're not better at school work. Just sports.* (Boonlai)

In spite of the 4:1 ratio of girls to boys in the gym classes, boys played a crucial role in the physical activity experiences of these grade four girls. Many girls struggled with the apparent dilemma of whether they should "like boys" or not. However, they were able to make a distinction between liking boys and enjoying participating with them in sports or activities. When the girls talked about boys, they discussed their physical differences, incidences of teasing, the impact of an overly aggressive boy named Justin, and the need for "girls-only" gym.
"More Muscles"

Most girls proclaimed they could play "any sports." One girl even emphasized her knowledge of their rights, "every single game girls can play too, there's no law that says you can't play" (Focus Group 1). However, in their reality the girls were quick to exclude themselves from some sports they labelled as "boys' games." They discussed the physical advantage of boys as being "bigger, stronger", and "having more muscles." Kelly remarked that "girls can play football, they just they have to be really big." When I probed their comments many agreed that boys "are born with it" or "are used to it" while others explained that boys got more muscles through "exercising and nutrition." Some girls told stories about boys they were stronger than (mainly brothers and cousins) and one girl shared how her mother was stronger than her father because "she always carries the groceries." In spite of the contradictory arguments, it appeared most of the girls felt that boys were naturally more physically advantaged than them.

When it came to participating with boys, the physical advantage was taken one step further. "Being stronger" and "having more muscles" was interpreted by the girls that boys were inherently better at sports and learned skills faster. Shanna accepted this sentiment with some frustration, "they think that just because girls are not good - then only boys can play." Some girls seemed to want to play regardless of their physical skill level, but knew that "girls won't really like it unless they're really good at it" (Focus Group 3). Jasmine shared her desire to be good at activities:

I learned how to ride my bike, like, I used to not know how to ride my bike and my brother said if you pedal twice then I'll give you something. And I pedalled and he gave me something and then I pedalled three times and then, I got another thing, and then I started learning it, and now I'm good at it.

Instead of questioning this socially constructed ideology, most girls felt that it was inevitable that they would not be as good as boys in sports and opted to separate themselves from the activities associated with boys. These activities were not limited to
their school's offerings and included mostly the male dominated, traditional team sports of hockey, basketball, football, and baseball. In the end, many of them would justify their positions by claiming they didn't like these sports anyway. Boonlai explained, "they do sports I don't like to play" or they're "boring." This view was supported in the following quote:

I don't like basketball.
Well, cause all you do is stand around and bounce the ball.
And throw it in the net.
But you always hit the rim of the net.
Only boys can get it in.
And maybe it goes on your head or something.
Only boys play baseball or basketball.
Basketball. It's too boring.  (Focus Group 4)

Conversely, most girls agreed that boys were not as good as they were at some activities. Most of these activities were gender stereotypic such as dancing, gymnastics, Chinese skip, and skipping rope. The dance and gymnastic units were by far the most popular with the girls. The girls were unable to express why they were better at these activities, except that boys thought that these were "girls' stuff."

In the sessions observed, the basic skill level of the boys appeared to be higher in some traditional activities (e.g. basketball and volleyball), but was certainly not the case in gymnastics or dancing. Physically, the boys were not all bigger than the girls. In fact one Asian boy was as small as two of the smallest Asian girls. Of the case study girls, Jasmine, Susan, and Shanna were relatively tall, and physically mature; no boys towered over them.

"Boys Tease Girls"

When the girls discussed the boys, their stories often referred to being recipients of teasing. The intensity of their voices increased when discussing this topic, and I sensed that teasing created frustration for many girls. Sometimes the teasing focused on denigrating the girls' skill levels and other times it was aimed at reinforcing the girls'
physical disadvantages. Again, the girls linked these experiences with an inability to "have fun." It was difficult to have fun playing sports with boys because the boys "make fun", "bug girls", "laugh at girls", "say that [girls] look stupid, are weak and everything" (Focus Group 1-4).

The girls felt most vulnerable to teasing when they were performing a skill while playing on a team. During a game situation the girls worried about letting their team down and the boys fed on this feeling with their disparaging comments or actions. Kelly shared that "sometimes when you can't do it, they just like say bad things." Boonlai's experience was similar in that "boys tease girls...when they can't shoot it in. It makes you feel terrible." Susan complained that "they won't pass the ball to you, like you're not playing the game" and another girl mentioned that they would be denigrated for not performing the skill correctly in her comment "we don't hit it right, and then we don't get a point, they get mad." The girls felt that "[the boys] want to hit the ball and make the best shot" and that the girls were not capable of "making the shot." A couple girls wanted "to prove them wrong," but most just wanted to avoid the boys as much as possible (Focus Group 2).

My observations concurred with some of girls' comments, particularly during the traditional team sports units of basketball and volleyball. When a team game was being played, the boys would try to control the ball and pass mainly to other boys. However, during gym class, very little of this behaviour was observed, possibly because the gender ratio reduced the number of boys per team to one or two. Other incidences of aggressive and exclusive behaviour were observed during the house games although, again it was minimal. The house games involved modified activities of basketball and volleyball: bucketball and beachy ball respectively. The modified rules of both activities encouraged the passing and sharing of the ball. However, the intensity of the house games was greater than during the regular gym class. There was evidence of a couple boys becoming more aggressive in nature and at times darting in front of the girls to get the ball. At other times
they were only passing to other boys. Some frustration was observed in the faces of the boys during team play (i.e., when a girl had the ball and then lost it to the other team). This activity was limited by the rules of having to pass and by the referees and coaches in attendance reminding the boys of appropriate team play conduct.

"I Don't Like Playing With Boys, Especially Justin"

This young boy, whose pseudonym is Justin, was regularly described as adversely affecting the experiences of the girls during gym class. Once again, many of the girls were caught in a dilemma between liking him because "he's good at everything" and "has lots of friends," and hating him for "always teasing" during their gym classes and other times when they were participating in activities. Comments like "he's always showing off" or "he laughs at people when they don't' do it right" (Focus Group 3) were common.

Justin was South American, fairly tall, had dark wavy hair and appeared to be highly skilled. When the girls were struggling to consecutively bump a volleyball two or three times, Justin would be successfully bumping twenty or more. He appeared very interested and focused in gym class. He played in the house games and apparently joined every team. He always wanted to be the recorder during gym class and would try to take the leadership role during all games. During one gym class I focused on Justin intently and noticed that he always positioned his body in positions of power. He would hold the ball while his hands were on his hips, while the other kids would hold the ball with both hands out in front. Sometimes he would place his ball on a pylon and lean on it casually listening to instructions. He also managed to get the only blue ball in the cart. It didn't seem to matter what order his team was permitted to collect their equipment, he would end up with the blue ball.

One girl believed that "all the boys like him cause he teases the girls" (Focus Group 1). I confirmed a strong liking from the other boys in his class. They looked up to him and tried to impress him with their skills, "hey Justin, I got the same as you."
would call him to watch their skills while congratulating him on his recent skill accomplishment. This was very apparent during the basketball and volleyball skill testing units when the number of repetitions were important. Even though Justin was never on a team with other boys in gym class, he was very much a part of everyone's experiences.

Several of the girls declared the punishment doled to Justin for his mischief was inconsequential to him. He would continue this behaviour. Others felt threatened by him after school. They said that he would accuse them of being the "teacher's pet" or that "he hits [them] and stuff" (Focus Group 1). During the participant observations, I was not privy to his teasing nor his alleged foul play.

"A Girls' Club"

*I wish it could only be for girls.* (Focus Group 2)

*Boys, I don't like them around.* (Focus Group 3)

*Yeah, I would put no boys.* (Focus Group 4)

The frustration built up by talking about playing with boys led to discussions (or more like dreams) about girls-only gym classes. The mention of this possibility was entertained quite enthusiastically as can be read by the above quotations. It was apparent from their initially hesitant responses that the girls had not thought about this concept prior to the study. As they started to imagine what it would be like, tensions dissipated and the excitement increased.

*I'm not sure really, I don't know what would happen if we had an all girls one. Well I know what happens if we have mixed.* (Focus Group 3)

*Yeah, girls only - if you can't do it [boys] like say, say bad things.* (Focus Group 3)

*Oh, I know what. We can do what the girls want to do for a change.* (Focus Group 4)
Susan shared her thoughts:

*Because if it was only for girls... a boy teacher for the boys and a girl teacher for the girl class. So then it will be better because then you can do more girl stuff and the boys won't have to be there and don't have to say 'why do we have to do girls' stuff?''*

Susan's notion of "girls' stuff" presented a common belief among the girls that there were different activities for girls and for boys. Although they argued that all sports were for both genders during the focus groups, the girls' comments about their own physical activity experiences reflected a dichotomous reality. The girls felt that when they wanted to play girls' stuff, boys would ruin their experiences "because when we play girls' stuff... the boys bug the girls" (Focus Group 2). The "girls' stuff" Susan mentioned mainly consisted of gender stereotyped activities (e.g. gymnastics, dancing, skipping).

Jasmine and Boonlai were unsure of the sex-segregated gym class concept because they both admitted that they improved their own skill levels by watching the boys perform skills.

*Whenever we play basketball I told the boys to do it first and then I know how to do it and then I started to do it. (Jasmine)*

Jasmine also shared a dream of being a boy and playing soccer on television indicating the prevalence of boys in her physical activity experiences:

*And sometimes I watch soccer 'cause it's kinda like I was a boy and I was playing in there and they recorded it and I'm on TV. (Jasmine)*

Boonlai thought boys were more encouraging than girls when it came to skill development. She wanted to do well in sport and got her advice from boys. Initially her response was "it wouldn't be fun with just girls, it would be boring." However, after some discussion, she agreed that boys were more physically adept, but because they teased she would consider sex-segregated gym classes, but would not know what the classes would be like.
Tension existed in the discussion about wanting the boys around while they were participating in physical activity. One girl, unable to completely exclude the boys, identified a role for the boys: "if the boys want to [come], they will be the managers and pick up our clothes and stuff" (Focus Group 4). The girls responded to this comment with joyous laughter. Although the girls struggled with not wanting boys around, they understood their presence was inevitable in their lives:

When you are our age you don't really like them. (Focus Group 2)

I only like to play with my brother. (Focus Group 1)

Mostly I chase boys now. (Focus Group 4)

If they are really old, like, if you're 18, like an adult, or something, you get married and then you feel inside, inside you feel really happy. (Focus Group 3)

However, when it came to participating in physical activity or sport, all but Jasmine wanted to avoid them. Boys also figured prominently in the subsequent theme of fair play.

Theme 4: "Play Fair"

Issues about fairness arose in the first focus group. It appeared to be a topic of concern for these girls, so a question regarding fairness was incorporated into the subsequent focus groups. As illustrated below, the girls mostly equated being fair with having fun and with the concept of fair play. Discussions about their physical education instructor (Ms Haines) also emerged frequently.

"Everyone's a Winner in Our Gym Classes"

Boonlai's comment reflected a consensus amongst the girls. When asked if winning was important to them they expressed a definite understanding about its role in their physical activity experiences.

Yeah, it's good to win, but it's mostly to have fun. (Focus Group 1)
It doesn’t matter if you win or lose, it’s just how you play the game.  (Boonlai)

A game’s not for winning, just for fun.  (Susan)

The other aspect of winning and losing that emerged was an emotional connection with self improvement or personal effort. The responses were remarkably mature and laced with old clichés. Perhaps I was hearing an adult’s voice (such as Ms Haines’) echoing through theirs.

If somebody won a game and the other people didn’t then you should say like, well, you should be proud of yourself because you tried your best.  (Jasmine)

The real winners are the people who don’t give up.  (Focus Group 3)

Just believe in yourself. Keep trying, and then you get it. No matter what anyone says, just keep on trying.  (Yeeseun)

A respect for others also emerged:

You shouldn’t, like you shouldn’t be mean, cause in time you can win, beat them.  (Focus Group 4)

If someone wins, just don’t get mad at them or tease.  (Focus Group 3)

When discussing the role of boys, most of the girls agreed with Boonlai’s comments that “winning is mostly for boys” or Susan’s comment that “boys like to win more than anyone.” The boy’s superior physicality was also mentioned:

If the boys win they say ‘hah hah we beat you cause we’re stronger than you.’  (Focus Group 1)

Not all girls took this position. During a gym class focusing on basketball skills, I observed Jasmine asserting her belief that she wanted to win and wanted to beat others during an argument with another girl. The other girl was just as adamant that “winning” was not the purpose of the activity.

The girls associated cheating with the behaviour of boys since “mostly girls don’t cheat people” (Focus Group 1). Cheating was seen as the antithesis of fair play.
If [the boys] don't win they start teasing and say you cheated and stuff. (Focus Group 2)

Sometimes the games aren't fair so I'd like to see no cheating and um, just fair play. Honesty. (Focus Group 1)

Only matters to where you played...that is if you cheated or not. Cause if you cheated you're a very bad player. You're a poor sport. (Yeesoon)

"Ms Haines is Fair - She Never Cheats"

The fair play topic arose in each of the focus groups and without exception, comments were associated with Ms Haines. The girls claimed that winning was not important "to our teacher at all" (Focus Group 3). They unanimously thought of Ms Haines as being fair as indicated in the initial statement from Shanna and subsequently confirmed by others:

She does everything fair. (Kelly)

Because if two teams are playing she doesn't root for just one team she roots for both of them. (Susan)

She shows her good attitude. She shows it to us. (Boonlai)

Ms Haines' rules of team play also influenced the girls' perception and experiences of fair play. Even though the nature of intramural teams and house games were traditionally competitive, the girls reinforced their view by quickly pointing out that "it's just a game" (Focus Group 2). Even though their house game system was one of accumulated points to establish a winner at the end of the year, the guiding principles supported participation more so than the end result. Points were allocated for each member on a team who showed up to play, as well as points for the ritual of shaking hands after the game. In fact, points were deducted if this ritual did not take place. Susan noted that one of the reasons she liked to participate in the house games was because she enjoyed this ritual:
I like the rotating part of volleyball and serving at other people and shaking their hand afterward. (Susan)

The activities within the house game system as well as during their gym class often incorporated fair play ideals (e.g. modified activities which encourage play by every team member and focus on participation, not the end result). For example, beachy ball allowed for multiple hits of the ball, and the rotation of the server occurred after every serve. Bucketball replaced dribbling with passing and did not permit running with the ball. In order to pass the ball down the court, it involved a team effort.

Further evidence that fair play was associated with Ms Haines was reflected in the following quote:

And once, when we’re starting the year playing volleyball, there was two teams and one team wasn’t equal, my team. She went on our team and then, everybody had to hit. She hit it hard and we got a point and then the next time she hit it not good on purpose so we wouldn’t get a point <laughter>. (Focus Group 4)

In another conversation, satisfaction with Ms Haines’ teaching style and being fair was reinforced with the following comments:

She doesn’t get mad when people don’t do things right and she explains it again. (Shanna)

First she shows us how to do things and then we can do things right. (Focus Group 2)

She demonstrates and then let’s us try and calls that’s good. (Focus Group 2)

Remaining true to their perceived relationship with boys, some girls noted that the boys may not agree that Ms Haines was fair.

I think boys think that they don’t treat them right, because they, I think they don’t know they’re being rude and they don’t like Ms Haines because she always says ‘go to the corner.’ (Focus Group 1)
My observations tended to confirm many of the girls' experiences. For example, during an observation of a gym class during the introduction of the day's lesson, I heard Ms Haines say "we're not worried about winning, we're worried about improving ourselves." It was evident Ms Haines' values of fair play influenced the physical activity experiences of the girls.

In addition to the girls' descriptions, Ms Haines incorporated aspects of fair play in the promotion and documentation of the physical education program (e.g. consent forms for teams, report cards, and invitations to other schools). Furthermore, fair play was a stated goal of the basketball inter-scholastic program:

Basketball season is here. Your child has an opportunity to take part in basketball extra-curricular games competing against other elementary schools. Participation in this activity is encouraged to develop leadership, fair play, skills and a healthy school spirit, as well as to have fun!! (Haines, 1995a)

Theme 5: School Support Did Not Go Unnoticed

The girls were aware of their teachers' attitude towards physical activity and their respective roles within the school. The key person, of course, was Ms Haines, but the principal had also made a strong impression. The grade four teachers played more minor roles.

"Ms Haines Just Wants Us To Have Fun, That's It"

After already describing Ms Haines as fair; "fun", "jellybeans", and "gym strip", were other terms associated with her. The girls directly attributed many of the fun elements of their physical education program to Ms Haines as articulated by Boonlai's comment. The more controversial aspects of Ms Haines' teaching style emerged around issues of gym strip and a perceived gender bias favouring the boys.

The girls thought Ms Haines contributed to the fun they experienced in their gym class with comments such as "she plays jokes" and "she is funny" or "she's happy" and
"she encourages people to participate." Some of them remarked that they thought that Ms Haines enjoyed teaching physical education to them.

They also liked her because she "makes up new games" which were very popular. The games were usually associated with a holiday theme (e.g. Christmas, Halloween, Valentines). The "fun games" they described were often more than just games. They also mentioned presents and elaborate decorations which seemed to be important attributes.

Fun, lot's of games like holiday games, Christmas games and spring games, all those kinds, Valentine games. (Yeesoon)

I like Christmas games all the time. (Focus Group 2)

I like it when she decorates the gym for the special holiday. (Focus Group 3)

Jellybeans and Gym Strip

Who would ever believe that jellybeans and gym strip could have something in common? At Parkside Elementary the relationship was symbiotic; the class was rewarded with jellybeans if everyone brought her or his own gym strip. The reward was one jellybean per student. This ritual produced only positive feedback from the girls. It also resulted indirectly in the taking of personal responsibility. I witnessed this ritual three times and excerpted the following from my fieldnotes:

There seemed to be some excitement in the din of voices and I realized that the students were anticipating being rewarded with jelly beans. The whole class must have brought their gym strip. Ms Haines announced that this class was successful and disappeared into the equipment room. She returned with a clear plastic container filled with colourful jellybeans. Ms Haines mentioned that she owed this class from a previous time when she ran out of jellybeans, therefore they were allowed to take two jellybeans each. This resulted in cheers and wriggles of delight. The children were told to stand and remain in their lines while Ms Haines slowly sauntered her way up and down each line. One child at a time reached in and took out two jellybeans. Once they had their jellybeans the children sat down remaining steadfastly in their teams. Quiet chatter included discussion about their favourite colours and flavours. I too was privileged to join in this ritual and reached in for my two jellybeans. (Fieldnotes)
Some girls mentioned that bringing in their gym strip was a practice they did not like. If a student forgot her or his gym strip, Ms Haines provided two containers full of clean shorts and T-shirts to choose from. She developed this strategy to ensure that students never missed gym because of inadequate clothing. However, the girls were most concerned about this policy. Just the mention of this spare clothing caused wrinkled noses and funny faces. The reasons behind their displeasure with this option finally surfaced. It was because only shorts (no long pants) were provided. Shanna explained that "Ms Haines tells us to wear shorts when you do not bring your gym strip." It was clear that the girls did not want to wear shorts. Boonlai used "wearing shorts" as an excuse for not liking soccer:

_I don't like soccer, like you have to wear shorts, and then when it rains you get wet and I don't like playing that sport._

It was noticeable that long leggings were the most popular gym attire. In fact, during the sessions I observed the girls did not wear shorts during any of the gym classes (unless they borrowed). Another anxiety surfaced about these shorts. Some girls had decided the shorts were "boys' shorts." My observations did not concur with this belief (i.e., pink flowered shorts), but they were adamant, such as in this conversation:

_I don't want to wear extra shorts, cause they're funny. They're boys' shorts._
_I know._
<laughter>
_Evan always wears those pink ones._
_I know._
_Evan always wears these light pink shorts and he pulls them up so high._
 _He pulls them up so high and they're so big on him._
<laughter> (Focus Group 4)

From what I could observe, the girls seemed to be wearing their own choice in clothing ranging from jeans and sweaters, to tights and T-shirts. Ms Haines' clothing policy was based on the premise of movement and safety. For most of the activities, stretchy uncumbersome clothing was permitted. During line dance, Ms Haines accepted
the wearing of jeans and during gymnastics, Ms Haines was overtly concerned about the girls being able to tuck in their shirts and to wear tops without ties in the front or back.

Running shoes were also considered to be a component of the gym attire and presented another issue for the girls. The girls knew what was expected of them:

You have to have running shoes and you can't have black running shoes, soles, yeah because they make marks on the gym. (Shanna)

From my observations almost any shoe was acceptable. Ms Haines mentioned she encouraged light coloured soled runners, or the students could go bare foot. This option also triggered a negative response from the girls. Many complained the floor was dirty and that the dirt hurt their feet.

If she makes you, like if you don't bring the right shoes you have to take them off and go on the floor bare foot with all the rocks and everything and it hurts. And she says 'this gym is really clean, it's not dirty.'

Yeah, and then it hurts your feet. She should have these special extra shoes, all sizes for you or something. (Focus Group 4)

It was apparent that clothing was an issue for the girls, but in most cases the girls appeared to be choosing their own gym strip which was acceptable to Ms Haines. Other than the jellybean ritual, the issue of gym strip was not given much time or concern during the gym classes. The girls understood Ms Haines' expectations, but did not always accept them. This was evident when Shanna described her ideal gym class:

We would do all games, I like Halloween and Christmas. We would have jellybeans everyday. You don't have to wear gym strip, you could wear anything, and we would have gym everyday.
"I Think She Likes The Boys More Than Girls"

Though the girls were adamant that Ms Haines was a fair teacher, they did describe incidences when she favoured the boys. This preferential treatment was noted in all focus group sessions, at different intensities and through different examples.

*Every time when she picks the boys, I think she likes boys more than girls.*
(Shanna)

*She asks the boys to help her not the girls. The girls have their hands up, but she does not pick the girls. I would like to help, but she never asks me.* (Focus Group 2)

*Yeah, mostly Ms Haines doesn't show us she just says 'that's the wrong way' and then she gets a boy usually, to show us how to do it.* (Focus Group 3)

This concern of the girls encouraged me to focus on the actions of Ms Haines with respect to gender relations. In general, Ms Haines' classes were well organized and she rarely required assistance from the students. When helpers were needed, I observed that both boys and girls were chosen. The most obvious time when preferential treatment was detected during the basketball and volleyball units. In most cases, Ms Haines would demonstrate the skill herself, however, when she required an assistant to demonstrate, she would always select a boy. During these particular units, the boys also appeared to be the recipients of more elaborate and encouraging comments. For example, during a volleyball session I recorded the comments from Ms Haines and which gender they were directed towards. Very few comments were directed towards the girls and when they were they mostly received a basic remark such as "that's good" or a brief review of how to perform the skill. The boys, on the other hand, received personal, precise, and encouraging remarks:

*I like your bump - right under it - excellent.*

*Nice hit there, Eric.*
Excellent serve, Justin, excellent.

Considering again, the ratio of girls to boys, the boys were far more obvious in the class due to this preferential treatment than would be expected. The routine after a typical warm up also indicated a possible bias. The kids were supposed to line up in front of their gender respective change rooms. Once a line was formed they could enter the change room for a drink of water. Because there were so few boys, they were out of their change room sometimes before the girls had even completed forming their line. This meant that they were free and floating around Ms Haines asking for jobs. She put them to work. It appeared that this bias could have been a result of the gender split in the class.

When considering the gender ratio, the following fieldnote excerpt provides further evidence of a gender bias:

Ms Haines asked the group to nominate a recorder for each team for the class coming up when they will be tested on their volleyball skills. The kids started talking amongst themselves, but not necessarily as a team. In each case except for one, the boys became the recorder. In two instances the girls nominated the boys. In one case the most athletic boy, Justin, chose himself and no one seemed to argue. In the fourth team, a boy told Ms Haines that he was the recorder and then Boonlai stated that she wanted Betty to be the recorder. Then the other girls agreed and Ms Haines allowed the majority to win and Betty became the recorder. Ms Haines wrote the names down on prepared clipboard sheets - one per team and returned them to the equipment room. Once she had the attention of the kids once more she assigned teams to stations one at a time. (Fieldnotes)

Even though there was only one boy per team, the boy sought out and took the recorder position. However, the recorder positions were not always a role that the girls enjoyed, as exemplified by Yeeseon's experience:

There's like four groups and I'm one person in the group and I have to hold this board and write down all the good stuff they do about volleyball. It's so hard and she gets mad at me for missing some stuff because they go so slow at it and I have to check everything so slow right, and how many points they have, then she gets so mad at me cause I didn't do it fast enough.
On one occasion, I did witness Ms Haines calling the recorders back to finish up or to correct their recordings after class. She was reinforcing their responsibility to others to have the information correct and to finish a job properly. Other times they were thrilled to lead the class or have an opportunity to demonstrate their skills in front of the school. The girls especially got excited when the opportunity to lead occurred during the line dance and free dance units.

The girls also associated boys gaining Ms Haines' attention with discipline. The girls were certain that "it's mostly the boys that get in trouble." The trouble would come as a result of "pushing, fooling around," or "budging in" which often disrupted the girls' experiences. Shanna reasoned that "girls are weaker than boys and [the boys] think they can boss [them] around" (Focus Group 1).

Yeesoon also claimed that boys "don't appreciate" Ms Haines' rules. She goes on to explain that "they don't listen." When "Ms Haines says 'be quiet', the boys still talk and all the girls are still." This behaviour pattern was observed only a few times during various units of gym class. For instance, the boys were not following the rules in gymnastics and Ms Haines interrupted their actions and strictly enforced appropriate behaviour. Another time the boys were swinging their partners aggressively resulting in one partner swinging into the wall or disrupting the dance routine with the group. At other times the boys would dribble the ball after Ms Haines motioned the class to stand still and hold the balls. Because the ratio of girls to boys was 4:1, these behaviours did not upset the class, nor did they seem to involve the girls much.

The preference towards boys also appeared to be balanced later in the year during their line dance unit when most of the leaders were girls. However, if the girls believed that the boys were being favoured then this is their reality.
The Principal: "She's A Sporty Woman"

The principal, Ms Evans, was new to this school this year and had in this brief time made quite an impression on the girls in terms of their beliefs about her relationship to physical activity and her role in their experiences. They claimed that she "likes gym" and is "a sporty woman" because they have seen it with their own eyes:

*My principal always joins in all the time.* (Kelly)

*I've seen her most times playing sports. At lunch. Because she always comes to school in running shoes and our first principal didn't play sports.* (Susan)

*Yeah, she's participated in cross-country too.* (Focus Group 1)

When I enquired about whether she thought that gym was important for them, the girls were quite sure about this and explained why:

*She cares about it.* (Yeesoon)

*I think she wants us to have fun.* (Focus Group 2)

*She wants everyone to learn stuff like other people know how to do.* (Focus Group 4)

*She wants us to be healthy and exercise.* (Focus Group 4)

Ms Evans also carried a greater role in the eyes of the girls and that was of a mother figure. Ms Evan dedicated every lunch hour to the kids. She would eat lunch with them in the cafeteria and then wander the school grounds with kids clinging to her sides.

*She loves us, she's like a mother for us.* (Yeesoon)

Ms Fletcher: "She's Interested in Gym"

The girls were very aware of Ms Fletcher's activity pattern and were quick to list a number of activities they had witnessed her participating in:
She likes to bike and sometimes she goes skiing and hiking. (Focus Group 4)

She roller blades with us. (Focus Group 3)

She goes to the cross country runs. (Focus Group 3)

She helps out the green team. She is on the green team. (Jasmine)

Her class in particular, also enjoyed their extra gym period she provided. They apparently always danced and would sometimes perform their dances at a school assembly. This year they learned the "elephant song", a "monkey song", and a "skateboard song."

She takes us to the gym and do some dances. Last Halloween, we did Monster Mash. (Yeesoon)

Well, I like it when with my teacher we do dances in there. And do it in front of the whole school. She takes us to the gym because we got a big classroom and a lot of people. (Jasmine)

Every Friday, she, like, she teaches us how to dance. She takes us for extra gym. (Focus Group 4)

Mr Wong

The girls were not aware of Mr Wong's feelings towards physical activity or his role in their experiences. Since Mr Wong was not visibly involved in the physical activities with the grade four girls, they could not reach a conclusion about him.

C. School Culture and the Social and Political Contexts

This section of the results deals with the ring of the conceptual framework (Figure 1) on school culture that addresses the third research question area. This study also acknowledged that and described how the social and political contexts shaped school culture which addresses the second and fourth research question areas.
School Culture

Meeting the Physical Education Instructor, Ms Haines

'Miss' do it all. (Haines)

I met Ms Haines prior to the study on several occasions through my professional role. Even though I assumed I knew what she would be like as a physical education instructor, the data collected during the research project forced me to question my initial assumptions.

Ms Haines was Caucasian, with a short, athletic build, straight salt and pepper coloured hair, styled in a short, 'no fuss' cut. She wore traditionally shaped blue rimmed glasses and wore no make-up. She most often dressed in a baggy T-shirt, shorts, and a solid pair of contemporary white running shoes. A whistle always hung around her neck, although I never saw her actually use it. I was told that Ms Haines smoked, but this was never observed in the presence of the students nor myself.

Ms Haines was single and lived in a friend's basement. She was the God-parent to the children of this friend. This seemed an amiable situation since she often mentioned her close relationship with this family. She also maintained contact with her immediate family. She referred to the Okanagan as "home base" and ventured there every summer for camping and golfing with family and friends.

Ms Haines' Place in the School

Ms Haines was a full-time physical education instructor for four-fifths of her job. She was responsible for planning and teaching the entire school's physical education program. The other one-fifth was dedicated to teaching kindergarten. Ms Haines' sanctuary was the gymnasium located at one end of the school. She had an office (or rather a cubby hole) in the girls' change room. My first glimpse of her office suggested that she was very busy and inundated with paperwork. Although the office looked
crammed, there appeared to be some order to the myriad stacks of paper and binders that
covered all surface areas and some floor space. I noticed that the filing cabinet, potentially
a home for some of the paper, was inaccessible due to a table positioned against the
drawers. On the walls, along with some shelving, hung a variety of photos, hand made
cards and pictures (presumably from students), and several thank you notes. There were
also two shopping bags of which I could see the lids of boxes of cookies, crackers, and
various other snacks. In a subsequent visit to her office, it had been tidied or in her words
she had performed a "paper shuffle."

Ms Haines put in long hours; she arrived at school before and left after everyone
else. She volunteered as the president of the district Athletic Association responsible for
organizing district tournaments and the inter-scholastics program. She was also a member
on the district's Fast Action Disciplinary Committee that dealt with problems associated
with coaches.

Ms Haines often reflected upon her personal experiences in sport. Sport was a big
part of her younger life in a small rural community of BC. She talked about the teams she
was on, the road trips in buses, the support of her parents, and the friendships she made.

Even in high school I was in every sport. We made that our focal point because
there wasn't anything in a small town. We relied on it. And even the parents all
came to watch the games because that was entertainment, you were Friday and
Saturday entertainment.

Participating in sport and physical activity formed the foundation for her life. Examples of
personal experience guiding her actions throughout this section recur.

The Planned Physical Education Program

The Beginnings

The physical education program at Parkside Elementary was spearheaded by Ms
Haines about six years ago. Upon arriving at the school, Ms Haines' initial experiences
motivated her to pursue the development of a comprehensive physical education program based on the premise that it would build school spirit. A description of her initial experiences in this school is presented below:

Ms Haines: And then that year I realized the situation in the school with the kids was so bad that I convinced the principal and the staff that if we put in a physical education program we could try and turn this school around from being a school where no other schools would come here to visit. Even teachers were scared if they ended up at this school teaching one year. They transferred out right away. Ah, the reputation throughout the city was just terrible.

JF: What kinds of examples, what were the kids like?

Ms Haines: Well, we had a lot of thefts. If we went for an assembly, they would have their little gangs come in -- there would go our TV's, our VCR's, our listening equipment, our small tape recorders. That year we put on a musical, this was when I was in kindergarten, and the principal came to me and asked me if I would look after some kids in my kindergarten class. I picked up 2 switchblades that dropped out of their pockets. The other examples were the fights. They would just physically fight all over the place. They would grab the library racks full of books and throw them on the floor. They'd go walking towards the doors, they'd kick in the windows in the doors. They'd pick up chairs, throw them over the coat racks into the areas where kids were sitting. I mean, it was a disaster, a real disaster. The graffiti...no pride in the school whatsoever.

JF: Right, so what was the response to your suggestion?

Ms Haines: They wanted to give it a try and I told them I would be committed to it. That I would do my best, and that hopefully we could see some results in turning it around. And it was a lot of work that first year, and sometimes in the gym classes, because of the behaviour, they had no discipline whatsoever in the class, you give them a ball and they'd go up and ram it in someone's face. I mean, they were out to kill each other.

JF: This involved all grades?

Ms Haines: Mainly your intermediates, but the younger ones were just wild too. They thought it was a free for all when you came into the gym. There wasn't a stitch of equipment in there when I took over in September. So the principal [supported me] and I got just basics to get us going. And then after a couple of months I added to it.
Ms Haines developed a physical education program with goals to build trust, responsibility, and school pride. These ideals enhanced the value of physical education and eventually school spirit began to unfold. According to Ms Haines, the school has experienced a dramatic metamorphosis:

*So now we don't have anything stolen. I mean it's been a complete turn around. Each year you could see the benefits of it. The kids have a lot of school spirit, a lot of pride.*

The Grade Four Physical Education Program

The grade four physical activity program, developed by Ms Haines is displayed in the chart (see Figure 4). It represents the main program components only (e.g. special presentations, guests, or field trips are not included).

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Figure 4
The Place of Physical Education Within the School Culture

Physical education is one of the subject areas that over the years has lost priority in the school system. It is no longer mandatory in grades 11 and 12. However, it was evident that the planned physical education program of Parkside Elementary was a valued and integral part of the school's overall curriculum and the school culture. The following paragraphs will explore two thematic categories: school spirit and student leadership. Following this description the roles of Ms Haines, the principal, and the two grade four teachers will be examined in terms of the provision of physical activity and how these related to the grade four girls' experiences. A summary display chart for the teachers and principal has been created as an easy reference for the reader of their values and beliefs and roles in the program (see Figure 5).

"A Healthy School Spirit"

Deliberate strategies, to promote "a healthy school spirit" beyond the walls of the gymnasium, were found in aspects of the planned physical education program primarily the function of Ms Haines, and within the school environment influenced by the principal and other supportive teachers.

During gym classes, Ms Haines incorporated messages about the meaning of school spirit. For example, before lessons began, she reminded them of the lunch hour house games, explained the game to be played and announced the teams scheduled to play. During these announcements, Ms Haines reinforced the importance of participation as part of "team spirit" and team responsibility and often would compliment them for a good turn out in a previous match. Another time, during a typical warm up run to music, she announced to the group that the song she chose was "Be True to Your School" by the Beach Boys. Before she played the song she took a moment to describe what it meant to be true to your school and talked about honour and pride. Although, brief and subtle, she consistently reinforced the broad based values of school spirit within the program.
The inter-scholastic and house game models were also based on goals to promote a "healthy school spirit." The inter-scholastics program consisted of traditional team sports played against other schools. The house games included modified games and were designed to be more participative, but also functioned as a practice ground for establishing appropriate behaviour when playing team sport. Included in the values of these programs were the development of the skills to be "good hosts" to other schools and other sporting behaviours such as shaking hands after the game and giving positive complements to team members as well as opponents. In the house game system, points were assigned for participation and this practice often determined which team won regardless of the game result. The students seemed quite clear on this aspect and were keen to attend to ensure that points were accrued for their team. The house game teams were created balancing gender and skill ability. Ms Haines was able to assess skill ability because her full time capacity as the physical education instructor introduced her to all the students in the school. There were no random placements. The house games I observed were very well attended (each game involved two teams, 25 students per team, plus spectators and a full compliment of officials and team leaders). Ms Haines proudly referred to this turn-out as "real house spirit."

In addition to the gym classes, some of the extra "spirit risers" included 'Spirit Week' which involved the whole school and focused mostly on physical activities (e.g. special activities such as teacher-student basketball games, singing of the school song, sneaker day, and school colours day). The very upbeat school song was created by a previous teacher, and was part of the 'spirit riser' package Ms Haines had crafted. At all general school gatherings or functions, Ms Haines would ensure that the school song was on the agenda. She even had some students put together an accompanying dance to perform when appropriate.

The school has also adopted a motto of "courtesy, consideration, and care." The grades 5-7 students explored the meaning of this motto at a one week outdoor camp as
part of the planned program. This camp was held at the beginning of each year to create friendships, and ultimately enhance school spirit.

An appreciation for the program within the overall school organization was demonstrated in several ways. Many teachers volunteered to assist with teams and house games and to raise funds for team uniforms. The support was also strongly identified in their encouragement of students participating in the extra-curricular programs, the leadership programs, and assemblies for which students often had to be absent from their class room in order to participate. Teachers did not often withhold gym period or participation on an inter-scholastic team as a disciplinary action. Ms Haines proudly reported that her program "ideas never got vetoed" and that she readily received any assistance she requested from the teachers. The principal confirmed Ms Haines' contribution to the positive school ethos:

*Ms Haines' enthusiasm and emphasis on participation, sportsmanship, and fair play have a great deal to do with the positive tone and spirit of our school.*

(Evans)

Parkside Elementary emitted a sense of pride defined by its physical environment, decorations, and tone. Upon entering the front lobby, a sense of what was important to this school were clearly displayed. A district document (School Board, 1994) described the importance of establishing pride in the appearance and decoration of the school demonstrating publicly the "value placed in the school on good achievement, effort, and behaviour" (p. 15). Amongst students' artwork, a hand drawn fund-raising thermometer for computers, the monthly lunch schedule, and certificates of events or accomplishments were mounted. One of these, proclaimed this school as a partner with the BC Ambassador for Sport highlighting Silken Laumann and the Premier's Sport Awards Program. In the gym, the mounting of motivational posters and achievement banners conveyed a feeling of pride and school spirit.
School assemblies were another vehicle through which the physical education program was publicly displayed, further entrenching its significance in the school culture. Throughout the year, different students or classes were asked to demonstrate their line dancing, movement dance, or basketball skills. Physical education was placed on the agenda of public assemblies. The students were also awarded with participation certificates for all the activities they participated in. Not only were academic and competitive sport achievements recognized, but participation at any level in the planned physical activities was given value.

A survey entitled: "The spirit of our school" was distributed to the intermediate grade students (School Survey, 1994) who were asked to write about problems of the school, possible solutions to these problems, and positive things about the school. The results were qualitatively compiled into themes and the physical education program activities figured prominently as positively contributing to the school spirit. The following were popular comments:

- Good sports and teams.
- Good gym program.
- Good after school programs.

**Student Leadership**

The student leadership program included the development of personal skills, role models, and fair play with the goal of establishing a legacy promoting school spirit. The planned physical education program provided a multitude of leadership opportunities.

In the gym classes there were opportunities to be a team leader, a recorder, an equipment helper, or a peer tutor. The leaders were not always the most highly skilled leaders because Ms Haines’ style was to request volunteers and share the opportunities amongst the students. Sometimes leaders from the upper grades were invited to join the grade four classes to lead a particular skill or help out with the class in some way. For example, during the line and creative dancing units, Ms Haines invited older girls and boys
to lead the various dances or to help with the music. These leadership positions allowed students extra time to practice for an upcoming assembly or inter-school performance and gave them a chance to be role models for the younger students.

House games and inter-scholastics provided many leadership opportunities for the grades 6 and 7's. Referees, time keepers, score keepers, and house leaders were some of the roles and responsibilities provided. One teacher was on duty to oversee the roles, but the responsibilities were delegated to the students. Both males and females were encouraged and groomed as leaders.

The Role of the Physical Education Instructor, Ms Haines

As described earlier, the program was designed, in part, to deal with the inability of the school to function as a safe and effective agency. Ms Haines recognized that it had the potential to harness the disruptive energy and replace it with positive energy to create a school culture evoking pride. The data revealed two prominent principles within the program including a student-centred approach and sensitivity towards the social context of the students. The instructional characteristics of Ms Haines also appeared crucial to the program. These included an emphasis on organizational management, safety aspects, and a philosophy of equality. Some insight into Ms Haines' actions and intentions as a physical educator provides meaning to the context in which the girls' experiences were formed.

A Student-Centred Approach

*I like to see their smiles when they accomplish something. Even a minute little thing, and if they achieve it they have a big smile on their face and they're happy with themselves.* (Haines)

The student-centred approach which emerged in this study included: respecting individual needs and situations; nurturing and providing leadership opportunities in a
variety of ways; responding to popular requests; recognizing and rewarding positive and responsible behaviour; and recognizing and rewarding skill development and personal goal oriented achievements.

Much of the physical education program paralleled the provincial curriculum requirements and Ms Haines was very familiar with the curriculum and the School Board's Guidelines. However, it became apparent that the program possessed a flavour not wholly based on a rational curriculum model. Ms Haines’ guiding force were the smiles on her students’ faces. The following quote emphasizes her attention to and caring about the students:

...where I see a need or the kids have voiced you know, “I'd like to do this sometime,” then I'll take a look at it and see where we can fit it into the program. Last year we started badminton, the year before we started tennis. So we started getting more into some individual games.

Another example of a commitment to the student-centred principle was responding to trends (e.g. line dancing). The line dancing program grew so much in quality and quantity in two years, that Ms Haines’ students became leaders in the school district and were invited to other schools to demonstrate their skills.

...a two minute program where they had to organize their own group, had to choose their own music, they had to decide on a stage name for themselves and I gave them lots of practice time and then they had to present it to the class. We started off with dance contests. They had to enter the contest, but their whole group had to decide on this decision, and then the winners of the dance contest presented to a school wide assembly. That took off like you wouldn't believe. The first year it was mainly 6's and 7’s next year the 4's and 5’s asked if they could join. And then it would be maybe 5 or 6 groups. Well it built from the first year, I think there was 12 groups until last year there was 35 groups want to show their dances. So you take something, and the kids have already been asking right from the beginning, are we going to do that again this year? So it's something that they're interested in but it's also learning because they're learning, they're choosing their own funky music, rap or whatever, and getting what they want. But the line dances have really taken off. (Haines)
Offering new programs introduced new challenges to Ms Haines as an instructor. For example, when line dancing became popular, Ms Haines had to face her inability to keep a beat. This did not stop her, she just got creative and extended her leadership program to include peer dancers.

*I went to one workshop and I couldn't keep up with them. So I got the steps and I got the music. Now I can teach the kids the steps without the music. Once they got just the basics, then what I actually did was start a peer line dance group. I had them come in for two weeks in the morning. They learned all the steps to the music then with the co-operation of teachers they come to the gym classes and they are the leaders in the gym classes.*

Another instance of being aware of and responding to the students' desires occurred with the increasing popularity of in-line skating. Ms Haines included this as part of the planned program. Because of its inherent risk, the in-line skating program was contracted to a private company to teach the basic skills and safety procedures. The company supplied the instructors and the equipment.

Ms Haines also used two recognition programs as other opportunities to meet the needs of the students as well as to provide positive reinforcement for participating in physical activity. Demonstrating a sincere respect for the students, she involved the them in the decision to participate in the Quality Daily Physical Education Program (QDPE), a national program, discussed in Chapter 2, that recognizes schools who obtain specific criteria with a banner to hang in the gym. She also utilized the Premier's Sport Awards Program to motivate students to improve their basic sport skills. Students received coloured crests for their efforts. Along with skill development, Ms Haines was once again driven by her mission to put smiles on the students' faces and to make a difference to their overall school experiences with her comments about how these programs fit her philosophy:
Excellent motivators for the kids. These type of kids need awards. They need recognition. They want to know that they're doing it well. It helps to give them a sense of belonging. They love to come to school.

Ms Haines sought a commitment from the students to participate in as many of the programs offered. She made them aware that it was their choice and they would be rewarded if they followed through. Her commitment to the students was also linked to her concern and perception about their social and living environments as can be inferred from her words such as "these type of kids" and "helps to give them a sense of belonging."

Sensitivity to the Social Context of the Students

When discussing the mission of Parkside Elementary, Ms Haines immediately began to describe the community in which the students lived. Her list of concerns seemed endless, some of which included the low socio-economic status, drugs, prostitution, child abuse, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and the multiracial composition resulting in multicultures and multi-languages. With all this on her mind, she reminded me of one of her goals:

*to make the kids, their day at school, their happiest day. So they go home with something because a lot of them are going home to nothing, basically.*

Ms Haines' goal may not necessarily conform to the provincial curriculum's goals, or the mandate she was assigned in teacher training, but the critical element was her acknowledgement of the context in which she was teaching and how this shaped and provided meaning to her teaching practices and programming. She was driven by the disadvantages many of the students experienced on a day to day basis and applied this knowledge to her programming to provide them with something positive every day.

As can be seen on the physical education program chart (Figure 4), programming for the community was a component as well. In her mind, the extension of programming beyond school hours (a volunteer commitment for Ms Haines) was essential for her students. Ms Haines sought to understand their needs and reached out with what she
knew best - physical activity programming. Ms Haines had a two prong purpose for the after school programs: i) to nurture a relationship with the parents; and ii) to provide safe and productive after school activities.

Ms Haines commented that her parents were and continue to be "supportive, very supportive." Based on Ms Haines' feeling that parental support for kids was an important element to enjoying physical activity, Ms Haines created opportunities to meet the parents and share with them the importance of physical activity and to inform them of their child's achievements in some of the programs. Ms Haines offered morning and evening physical activity programs open to parents. Her morning aerobic sessions, led by student leaders, were open to staff and parents and Ms Haines was there to greet them. During aerobics there was child minding, a pre-school day-care, and a corporate sponsored breakfast in the one-third of the gym that was not being used for aerobics. This was a good opportunity to become acquainted with some of the parents, even with those parents just dropping off their children.

During gym class, I was alerted to the potential extent of her relationships with the parents. Ms Haines was handing out jelly beans as the class reward for bringing gym strip when she stopped at one Vietnamese girl. She asked her "do you need a hug today?" The girl shook her head indicating a 'no'. Ms Haines explained to me later that the girl's mom had gone back to Vietnam unexpectedly and she asked Ms Haines if she would give her child hugs when she needed them.

Ms Haines started a drop-in family sports night, for parents and their children (all ages), that was fully accessible and promoted skill learning and simple team play. These extra programs were free, and if necessary, child minding was provided. Students were paid to watch over the smaller children while the siblings or parents participated.

Involving the parents was one way to better understand the children's situations and how the school may be able to help more directly with other outreach programs (e.g. ESL, crime prevention). Her hopes for the students were that:
when they're at the age when they're on their own they can look back and, and maybe they've learned something and won't go in the same direction as their parents' life.

She was also motivated to gain their support for their children to participate in her other programs. Often a consent form was necessary and Ms Haines wanted them to feel comfortable with their kids participating in any of her programs.

Ms Haines offered a drop-in basketball night once a week for students as an alternative to being on the streets and to keep them safe for a few more hours while their guardians worked or were not at home. According to Ms Haines, single parents do not have the choice of when they can be home, nor do they always have a contingency plan for the caring of their children.

...it's giving them a place to go after school. Keeping them out of trouble. Night programs are keeping those kids off the street.

Students up to grade 10 were invited to participate in the basketball drop in. This extended invitation beyond the elementary grades created an opportunity to keep in touch with some of her former students and vice versa. Ms Haines proudly mentioned she was invited to "Grad" this year:

...with more of the kids now in high school, you know, are always coming back and I see them and a lot of them are on honour roll, they're trying to keep up, even though their home life is a disaster. They're really trying out there, and it's nice to see.

Instructional Characteristics of Ms Haines

The most salient instructional characteristics of Ms Haines that emerged from the data were identified as an emphasis on organizational management, safety aspects, and her philosophy of equality.
"Organization Is of Prime Importance"

Ms Haines described her instructional style in addition to her above quote, with the following adjectives: "structured", "teasing", "having fun", "fairness", "motivating", and "encouraging." Watching Ms Haines' actions and interactions with the students was most intriguing. I began to realize the importance of Ms Haines in these classes. From the moment the students raced in the door, to them lining up to leave, every minute was allocated. I was fascinated by her ability to adapt every 40 minutes to a new audience. She always appeared refreshed and wasted no time, nor did she ever go over time. Very rarely did I witness disciplinary action. Ms Haines attributed this to being organized and being consistent:

*I think in physical education, organization is of prime importance. You have to be organized or things will just fall apart. Kids will know right now what they can do, what they can get away with. They know what to do, where they're going, how far out of line they can go with me. And the ones you have problems with, are usually the new kids into the school so they've never had any boundaries set on them in their programs. And, usually if they're new in September, by the time I do my Halloween games and the gym is totally decorated for Halloween, I have them in the palm of my hands.*

Her style was subtle. She commanded the attention of the students with a silent raising of her arm. For example, during a basketball dribbling session Ms Haines raised her hand, and over the din of bouncing balls, instantaneously the students stopped, held their balls, and the gym was momentarily still. In a conversational voice, Ms Haines then informed them it was time to switch, and reminded them to place the balls on the floor at their current station before moving on. She then motioned to switch. The students took off. It looked all too easy, yet I knew from my limited experience that I was watching something special.

My feelings that Ms Haines had a unique relationship with the students in the gym were further entrenched when I arrived one day to observe a class led by a substitute
teacher. The tone of this class was remarkably different. The substitute did not utilize their usual class teams, instead:

he lined them up against a wall and numbered them off into two teams. He communicated with a loud and commanding voice. He shouted at a girl who was talking and moved her to the other end of the wall. There was no warm-up activity and he launched into an elimination game which was similar to dodge ball except it involved running to the wall and back without getting hit by the ball. He used two boys to demonstrate and tried to encourage the passing of the ball amongst the team members. He interrupted to ensure that everyone was taking turns kicking the ball to start the game. He continuously yelled strategies at the team with the ball and kept score on a small chalkboard attached to the gym wall. He compared this class with others and claimed that "this class was slow." The students who were not eliminated did a lot of running, and those eliminated early on sat idle on the bench. (Fieldnotes)

The whole lesson was such a contrast that I was stunned. I started to reflect on what happened and wondered how the experiences of the girls would differ if he was the full-time physical education instructor.

Safety

Safety within a school environment must always be a concern for teachers and administrators. From my observations Ms Haines demonstrated a commitment towards safety through introductory programs, equipment set-up, rules of conduct, and the clothing policy.

Having students learn the safety aspects was one of Ms Haines’ stated goals. As mentioned previously, the in-line skating program was contracted to an outside firm with expertise in safe skating skills and habits. During the gymnastics unit the students were reminded every class of the safety standards and procedures. Ms Haines controlled the situation and the gym was a safe place to participate in. I observed respect for and compliance to her requests. I never witnessed an unsafe situation.
Ms Haines extended the realm of safety to include personal hygiene. During one of the dance units, Ms Haines cleverly turned a breaking of a rule into a lesson on safe health habits for everyone. Ms Haines noticed Shanna was chewing gum and responded this way:

Shanna responded to Ms Haines’ query with a nod and ran off towards the change room. Ms Haines did not raise her voice, but her tone changed from when she was interrupted describing the dance. Ms Haines reminded Shanna of the rule. She informed the rest of the class she was on the "gum bandwagon" and asked if they knew what she meant by that, pausing for a reaction. The class remained quiet and still. She mentioned she found gum on the gym floor, in the hallways, and on tables in the last two weeks. The school rule was no gum inside the school. They were permitted to chew gum in the playgrounds but it must be placed in the garbage before entering the school. She mentioned gum was not only messy, but also dirty and that most of them 'do not wash their hands very often'. She explained that if they got some gum stuck on their shoe, they would pick it off and then without washing their hands they would eat their sandwich. The problem, she continued, was that all kids have germs and they would be putting those germs into their mouths. She reminded them of all the colds and flu going around and that this was one way that would help it spread. A quick pause, (as if to let the information settle) and then she continued with the description of the dance.

(Fieldnotes)

Instead of humiliating Shanna by focusing on her mistake, Ms Haines took an opportunity to explain the reason for the rule as a safety precaution for their health.

"The Same for Everyone"

Ms Haines’ definition of equality offered an example that linked equality with the notion of choice:

*Everything is offered to every kid. Whether they choose, it's their choice. For example, drop in basketball, I had one girl there last night. But it was open to all boys, and all girls from grades 6 to 10. And it's their choice whether they come or not. Sometimes they don't have a choice, it's their parents' choice whether they come or not. House games is a good example because you get all boys and all girls out.*
Ms Haines also referred to fairness and equality seemingly interchangeably. She noted that fairness was a characteristic of her style and explained she made a concerted effort "to be fair with all of them" because she believed "fairness [was] a big thing with the kids." She mentioned that she heard one student describe her as "tough, but fair."

During discussions about gender, race, or class, Ms Haines felt strongly that none of these social attributes made programming more difficult, nor did she focus on one more than the other. Even though this was her stated intent, it became increasingly apparent with her focus on "individuals", she indirectly addressed various aspects of each gender, race, and class. Of these three, the most predominant however, was class. There were many instances when I observed the incorporation of her beliefs about low income students in her decision making, some of which I have previously discussed. For example her extra programming was driven by a concern for their low social economic status. Another example was when Ms Haines mentioned to me that she never negatively criticized the efforts of the students unless she felt completely justified. Her reasoning was based on her belief that the student may not have had anything to eat, was not able to sleep, or was abused the night before.

Circuitously, her gym strip policy addressed pertinent issues around girls' anxieties and their feelings towards their body during physical activity as well as indirectly acknowledging potential ethnic concerns. Ms Haines was concerned about freedom of movement and safety during any physical activities, and as long as the clothes the students wore fit this criteria, they were free to choose their own gym strip. The issue of race relations and clothing did not seem to be an issue in the classes I observed. The six study girls of varying racial and cultural backgrounds were conforming to a Canadian clothing style and did not appear to have any religious conflicts or concerns. Ms Haines' clothing policy seemed to limit issues and barriers for girls that commonly arise with a more formal, traditional approach.
During the first few observations, I noticed Ms Haines favouring the boys. However, over all the sessions this bias dissipated. Ms Haines mentioned that she thought there were observable differences in the participation patterns of boys and girls. Boys "are always more active" and she attributed this to the level of "testosterone" and to the support of the social culture for boys in sports. She felt that things were changing and mentioned that she thought there was greater representation of women in the Olympics as an example. She added that she was the first woman president of the Athletics Association for her district. Ms Haines had not thought about the implications of sex-segregated physical education for elementary students, yet felt that it had potential. She stereotypically surmised that the girls may not feel as "inhibited" and the boys would be in an environment where they did not have "to hold back" or "have to pass to the girls."

In terms of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students, Ms Haines mentioned she thought the girls from different cultures were "hesitant" to take part in some of the programming and pointed towards their families and gender as barriers. She would talk with the parents of these girls and explain the purpose and benefits of physical activity in Canada and referred to this as "the Canadian way of thinking; the way we do it in our school system." Other than this initial communication, she has never been alerted to any cultural concerns from either the parents or the students. Her comment about the "Canadian way" may be seen as ignoring diversity and encouraging assimilation. According to a School District document (School Board, 1995), the notion of diversity suggests that "all persons possess unique characteristics which distinguish them as individuals" (p. 6). Even though Ms Haines claims to be utilizing a student-centred approach, how Ms Haines incorporates race and gender appears somewhat controversial.

For this busy teacher, there was often little time for reflection. Ms Haines used her intuition and the voices of the students to steer her course. In the end and after all those long hours she was still able to say:
I'm also doing something that I really really enjoy, so I don't find it stressful.

It was apparent that even though Ms Haines was a significant factor in this program, she had the support of the principal and the other teachers. This support was imperative for her to be able to implement the physical education program to the extent that she did.

The Role of the Principal, Ms Evans

Ms Evans displayed a deliberate, professional manner. She was a short, healthy looking caucasian, with short, grey, styled hair and was married. Even though this was her first year in Parkside Elementary, Ms Evans acknowledged the merits of the physical education program, expressed the value of its place in the culture of the school, and was eager to enhance it. Her role in the experiences of the grade four girls emerged from the decisions and actions as a function of her professional position within the school, her past personal experiences, and similar to Ms Haines, her desire to meet the perceived needs of students living in a low social economic community.

Professional Support

Ms Evans has been a principal of inner city schools for several years now. According to school district policy, a principal is only ever required to stay a maximum of two years at an inner city school and is not placed in an inner city school unless requested. Ms Evans specifically requests these placements because she says she "likes the challenge," she's "good at it," and finds it "extremely rewarding."

Ms Evans viewed the school as "a big family" and "wants to nurture this" type of relationship within her staff. During an interview, she briefly alluded to her management style:

*I want everyone to co-operate together and work together and do a really good job together in a team atmosphere. Hopefully I'm not the big figurehead,* [a]
hierarchical figure. Someone else chairs the staff meetings, other people chair committees, I try to bring the talents of the staff forward as much as possible.

Even though the family structure has been traditionally hierarchical, her focus appeared to be team oriented. Her consultative approach was positively acknowledged by other teachers because it encouraged collaborative decision making and planning. A good example of her commitment to "bring the talents of the staff forward as much as possible" emerged with her support and encouragement of Ms Haines and the physical education program.

Ms Evans substantiated her verbal commitment for the program, and reinforced her support for Ms Haines' personal efforts in the following comments:

*She's the leader and the supporter, gets other people involved, and spends a great deal of personal time.*

*She has a lot of pride in what she does. She has high standards for herself.*

*Nobody could do it to the same standard plus she takes care of all the related stuff, the equipment in the gym, keeps all the decorations and pa [sound] system.*

Ms Evans recognized that "many [of the physical education] programs affected the whole school" and that Ms Haines' personal commitment was unique and valued. Evidence of this conviction arose in her concern "about [Ms Haines'] health" and that she "did not want to lose her."

Ms Evans further demonstrated her support for the program through her allocation of human and financial resources. Although Ms Evans was not involved in the decision to have a dedicated physical education instructor, she wanted to maintain the position. The allocation of a designated physical education instructor in elementary schools is rare and this commitment requires a strong belief that physical education is important to the school as a whole. Ms Evans' financial commitments towards aspects of the physical education
program such as the funding of the in-line skating program and cross-country skiing lessons further reflected the value she placed on physical education in the school.

"I Bring a Lot of My Own Background"

When it came to program development, Ms Evans was philosophically aligned with Ms Haines. She too did not adhere to a rational model of curriculum design, instead exposed a hidden curriculum. In response to a question about the adequacy of the current physical education curriculum she mentioned she had not "seen one in about 10 years." She believed that in order to meet the needs of the students, the curriculum must focus on "individuals" and "personalities":

...listen to where the kids are coming from. Listening and being sensitive - based on those two things.

Ms Evans contended that she did not place an emphasis on gender issues; she focused on the individual. Other than her own experiences as a female, she was unaware of gender issues in the realm of physical activity and appeared surprised when questioned about sex-segregated physical education: "girls can't be with boys...really?" The principal, like Ms Haines, adopted an equality stance:

A physical education program that covers everything: health, fitness, social, socialization, co-operation, lots of different sports, equal with boys and girls. This includes after school activities. It's not just team sports, it's gymnastics and lots of other things.

Ms Evans was quite passionate about the topic of girls and physical activity on a personal level and emphasized the benefits of physical activity for girls in terms of self-esteem and confidence building. Her concern for confidence building evolved from her own personal experiences as a young girl who, being "over weight and not particularly athletic," did not have the confidence to play team sports at school.
If you learn to something you're a little bit afraid of, it transfers over. It really does transfer in confidence.

[The students] need to know they can do whatever they want and part of that is learning new skills. They need to have confidence in themselves...that will transfer, that good feeling, to certain things in the gym, or learning to be able to run in cross-country or be part of the team...

Similar to Ms Haines, she too had a supportive family who offered her positive experiences with sport and physical activity outside of school. These experiences led her to value "lifetime sports" which she felt were often more recreational than traditional curriculum offerings, providing all students and especially girls, a balance of activities. The kinds of experiences she valued were the ones she had participated with her family and continued to pursue as an adult. These consisted mainly of outdoor individual pursuits. Upon arriving at the school, she extended the cross-country ski program to include grades 4-7 and intended to implement an ice skating program soon.

She had a desire to increase the exposure to community-based activities by establishing contact with opportunities outside the school walls. She wanted to demonstrate to the students that careers and jobs were available in the field of recreation and sport:

[The students] are introduced to another instructor, a new environment, other people from different communities and this builds up their experiential repertoires. You know confidence and exposure or...there's 10 people working here, these are job opportunities. There's a place that's got fresh air, snow, and away from the city. Just by going up to the hill, they learn.

This was an important dimension she wanted to bring to their physical education program. Although, experiences in lifetime sports seems to be important, the social context in which these girls are bound may interfere with Ms Evan's visions for them. Although cross-country skiing could be seen as the cheaper alternate to alpine skiing, travelling to the hill, renting equipment, and purchasing the trail ticket present limiting economic factors. Therefore cross-country skiing and skating are not necessarily accessible lifetime sports to
the kids from this low social economic community. Both activities are inherently expensive and require other support systems (e.g. transportation, equipment) to make the experience possible. Ms Evans may be imposing her personal view without considering wholly the situation of the kids without her as their support system.

Ms Evans not only supported and assisted Ms Haines with the program in a variety of ways, she acknowledged the powerful element of role models. The principal could see the value in Ms Haines as a role model, especially for the girls. She even attributed the high participation rate of girls to the fact that Ms Haines was a female. Ms Evans believed Ms Haines was an "inspirational role model" for the whole school. She believed her "high standards" would impress on the children that "this is the way we do things in this school, we do them well."

Ms Evans made it a priority for herself to be a role model "for the girls in particular." She participated in school physical activities when her job allowed her and rode her bicycle in the Spring "to show the kids." She felt it was important for the students to see her in a "different light" and would dress in lycra tights and running shoes some days and other days she would wear a more formal attire as was "expected" by her profession.

The Roles of the Grade Four Teachers, Ms Fletcher and Mr Wong

The grade four teachers both positively supported the physical education program and recognized its role in the school's culture. Ms Fletcher referred to the program as being "excellent" and Mr Wong commented that it was "good for the school, definitely." They both acknowledged Ms Haines' prodigious commitment and credited the success of the program "100% to Ms Haines." Ms Fletcher's comment that "Ms Haines commits in a very big way" was based on her observation that for every day for two years, Ms Haines had been at school when she arrived in the morning and was still at school when she left.
Ms Fletcher was a tall, slim caucasian with short, curly blonde hair. She had been teaching at Parkside for a couple years following a year’s leave of travelling with her husband and son. Ms Fletcher described herself as a role model for the girls. She participated in many of the school physical activities and was currently an active triathlete, marathoner, and bicycle commuter. She explained:

_I bike to work and my bike is in the cloakroom. They see things like that. If I run in a race, I wear the T-shirt the next day. You know that kind of thing, setting an example is a good thing._

Beyond her display of her personal physical pursuits she "_encouraged [the grade four girls] to do house games or to join teams._" She assisted Ms Haines with the house games, track & field, and with cross-country. She also took her class to the gym for one extra gym period a week, most often accompanied by the kindergarten class. She focused mainly on dancing (e.g. rhythmic and jazz dance steps). She volunteered on a Safety Committee which involved aspects of fire drills, earthquake education, and other personal safety issues.

Mr Wong, a small framed, Chinese Canadian who was married, grew up in Victoria and had been teaching the intermediate grades for over twenty years. His hair was black and cut in a conservative style. Mr Wong was involved in the inter-scholastic and track & field programs mainly with the grades six and sevens as an assistant coach and driver. When discussing the grade four girls, Mr Wong demonstrated a genuine concern and knowledge about some of the barriers girls face, which from his perspective limited their "keenness" to participate in physical activity. He perceived that gender differences exist in the areas of physical strength, skill ability, and social cultural influences. He generally felt that the boys were more physically skilled than the girls and that the boys included the girls only "_reluctantly._" He also surmised that the girls "_with less skill_" would not feel "_comfortable participating at that level._" He knew this was not always the case, but from his experiences, girls appeared to be lacking in sport skills.
## Teachers' and Principal's Roles in the Planned Physical Education Program: Summary Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers Description</th>
<th>Perception of the School Mission</th>
<th>School Concerns</th>
<th>Personal Physical Activity Experiences</th>
<th>Personal Role in Program</th>
<th>Values of Program</th>
<th>Beliefs about Girls in Physical Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PEI, Physical Education Instructor, 6 years</strong></td>
<td>To make the kids their happiest day - &quot;a lot of them are going home to nothing basically.&quot;</td>
<td>discipline</td>
<td>school jock as youth</td>
<td>teaches the whole school</td>
<td>school spirit</td>
<td>Boys are generally more active because they have &quot;more testosterone.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>vandalism</td>
<td>lowest social economic school in the country</td>
<td>golf and camping in the summer</td>
<td>provides house games and interscholastics</td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>Sex segregated physical education may benefit both boys and girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>39 languages</td>
<td>provides community programs to include family</td>
<td>provides extra gym classes in dance</td>
<td>Volunteering as PE Association President and on the Fast Action Disciplinary Committee</td>
<td>fairness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy set</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>assists with house games, track &amp; field, cross country</td>
<td>helps improve discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ms Fletcher, Grade Four Teacher, 2 years</strong></td>
<td>To address the needs of all children - social, emotional, and academic.</td>
<td>special needs kids in the classroom</td>
<td>triathlons, mini-marathons, bike commuter, skiing, hiking, travelling</td>
<td>provides extra gym classes in dance</td>
<td>healthy, good for body and mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40's</td>
<td>class size too big</td>
<td>assists with house games, track &amp; field, cross country</td>
<td>PEI is crucial to program</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>slight</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mr Wong, Grade Four Teacher, 5 years</strong></td>
<td>To enable kids to meet basic needs and then educate them.</td>
<td>behavioural, learning and special needs</td>
<td>active as a kid</td>
<td>assists with coaching</td>
<td>girls need physical activity</td>
<td>Cultural and gender sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>transience</td>
<td>walks with wife</td>
<td>provides transportation</td>
<td>PEI spends the time to make this a good program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<td>Canadian</td>
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<td>slight</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>50's</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ms Evans, Principal, first year</strong></td>
<td>To provide equitable educational outcomes.</td>
<td>&quot;needs of children and their families are so extreme.&quot;</td>
<td>overweight as youth and hated team sport</td>
<td>applies discretionary fund to extra programs</td>
<td>school spirit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pursues individual sports: cross country skiing, biking, running, hiking</td>
<td>intent to expand program to reflect personal experiences</td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
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Figure 5
Mr Wong also articulated his concerns for the cultural barriers that the girls were experiencing. He believed that some parents in this community did not value physical activity to the same degree as this school or the Canadian culture in general. He thought that physical activity for girls was "de-emphasized by the family" and left to the school. He was not sure if the parents just "do not encourage" their girls or if they "want them to do something else with their time." He did not apply this cultural theory to the non-Caucasian boys. He had not witnessed the boys having difficulty with getting involved in physical activities and suggested boys were generally more "sports minded."

Mr Wong had some thoughts about how to break down some of the barriers facing the girls. He suggested that offering different programs was not the answer. Instead, he said that devoting extra time and commitment to encouraging girls to participate would result in higher involvement levels. He especially thought this to be true with the grade four girls. Mr Wong confirmed that even though he was "not directly involved," in any physical activities with the grade fours, his contribution was in encouraging them to participate.

I think they should get the message that physical education, especially at their age, is good for them. Their bodies are developing and they need to exercise and they need to develop their muscles, and you know, just for their own health. Just to be fit. And I know there's a lot of girls, I've noticed in my class, that are not very strong, you know, physically, and there could be a number of reasons. But you know, I encourage them to go and unless I get a note saying from parents "I really don't want them going" and it's in writing then there's nothing I can do because it's the parent's. If they're not sure then I'll phone the parents and try to encourage them.

Mr Wong also believed that role modelling would encourage the grade four girls to participate in the program's offerings. Currently there was not enough interest by the girls to field teams for inter-scholastics. However, he felt that once the girls were exposed to the older girls playing, they too would want to play next year.
Mr Wong was also very supportive of this study. He encouraged the girls to return the consent forms, requested additional forms for the girls who had misplaced them, called parents who had questions about the study, and even had an interpreter call one family in response to an enquiry to try to increase the number of girls with an opportunity to participate.

Social and Political Contexts

The social context emerged as an important element of the girls and their physical activity experiences that were negotiated within and informed by the social demographics. The social context was also connected to the school culture primarily through relationships with community organizations, the police, and the parents. The political context, which encompassed the influences of the provincial Ministry of Education, the School District, and corporate agencies was also prominently linked with the school culture. The results related to initiatives to improve the situation for low income schools by various political groups illustrated how the social and political contexts were intertwined.

Social Context

To isolate experiences without consideration of external influences is to ignore and discredit the complexities of social relationships. The social context provides the social underpinnings of how knowledge is constructed and how power relations evolve. In addition, school culture acts as an agent that reinforces the socially constructed knowledge and power relations through its practices and policies. Adopting this contextual framework encourages a more meaningful analysis of the formation of girls' experiences in their planned physical education program.

One social barrier to achieving the program development goals identified by Ms Evans was the lack of community recreation facilities within close proximity. She felt it
was very important to acquaint the students with opportunities available in their community, but the geographic distance increased the costs of school outings exorbitantly and made it difficult to achieve this goal.

This year Ms Haines was recognized by 'Kids', a local private organization, as a "hero" for her ability to utilize "physical education as a basis for teaching youth about interpersonal skills and character building" (Fong, 1994, March 3, p. B2). This independent association involved in street kids programs and youth theatre, acknowledged that Ms Haines' efforts extended beyond her professional role, resulting in enhancing the quality of life for inner city kids. They identified her role in their community as "vital."

Another crucial community connection was established with the city police. Because of the social dynamics of this particular community, Parkside Elementary was designated a full-time school police liaison officer who made himself available and visible to all the children. He worked to establish a preventive role in addition to dealing with any crime or offences. According to Ms Haines, there was now "less involvement with these kids with the police" than when she first arrived on the scene. My observations of this officer around the school presented a favourable picture. He was very friendly and sincere and had a noticeable rapport with the kids. He addressed the students at one of the assemblies and discussed various safety and crime issues.

In spite of Ms Evan's belief that her job was mostly consumed by "putting out fires rather than instilling a positive vision," she appeared to have put some thought into a vision of a "full-service facility." She intended to address the needs of the students by increasing and enhancing the services the school offered to the community. Some of the services such as breakfast and lunch programs and a dedicated school police officer were in place while others were still in the works. She wanted to increase the number of interpreters and social workers who could deal directly with cultural and language differences and wanted to improve programs for parents and volunteers. As mentioned
earlier, parental involvement was minimal and according to Ms Evans, the school suffered from this.

*Very few parents want to get involved. Often the only time I am in contact with them is because of disciplinary action. We try to use the home workers and others to keep in communication and we have special weeks and meetings for them, but many are single parents and even though they care about their kids, they are not able to participate in much. They demonstrate their support through signed releases for activities or field trips.*

*Ms Haines is very good at offering opportunities to invite the parents to activities such as aerobics and drop in family sports night. This is good and more will be done in the future to develop this relationship further. It is a difficult area and we are very short staffed to deal with this.*

Along with her ambitious and worthwhile goals, Ms Evans planned to sustain or increase the status of physical education within the school. Financial and human resource cutbacks had already resulted in a commitment to creative time tabling to sustain and enhance the physical education program. This dedication, in amongst many critical issues, was a remarkable testament to the value of physical education in her "full-service school" vision.

**Political Context**

The bureaucratic role of the Ministry of Education and the School District was not only financial, but both agencies to varying degrees influenced teacher time allotments, curriculum guidelines, and the roles of the principal and area superintendent.

In times of economic restraint, schools are subject to downsizing and are expected to operate with less. The fiscal realities force school boards and principals to ascertain priority programs and services within the context of each school. At the same time as Ms Haines was building the physical education program, staffing levels were reduced. In fact, in the past year, Ms Haines' full-time teaching position was reduced to a four-fifths workload.
I guess after a couple years, this school started to change. Then we had people who wanted to stay and they started more budget cuts, and we lost 7 new teachers who were just wonderful. So a lot of it has to do with government funding too, for the schools. (Haines)

One major change in the physical education program this year was due to government cutbacks. The physical education position was cut to a 4 day week but staff and students have continued to support and strive for a quality program. We have been creative and flexible in an attempt to re-structure the time requirements. (Haines, 1995b)

As a volunteer President of the city's Inner City Education Society, Ms Evans engaged in lobbying the Ministry of Education to allocate more funds towards inner city programming and resources. The non-profit society, comprised of parents, teachers, vice-principals, principals, and district staff, identified its purposes:

1. To obtain equality of educational opportunity for disadvantaged students;
2. To focus on educational and social issues affecting children and families who live in poverty;
3. To build awareness of programs and strategies used in various jurisdictions across the country in inner city schools; and
4. To assist in the advocacy initiatives to meet the needs of children at risk in both urban and rural areas.

(Inner City Education Society, 1994)

In a short time, according to Ms Evans, this Society has been quite successful in increasing the awareness at the provincial government level of the unique and demanding situations inner city schools operate within, least of which was the low social economic environment.

As previously discussed, a strong undercurrent motivating both the physical education teacher and the principal was the desire to improve the lives of their students. Based on their middle class perspectives, and to repeat their phrasing, these students were "disadvantaged." To this end, program development and policies were created to "equalize opportunities." In a document describing the physical education program for the QDPE application, Ms Haines described how the context was incorporated:

Our school serves a low socio-economic community and many families are unable to fund extracurricular activities such as ice hockey or skiing. It is, therefore, our
goal to provide activities which address social and emotional needs of the students as well as physical fitness and health. (Haines, 1995b)

Their concern for individual students and the "social and emotional needs" often took precedence over a strict adherence to curriculum guidelines as was evident in Ms Evan's claim to not have seen a physical education curriculum "in ten years." While some may not be impressed with this statement, it purports a strong challenge to traditional bureaucracy. She has the position and the power to control her situation and has chosen to lean more towards a technocratic approach that allows Ms Haines' expertise to guide the program.

Inner city schools have recently been allocated special resources and flexible "ability to pay" policies which are sensitive to the parents' income situations. In addition, as a direct result of being in this category, the province provides a hot lunch program based on a minimal user fee. The payment strategy was implemented in a sensitive way and was confidential. The fees were collected in a brown envelope and given to a home school worker who processed them and passed them onto the area superintendent who worked within provincial and school board policy guidelines. This process eliminated embarrassment and any unnecessary exposure of the financial status of the individual and ultimately permitted all children to participate in all activities. Ms Evans implemented the same procedure for some of the physical education programs.

*It's not their fault they were born into poverty.* (Evans)

In programs with a user fee attached, the ability to participate was based on "if their paper was signed." If a consent form was signed, the child participated. For example, participation in the cross-country ski program was based on this process.

*The kids are encouraged to pay as much as they can. We're very clear that financial difficulty is not a reason not to go skiing.* (Evans)
Ms Evans mentioned she planned to cultivate her relationship with the management at the ski hill to achieve a better deal next year. She had a background in skiing and was also an instructor. Currently, the School Board of this district provided a learn-to-swim program for all grade four students. This was offered free of charge to the students and the school. In the depressed economic climate, the future of this provision would be questionable.

Ms Evans referred to the area superintendent as a “supportive liaison” and contributed aspects of her success in inner city schools to his dedication.

*He is an extremely strong advocate for children in inner city schools. He believes totally in what I’m doing and what the other inner city schools are doing and helps as much as possible, in any way.* (Evans)

Her relationship with the area superintendent has grown over several years. Even though she has been in different schools, she has remained in the same inner city school system and values his role in her ability to exert change in the system.

In further consideration of the family income situation, fund raising campaigns traditionally embarked on by schools for field trips and equipment such as computers, were altered by Ms Evans:

*If you [fund-raise] here it comes out of grocery money because that’s the only income they have to play with and it’s not much. So it’s kind of unwritten policy not to do a lot of fund-raising in inner city schools. I do corporate fund-raising.*

While some are highly critical of corporate sponsorship in schools, the principal continues to cultivate this kind of support to offer what she considers to be essential programs (e.g. computer lab, breakfast program). Once a year the corporate agency who funds the breakfast program comes to the school for a volleyball match with the students and at other times provides complimentary tickets to sporting events.

Ms Evan's political networking with public and private systems advanced her interests, created symbiotic links with the corporate community, and ultimately shaped the development of a school culture that will enrich elements of the students' complex lives.
D. A Comparative Analysis of the Girls' Voices, the School Culture, and Social and Political Contexts

The following comparative analysis reveals how the girls' perspectives were interpreted by Ms Haines, the principal, and the grade four teachers. The contribution of this analysis allows the reader to understand the complex nature of the links among experiences, school culture, and the social and political contexts in which these relationships take place. The girls' voices will frame the analysis.

"Mostly to Have Fun"

The existence of "having fun" emerged prominently from the voices of all study participants, however to varying degrees. The girls' version of having fun indicated a multi-faceted and multi-layered perspective uncovering several issues and barriers that confronted them and compromised their ability to have fun. Certain activities were highlighted as fun activities (e.g. theme games, gymnastics, and dancing) while concern about the environment still prevailed. Factors including safety aspects, the teacher, gender interactions, and attitude towards or purpose of the activity were crucial in determining whether the outcome of the experience would be positive or negative. In some instances, the girls' messages were laced with undercurrents of hegemony and the historical social construction of gender roles in physical activity. Their socialized notions often led to decisions to participate in or avoid an activity. Their favourite activities appeared to reflect a socialized notion of choice.

Ms Haines shared the deepest understanding of how to make a physical education program fun for the participants. Mostly, she was successful in providing the girls a program they were quick to label as "fun." She intentionally incorporated fun into her program goals and used the kids' faces and responses as a barometer to their enjoyment. Furthermore she indicated an evaluative measure of fun in her comment "I like to see their smiles when they accomplish something." The teachers and principal were less aware of
the meaning of having fun as defined by the girls. They referred to the element of fun but never indicated an understanding of how the program could be fun for girls in any specific or particular way. Their comments were sincere, yet appeared superficial when contrasted with the girls' multi-faceted account. Ms Evan's remarked that the theme games "are so much fun, they're a kick for everyone" and Ms Fletcher's commented that she wanted the girls to think that physical activity was "fun and healthy." What the teachers did not realize was the level of importance that fun had in the girls' decision to participate in or to avoid the activity. To the girls having fun was a crucial factor.

The formal curriculum as provided by the province and implemented by the school districts does not mention fun in the same way as defined by the girls. The curriculum talks about "enhancing the quality of life through active living" and uses phrases like "an appreciation for and enjoyment of movement."

"We Just Play Safety Stuff"

The concerns the girls had about safety were distinctly different from those of Ms Haines, the teachers, and the principal. Although safety was a goal of the planned physical education program (and of the formal curriculum) and during the observational sessions there was no apparent lack of concern for safety, the issues confronting the girls appeared less transparent and more complex. Their concerns seemed to be connected to their feelings of personal risk while participating in an activity, not necessarily related to the safe use of equipment or any risks directly related to Ms Haines' expectations or her role during the gym classes. The efforts of Ms Haines to maintain a level of safety was not seen as an issue by the girls. This level of care was expected.

Ms Haines' concern for safety, such as arriving early and programming for after school hours may have been socially situated because of her experiences with the school in its earlier state. These extra efforts were not acknowledged by the girls, but valued
greatly by the other teachers (who also may have been privy to the rough history of the school).

The issue of safety was particularly interesting since it stimulates new thinking about girls' perceptions and experiences and the role of their social context. Questions arise about how much of their experiences may be a result of their social economic status and home and community lives. A neighbourhood with high incidences of crime may have produced a generalized fear among all the girls. This area is worthy of further research.

"Play Fair"

The girls were very passionate about fair play ideals. Their consensus about what fair play meant to them and their ability to articulate this in strong and mature language indicated that Ms Haines' strong stance on fair play may have informed the level of intensity heard in the voices of the girls. Ms Evans also wholeheartedly reinforced the value of fair play for the school in of her claim that "sportsmanship is one of the highest values which is extremely good for the kids." However, both Ms Haines and the principal's perspective about the role of fair play did not match the girls' concern that fair play ideals were linked to their notion of having fun.

Fair play is a socially constructed concept initially developed to counter the rising concern about aggression and violence in sport. The girls viewed the concept as an opportunity to improve the activity environment by capitalizing on the basic premise that winning is not the most important value. A liberal response would be to create rules and to bring in officials to provide a more equitable environment, however, radical theorists would counter this approach by suggesting that superficial masking of the problem will not obtain this ideal. A structural reformation that challenges the root of the imbalance would have to occur before equity is truly addressed.
"Boys are Kind of Lousy"

The issues arising around the role of boys were far more pronounced from the girls' perspective than from the teachers' or the principal's perspectives. The girls perceived innate physiological gender differences, but were mostly concerned about how the presence of the boys negatively affected their experiences. Their level of frustration with the boys was far deeper than was recognized or acknowledged by those in positions of power. Even though the girls would argue that they could play "any sports" they distinctly separated physical activities by gender and in the end, their reality influenced their choice of and beliefs about physical activities. The girls' enthusiasm for the notion of sex-segregated physical education at the elementary school level provides further support for structural change of existing systems.

The perception of gender bias by the girls was not acknowledged by Ms Haines. She applied what she thought was a fair distribution of time, opportunities, and recognition to both girls and boys. Regardless, the girls' perception of this bias was real and acts as another barrier to their enjoyment of participating in physical activity.

Most of the girls clearly identified that boys negatively influenced their physical activity experiences, yet the teachers and the principal rarely acknowledged gender issues and admitted they were unaware of its multi-faceted nature. Mr Wong was the only one to recognize gender as an issue and situated it in a social and cultural context. The irony of Mr Wong's insightfulness was that he did not play a major role in the girls' experiences. These contrary findings suggest that a physical education program based on a student-centred model might help to eliminate some of the problems associated to a gender blind approach to program delivery.

For both Ms Haines and the principal, individual needs took precedence over the issues of gender. Although they recognized and valued themselves as role models, they adopted an inclusionary stance centred on the student regardless of race, gender, or (dis)abilities. However, their political and social interactions and program development
philosophies implicitly provided the girls with choices, experiences, and opportunities that reflected principles of gender equity.

School Support Did Not Go Unnoticed, But Perspectives Differed

An interesting discrepancy in interpretations was revealed around the issues of the gym strip policy. The girls interpreted the policy in two ways: i) as a warning to remember to bring appropriate gym clothing on gym day or face punishment by having to wear the supplied clothing, and ii) as an opportunity to be rewarded with jellybeans (a treat that contributed to the girls' definition of fun). It was unclear whether Ms Haines truly understood the value the girls placed on being able to choose their own gym strip even at this younger age. This is an area that requires further investigation because even after continual probing it was unclear whether their concern about clothing stemmed from social pressures, fashion or body image issues.

The girls' interpretations of the roles of Ms Evans and Ms Fletcher generally confirmed their own assessments. The teachers' deliberate efforts to be role models had been detected by the girls as could be heard in Susan's comment that "she always comes to school in running shoes" or by another girl "she likes to bike." Mr Wong's subtle role as an encourager was however overlooked by the girls. In some ways, his understanding of the issues facing girls' was far richer than his actions indicated.

The girls were not however, aware of the extent of the financial and human resource support provided to the program. In spite of the girls' assumed limited income, finances were never mentioned as a limiting factor in their participation. Had this support not been in place, economics may have surfaced in the girls' comments. In order to implement a program that was so varied and inclusive, Ms Haines needed significant support from the school. The political actions of the school helped to increase the range of opportunities (e.g. in-line skating or cross-country skiing) that are often restricted due to social class constraints.
It was unclear as to what role the school can really play in shaping experiences. Although it appeared at times that the school was a very significant factor in these girls’ lives, by linking the girls’ experiences to the social and political contexts a more complex picture emerged. Some of the issues described appeared to transcend both school experience and family influence. Further investigation in this area would be worthwhile.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

This chapter links the study’s findings to the literature on: i) social context and girls in physical activity; and ii) organizational culture and political context. Following this discussion, conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

I chose to discuss the findings by utilizing a conceptual framework which at times forces false dichotomies and distinctions when in actuality, a clear delineation between the layers of the framework does not exist (see Figure 1). The conceptual rings are intertwined and reveal the interrelations and complexities of the factors affecting experiences in physical activity. The discussion reflects these attributes.

A. Implications for the Literature on Social Context and Girls in Physical Activity

Social Context

A century ago, research focused on biologically deterministic perspectives based on male generated scientific beliefs about the limited capacity of girls and women in physical activity. These notions produced exercise prescriptions that perpetuated and reinforced the social construction of gender stereotyping and gender socialization. These dominant beliefs were indoctrinated within the sport and physical activity system and figured prominently in research. In the 60's the feminist movement began the journey towards dismantling the strongholds which limited and oppressed girls and women's experiences within the realm of physical activity and sport. Feminist theories and research finally provided arguments for placing gender issues on the sport agenda. As a result, gender equity initiatives emerged and the roles of race and social class were added to explanatory frameworks. The role of theory in social practice remains contested. Currently gaps in our knowledge exist about young girls' experiences within a school context and the links to the broader social and political contexts. Valuing diverse female
experiences situated in the social context is important in the realm of physical activity and
sport because so much of subjective experience has been weighed against male norms
perpetuated and reinforced through history.

This study confirmed the inadequacy of any one feminist theory to capture the
intricate social relations and complexity of forces that shape experiences in physical
activity. The standpoint theory, which validates everyday or subjective experiences was
used heavily to try to understand the girls' experiences while in the results of this study,
elements of the liberal, radical, Marxist, and cultural feminist theories emerged most
prominently.\textsuperscript{4}

The Girls' Experiences

The themes which emerged from the girls' responses are discussed here in two
broad categories. The first category describes the girls' desire to "level the playing field"
when they talk about their concerns for fun, safety, and fair play. The girls' sought to
eliminate the power imbalances created by the male defined sporting environment so that
they may enjoy the same benefits from physical activity. The second category involves
gender relations. The results of the study revealed that interactions with boys and a
perceived gender bias by the physical education instructor affected the quality of their
experiences. Aspects of the liberal and radical frameworks emanated from their voices; at
times the girls were willing to work within the system and at other times they were
demanding dramatic changes.

Leveling the Playing Field

Little is understood about what physical activity and sport means and how it is
interpreted by girls from diverse backgrounds. For almost a decade now, "having fun" has
been noted as one of the most important factors that attracts young girls into a physical

\textsuperscript{4} Please note that the study subjects did not explicitly identify with any of these theoretical stances.
activity (Dahlgren, 1988; Fitness Canada, 1989; AFA, 1991; Dyck & Wildi, 1993; Kirby & LeRougetel, 1993; Peters & Murphy, 1993). The challenge over the years has been to understand the multiple meanings of "fun" and, as was discovered in this study, these meanings are complex and often personal. This study, along with Jaffee and Manzer (1992) and Humbert (1995), illustrated the value of listening to girls as part of the quest to interpret and comprehend this ambiguous term. In spite of the consistent finding, the place of "fun" in physical education continues to be debated (Griffin et al, 1993). This confirms a gap between the intentions of the policy makers and experiences of the girls in the programs. The findings continue to challenge the male oriented ideology that surround the sporting experience.

The literature around issues of personal safety does not address the girls' perspectives to any satisfactory extent. Jaffee and Manzer (1992) mention that some girls were not willing to take risks when they thought "they might get hurt", but do not offer any further insight. The other probable explanation could be linked to the areas of gender socialization and self-esteem (Acker, 1984; Greendorfer, 1987; Lenskyj, 1988; Edwards, 1992; Jaffee & Manzer, 1992; Orenstein, 1994). The gender stereotyping and socialization literature suggests that due to the social construction of femininity, the more passive behaviours exhibited by young girls are rewarded and reinforced (Scranton & Flintoft, 1992; Geadelmann, 1989). Girls are often protected from high risk environments and guided towards safer choices (Acker, 1984; Greendorfer, 1987). In contrast, boys are encouraged to be aggressive and are expected to be brave and take risks. In this study, Shanna's mom influenced her perception about "sweating", perpetuating physiological myths about how a body responds to physical activity. A positive correlation between parental views on sport and girls' experiences has been well documented in the literature (Australian Sports Commission, 1991; Statistics Canada, 1994). Although it was beyond the scope of this study to address the confounding influence of the cultural beliefs of
physical activity by immigrant families, it is quite possible that this factor may explain the
hesitancy of some of the girls to pursue certain activities.

The self-esteem literature suggests that girls who lack confidence exhibit
avoidance behaviours (Lenskyj, 1988; Edwards, 1992; Orenstein, 1994) or diminished
participation in particular physical activities or sports (Jaffee & Manzer, 1992). However,
this explanation does not wholly coincide with the results of this study. Many of the girls
enjoyed their gym classes, wanted to participate, and did not seem to be lacking in self-
esteeem. Most of the knowledge surrounding self-esteem stems from studies on
adolescents, however, the studies of Sadker and Sadker (1994) confirm that the girls at
this age often do not lack in self esteem.

The girls shared legitimate concerns about how safety issues interfered with their
ability to enjoy participating in particular activities. The girls' concerns about safety
emerged primarily in the focus group sessions, but safety issues were not observed during
observations sessions. This finding provided support for the use of multiple data
collection strategies, otherwise important areas of inquiry may be overlooked.

Evidence of the importance of the inclusion of "fair play" emerged strongly; a
factor lacking in the literature. Griffin (1985b) and Shakeshaft (1986) are among the few
to discuss this concept. Shakeshaft viewed fair play as a gender issue. She argued that
the traditional instructional methods valuing "competition" and the ethos of "win/lose" in
the learning environment was "not the best environment for girls." The girls' statements
supported this. They believed that "boys mostly cheat" and "winning is mostly for boys."
Fair play to the girls meant that fun was more important than winning, that cheating was
intolerable, and that players should respect each other.

The inclusion of the fair play principle could also be situated within liberal reforms
as illustrated by Griffin's (1989) suggestion to post fair play rules and enforce them.
Rather than changing the structure, rules are formed to create a power balance within the
traditional structure. However, in this study, there was evidence that Ms Haines tried to
break down traditional notions of sporting experiences with activity modifications (e.g. bucketball) in conjunction with fair play principles. By combining these elements, the potential for providing a more equitable environment was enhanced.

Gender Relations

The findings of this study support Guthrie and Castelnuovo's (1994) contention that:

[Girls] have come to realize the importance of their subjective experiences in naming the source of their oppression and in validating an alternative view to male constructed reality (p. 318).

The girls in this study were able to identify boys as one source of their oppression. The girls' frustrations about interacting with boys and experiences with feelings of inequitable treatment have been well documented (Griffin 1985a, 1985b; Jaffee & Manzer, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Humbert, 1995). Griffin (1985a, 1985b) found that the teacher's interactions and class organization had an impact upon the power the boys were able to exert. While the instructional techniques of Ms Haines appeared to be dampening the effect of the boys within the sessions I observed, this was not reflected in the voices of the girls.

The girls only hinted towards a gender bias which is contrary to the stronger sentiments expressed by older girls and women in other studies (Griffin 1984, 1985a, 1985b; Knoppers, 1988; Macdonald, 1990; Wright & King, 1990; Barba & Cardinale, 1991; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Similar to the results of the studies of Sadker and Sadker (1994), Ms Haines was not aware that she was occasionally favouring the boys and was confident that her practices were gender equitable. Even though a gender bias was observed in the initial sessions it was not apparent over the remainder of the research period. This change may have been associated with the transition from traditional team sports (e.g. basketball and volleyball) to a variety of other activities which were less likely
to be governed by male based norms (e.g. dance, gymnastics). This study confirms that gender bias remains an issue for girls.

The girls' experiences also illuminated an element of radical feminism. Gender role distinctions in physical activity and sport were clearly voiced by the girls in their descriptions of "boys' stuff" and "girls' stuff" although conflicting views were evident. Their comments also supported a subordinate role of girls to boys and that the traditional focus on male dominated team sports (basketball, baseball, hockey, football) were not desirable. On one hand the girls felt that they could "do all sports," yet they were more comfortable with the more stereotypically feminine activities such as dance and gymnastics. It is interesting to note that these two particular activities have been a part of girls' physical education since the early nineteen century (Kirk, 1990; Scraton, 1992). These findings may allude to the girls' preference for individual activities, a finding that has been supported in other studies of older girls (Smale & Shaw, 1994).

The girls' discussion about sex-segregated gym classes supported radical feminist views that exclusionary activities can contribute to new ways of thinking and restructuring traditional systems. The positive response to the notion of sex-segregated gym classes reflected an example of how the system could be changed to accommodate the concerns expressed by the girls. This finding supports other research that identifies the safe, less intimidating, and harassment free environment of sex-segregated classes (Griffin, 1981, Macdonald, 1990; Wright & King, 1990; Scraton, 1992; Vail & Berck, 1993). The study revealed that even at the young age of nine, girls are already uncomfortable participating with boys in physical activities.

B. Implications for the Literature on School Culture and Social and Political Contexts

Utilizing an organizational culture framework (Schein, 1991) to investigate the relationships between experiences and broader school actions, values, and beliefs was a
relatively new approach to physical education and schools research (Griffin 1985b; Thomas, 1991; Williams, 1993; Rizvi, 1992; Talbot 1993; Cutforth, 1994). This study revealed links between organizational culture and the girls experiences in several different ways. The following section will be organized using Schein's (1991) three levels of organizational culture as a way to share the complex web of school culture as situated in the broader social and political contexts.

**Observable Artifacts**

**The Positive School Ethos**

Schein (1991) referred to organizational artifacts as "organizational structures and processes" (p. 252) that were visible and palpable. Parkside Elementary's culture was, in part, defined by its physical environment, decorations, and tone. Evidence of the value placed on the physical education program was not only heard in the voices of the study subjects, but it was displayed throughout the school and particularly in the gymnasium (e.g. certificates, sports banners, motivational athletic posters, certificates, hand-made promotional program flyers). A sense of pride and caring emitted from the display of these symbols. In addition the school song and school colours communicated to the outside a positive school spirit sensation.

**A Critique of the Rational Curriculum Model**

The curriculum has been identified as being an important factor positively influencing students' attitude towards physical education (Luke & Sinclair, 1991). The rational curriculum model was seldom utilized by the teachers or the principal. Rather a hidden curriculum (Kirk, 1992) emerged which, although did not overtly acknowledge gender equity, many of the initiatives undertaken did provide the girls with enjoyable physical activity experiences. The supportive findings towards the planned physical

Some of the study's findings built on the gender equity in physical education research and provided further insight into some of the related issues (Griffin 1981, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1989; Knoppers, 1988; Scraton, 1992; Vertinsky, 1992; Talbot, 1993; Humbert, 1995). Student-centred learning, varied learning situations and activities, leadership opportunities through student driven initiatives, and clothing choices were some of the strategies highlighted in the gender equity literature that were also salient features of the planned physical education program in the case study school. Two areas identified in the literature (Griffin, 1989; Scraton, 1992), but not strongly represented in the results of this study, were the presence of a flexible evaluative procedure and a formal commitment to gender education. The assessment factor (not part of this study) recently became a greater concern for study, since the BC Government has just legislated grade assignments for elementary physical education. Assessment strategies have already been accused of perpetuating gender stereotyped messages and will require radical restructuring to meet a feminist agenda (Evans, 1990; Kirk & Tinning, 1991; Kirk, 1992; Scraton, 1992). Elements of gender equitable practices were observed, yet a formal commitment to and dissemination of gender education was absent from the program. For example, some of the physiological myths about sweating and concerns about safety as described by the girls could be countered through further instruction.

Although aspects of the traditional curriculum model were apparent in this study, the respect towards the student's individual and social situation, and the focus on leadership, and school spirit reflected a much more broad based curriculum that acknowledged the roles of the broader social and political contexts (Arrighi & Young, 1987; Sparkes, 1990; Hellison & Templin, 1991; Tinning, 1991; Rizvi, 1992).

Evidence of the roles of the social and political contexts emerged primarily through the actions of Ms Haines and the principal, Ms Evans. Ms Haines clearly acknowledged
the social situation of her students particularly when she programmed before and after school activities. This study's findings supported studies that suggested linking the school with the community was crucial to gaining greater insight about the students and their lives (Thomas, 1991; Williams, 1993; Carroll & Hollingshead, 1993; Talbot, 1993). The insight offered opportunities for the school to respond to needs outside of the traditional framework. The study's findings provided extensive examples and descriptions about how Ms Haines attempted to meet the social needs of the students, challenged the bureaucratic model, and moved towards a more equitable one (Rizvi, 1992; Figueroa, 1993). In this respect, this study has illuminated the importance of physical activity to the lower income communities and the value of context driven approaches to program design in terms of meeting the diverse needs of girls from a low social economic community (Griffin, 1985c; Talbot, 1993). More research considering the links to social class are necessary to provide a more full understanding of the reaches of physical activity beyond the traditional focus of upper and middle classes, not to mention the neglect of gender at all levels.

Ms Evans also sought to make a difference in student's lives. For example, her comment about not seeing a physical education curriculum "in ten years" demonstrated that she was not intimidated or driven by years of tradition. Ms Evans worked in the present and sought to achieve her goals based on experience, knowledge of the social context, and by activating dimensions of the political context.

In spite of the plight of physical education as a viable component of the curriculum and faced with the economic climate of tight fiscal restraint and teacher reductions, Ms Evans intended to build on the program by working her political relations (Morgan, 1986). Houlihan's (1991) notion of positions of power in control of resources was reflected in Ms Evan's role as manager of the school. Utilizing this role, she worked the political arena to influence and gain from those organizations in negotiation with her. This was truly evident in her negotiations around funding aspects of her programming with the Ministry of Education and the School Board. She utilized her position as principal and non-union
Values

Values encompass "strategies, goals, and philosophies" (Schein, 1991, p. 252) and reveal aspects of how and why an organization operates the way it does. The most salient values in the school culture reflected elements of Marxist and liberal feminism. Even though neither Ms Haines nor Ms Evans admitted to being feminist, their actions and beliefs reflected a value system which incorporated feminist ideals. Two broad categories which describe this aspect of the school culture emerged as a focus on social economics and the value placed on the notion of equality.

Economics Rise To the Surface

In a school of complex interwoven social issues, class oppression was central to the policy and decision making influencing the planned physical education program. As with most Marxist theorists, gender issues are secondary to class oppression and this appeared to be evident in the actions of both Ms Haines and the principal.

Marxist values emerged in the extended programming aspects of the planned physical education program. Ms Haines acknowledged how a community stricken by poverty created unproductive opportunities for students who were not accompanied by an adult during after school hours. She offered a place of refuge with sport and encouraged a positive use of leisure time.

The findings in this study built on the work of Griffin (1985b), Talbot (1993) and Cutforth (1994) in which they suggest the ability of the teacher is often determined by the support system around them. Parkside Elementary considered the physical education program as a major contributor to their overall school curriculum and school spirit. The teachers and the principal voiced and demonstrated their support. Ms Haines noted that
this support enabled her to plan and implement a model program. The principal's voiced support was further evidenced by the allocation of a dedicated physical education instructor and of discrepancy funds towards community physical education programming. Marxist feminism would recognize this support as a way of indicating a resistance to dualistic ideology.

Cutforth's (1994) study, suggested that parental support for the physical education program helped to situate the teacher's efforts and practices within the applicable social context. Both Ms Haines' extra programming and the principal's extensive community connections responded to Cutforth's suggestion. The "very little parent involvement" motivated them to improve the situation.

Feminist Marxists also felt that liberation will come as a result of women in the work force and in decision making positions. Costa and Guthrie (1994) suggest that rights of women in sport will follow those gained in the work force. If we were to accept this seemingly natural course of events, then indirectly Parkside School presented a model which placed women in powerful positions, and provided evidence of them utilizing this power to change the system to better the situation for some individuals and for the school. Some of their actions (e.g. subsidized payment structure, variety of activities, respect for clothing choice) indirectly emancipated young girls in the area of physical activity.

The principal as a leader contributed to the school culture in significant ways. The "family" metaphor used by the principal to describe her leadership style fit into Morgan's (1986) belief that organizations adopt a decision making style. Female principals are scarce, and of interest in organizational culture is the role of gender and power relations. Although a traditional family is hierarchical in nature, Ms Evan's distributed the power during staff meetings and preferred a collaborative approach.

In addition to the formalized political relations, the principal also exploited her position to establish relationships with corporate agents in terms of "fundraising" for school programs (e.g. breakfast program). These external and personally developed
relationships directly influenced the physical education program because of the value she placed on the program within the school culture.

A feminist organization is more than an organization with women in positions of power. The gendered element in this study posed questions that the study did not and was not intending to examine. However, Ms Evan's personal convictions that guided some of her actions subtly addressed elements of feminist ideology. Furthermore, Martin (1990) would argue that by eliminating resource barriers, acknowledging the importance of self-confidence and self-esteem building, and offering more activity choices in addition to the traditional fare, Ms Evans produced feminist outcomes. Further investigation into how Ms Evans formed and nurtured her political relations would again enhance our understanding of how the school culture shaped or is shaped by these relations and the role of gender.

Equality

Even though the liberalism approach of offering the "same to everyone" has been criticized within the literature (Hall, 1990; Scraton & Flintoff, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994), both the principal and Ms Haines favoured this philosophy. The liberal theory was also criticized for promoting dualistic thinking which "stimulates sexist ideology and women's oppression" because of its inherently patriarchal history (Costa & Guthrie, 1995, p. 238). Evidence of dualistic thinking emerged in the girls' definition of "having fun" during gym classes when they juxtaposed "work" in the classroom against "playing" in gym class. Even though it was evident that Ms Haines had a plan for each class laden with goals and objectives and had educational and curriculum expectations of the students, the girls presented an impression reinforcing the dualistic ideology. Where this study differed from some of the negative aspects of dualistic thinking was the value placed on the physical education program by the school. Dualistic notions were not an obvious distinction at this
school at the curriculum level. A strong support for the physical education program was evident.

Ms Haines claimed to be a liberal advocate yet her actions emerged with radical and Marxist overtones as described in the following program decision. This year was the first year that participation in junior volleyball and basketball teams was too low to be offered. Instead of following her initial reaction that there were "no athletes in grade 4 or 5" and that "they didn't want to play," Ms Haines decided to create an in-school league emphasizing a competitive game environment within the school and not between schools. She offered this to encourage participation in an non-intimidating environment and to provide an opportunity for these kids to experience competition, team play, and to practise and improve their skills. She hoped they will build the confidence to pursue the senior teams in the following years.

Although the principal wanted to "treat everyone the same" as espoused by liberal democracy, her actions as well indicated elements of radical or Marxist feminism which allowed her to flex the rules and underwrite policies if it meant assisting someone more than another to ensure her or his participation in the planned program. This was apparent in her use of the discrepancy funds to aid those kids with varied incomes to be able to participate.

Basic Underlying Assumptions

Basic underlying assumptions include "habits of perception, thought and feeling" (Schein, 1991, p. 252). The most salient assumption pervading Parkside Elementary's school culture was the belief that race and gender were not as important as social economic status. This belief was especially pronounced considering the study was set in a multiracial community.

It was surprising that elements of the feminist cultural theory did not emerge considering the social context of the school (Hall, 1990; hooks, 1990; Birrell, 1990). Mr
Wong touched slightly on the role of cultural differences in his perception about the girls participation patterns in the physical education program. His insight was refreshing and his sincerity permeated his words and actions. I remain to wonder if his Chinese background heightened his sensitivity to cultural diversity. It was also most interesting to note that he did not apply his cultural theories to boys. The absence of gender in racial relations has been criticized for years (Birrell, 1990).

In terms of the physical education program, the only deliberate action towards multiracial concerns emerged as a component within the program called multicultural games. The girls were vaguely aware about these "Chinese games or something" and none were evident during the observation sessions. Even though both Ms Haines and Ms Evans referred to the inclusion of multicultural games within the curriculum as one way of addressing the multiracial aspect of their school population, they emphasized individual sensitivity and an inclusion approach as a way of dealing with race. This was reflected in the general actions of Ms Haines with her emphasis on the "Canadian way" and by Ms Evans in her response "we're being sensitive to [multiculturalism], yet people aren't excused because of that." The implications of their approach were not obvious. Making race invisible can be a sign of oppression. Cultural assimilation as a result of these practices could been seen as a form of racism by the dominant culture (Birrell, 1990; Rizvi, 1992; Figueroa, 1993). As suggested in the literature, teachers often require more education about multiculturalism and anti racism and how to be sensitive to its presence within the context of schooling practices and teaching goals (Carroll & Hollinshead, 1993; Figueroa, 1993).

There was no indication from the girls of feelings of discrimination or conflict amongst the cultures or between the girls' families and the school. In Orenstein's (1994) project on adolescent girls in high school, the awareness of discrimination increased as education increased. This was accomplished by an absence of awareness of themselves as minorities and their social environment and respect for their differences. The girls in this
study, because of their age may still be unaware of what discrimination means, or may
have been unable to articulate their feelings about it. Certainly more research in this area
is warranted in particular to the changing demographics and global economics.

The liberal clothing policy touched on cultural sensitivity (although not
intentionally). Girls from families of varied religions and backgrounds can be subject to
conflict between what is expected of them at school and what is expected of them at home
and in their religion (Rizvi, 1992). A clothing policy which hinges on safety and not
apparel type avoids this conflict and allows the girls to choose clothing which increases the
likelihood of participation and decreases aspects of negative body image issues which have
been a great and growing concern of girls (Lenskyj, 1988).

C. Conclusions

1. Girls in Physical Activity
How did the girls experience physical activity in their school's planned physical education
program? How did they place value on physical activity?

☐ Overall, the girls' voiced a positive attitude towards their planned physical education
program.

☐ Having fun was particularly important to the girls.

☐ Obstacles to having fun could be attributed to their concern for safety and negative
interactions with boys. These obstacles would jeopardize their ability to have fun and
would influence their choice of activity by avoiding activities associated with risk or
boys.

☐ Having fun during gym class occurred when the activities were gender stereotyped
(e.g. gymnastics, dance, skipping) or thematic (e.g. special holiday themes), because of
their fondness for Ms Haines, when fair play ideals were upheld, and when they chose
their own gym strip.

☐ The girls' ideas about safety and fair play were largely ignored by the literature, yet
their insight about these concerns illuminate the importance of listening to voices.
The girls indicated an interest in sex-segregated physical education classes.

The girls placed varying degrees of value on physical activity ranging from being very important to preferring to just watch.

Each girl had different experiences to offer; each one as valid as the next.

Elements of liberal and radical feminist theories emanated from the girls' voices.

2. Social Context
How did the social context, which situated the girls' experiences, influence the provision of the planned physical education program?

Both Ms Haines and Ms Evans acknowledged and developed programs based on perceptions of the girls' low social economic situations.

No evidence of cultural or racial oppression was felt by the girls, nor acknowledged by the teachers or principal.

The girls mentioned family as a contributing factor to their experiences.

More research considering the links to social class are necessary to provide a more full understanding of the reaches of physical activity beyond the traditional focus of upper and middle classes, not to mention the neglect of gender at all levels.

3. School Culture
How did the physical education teacher, principal, and the two grade four classroom teachers describe their role in the provision of the planned physical education program for girls in their school? How was this reflected in their actions and practices? How did the findings relate to the girls' voices and experiences?

The physical education teacher, for the most part, provided a compatible description of her role with those espoused by the girls'. The girls appreciated her "fun" nature, her "good attitude", her creative curricula activities (e.g. thematic games), and her jellybean reward system. The girls detected a gender bias towards the boys that Ms Haines was not aware of.

The girls' concern about safety and gender relations were not acknowledged to the same degree of importance by any of the teachers or principal.
Ms Evans and Ms Fletcher described roles that were also compatible with the girls' impressions. They both identified the power of role models and the girls were quick to acknowledge their contribution in this manner.

Mr Wong's supportive and encouraging intentions were not noticed by the girls, nor his sensitivity to their gender and cultural backgrounds as potential barriers to their participation.

Although the results indicated discrepancies between the girls' experiences and the school's intentions, the school's commitment to a planned physical education program that was student-centred and context driven reflected elements of an exemplary model. The model was dynamic and with some changes has the potential to have long lasting emancipatory effects on the girls and their subsequent experiences in physical activity and sport.

Marxist and liberal feminism figured prominently in the values of the school culture.

The absence of cultural feminism signifies issues related to cultural assimilation and the silencing of identities.

4. Political Context
How did the political context in which the school was situated influence the operations of the school and provision of the planned physical education program?

Support for the program was demonstrated through espoused beliefs, actions and resource dedication.

Political relations figured prominently in the actions of Ms Evans and her quest to fulfill her mission towards a full-service school. Within this negotiating framework, her goal to equalize social class deficiencies were applied to aspects of the physical education program.

Ms Evans' desire to eliminate resource barriers, increase self-confidence in girls, and provide more life time activities as alternative to traditional fare indicated feminist ideology.

By listening to the girls' voices and situating their experiences within the school culture and the broader social and political contexts, this study contributes on a theoretical, methodological, and practical level.
Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on grade four girls' experiences in a planned physical education program. The linking of experiences and school culture embedded in a broader social context contributed significantly to the interpretation and understanding of the girls' experiences. In general there is a deficit of information in this area, and more studies are recommended. The following points outline recommendations for further research in the area:

1. Each school site presents a unique situation and it would be valuable to conduct a similar study in another school within a similar demographic profile (to build a base of knowledge about low economic social contexts). A rural or private cultural school could prove interesting for comparative discussions. Other variations could include generalist physical education teachers, gender variations, and a more in-depth investigation of the cultural backgrounds of the family or to other places where attitudes are formed (e.g. media, community centre programs).

2. The selection criteria for the in-depth study of the six girls could be further utilized in another study. More work on how the girls' experiences varied by examining particularly physical skill ability and race could provide interesting results. The criteria of articulation ability may also prove interesting if we were to examine how the voices may also be an indication of experience.

3. Girls' lives, experiences, and attitudes change with age and although the grade four girls were reputable research participants, older students within the elementary school context would also contribute to information about their decision making process and the issues that physical activity presents to them. With the onset of puberty, does the Parkside model sustain its appeal to girls?

4. A female centred system such as in this study offers grounds for comparisons on a number of levels. The emergent political context within a school operated by a female principal warrants further investigation. A more in-depth case study would uncover the interrelationships in detail and could involve interviews of the political agents as well to establish a richer picture.

5. Assessment in elementary physical education has only been recently legislated in BC. Assessment was one area not addressed in this study, and the implications of assigning a grade to physical education for girls could be quite interesting. Aspects of interest revolve around how the assessment is implemented and how the girls (and comparatively the boys) respond to the assessment.
Recommendations for Practitioners

One of the main critiques of academic work is the lack of connection or relevance it provides to the practicing agents. One of the goals of this study was to offer this link. The value of having time to conduct research provided the opportunity to listen and ask questions as part of the job knowing that while teaching a class, or running a school, time for reflection and discussion is always limited to units of time and unique daily situations. These recommendations are meant as musings to read and to ponder. Based on the study's findings the following practical recommendations can be offered to anyone planning a physical education or physical activity program for girls:

1. Provide same sex opportunities where girls can learn new skills and participate in activities in a safe, harassment free environment. The girls are telling us that boys, for the most part, interfere with their enjoyment in participating in physical activity. Additionally, girls are underrepresented in organized sport or physical activity outside the school and therefore, may need more time and opportunities to learn the many skills, most boys have access to at an earlier age through other provisions outside the school. Some programs already exist which provide great ideas for sex-segregated programming for girls (Fenton, Kopelow & Viviani, 1994). The need is not only for the girls to be provided a safe environment to learn, but also to teach boys about their role in physical activity and sport and to dismantle some of the myths that drive them to places perhaps, they too, are not that interested in.

2. Provide more information about physiological responses to physical activity in an attempt to counter socially constructed myths and fallacies around girls and physical activity as well as those surrounding masculinity. Provide information on realistic risks and hazards and demonstrate how these are limited by implementation procedures. Pass this information onto parents and guardians. As practitioners, the safety issue and girls experiences with physical activity should not be underrated. Perception is their reality and to overcome this obstacle, safety issues should be discussed and consequences dealt with seriously.

3. Teacher education courses should include learning about the importance of listening to the voices of the clients (or students) in a desire to be market driven and to place experiences within the social and political contexts. Gender, race, and social class must also be included and discussed.
4. Provide deliberate gender education. The use of role models and outside guest speakers may assist in this area. Posters and newsletter items may also help to spread the word beyond the girls' ears since part of the problem lies in early socialization from the family and society as a whole.

5. Provide a variety of sporting activities and opportunities. Challenge the curriculum (e.g. how relevant is basketball year after year)? Society provides male based norms which are continually perpetuated and perceived as the standard. The schools need to dismantle the emphasis on privileged, traditional sport and offer experiences beyond the professional sports which dominate the market and the media in its many forms. Girls need to understand that there is room for them in the arena of physical activity and sport and that their needs and interests are important. Consider cultural and racial diversity. Learn from others and what their interests are.

6. Offer a variety of dance options and expect participation from both girls and boys. This emphasis has been endorsed by the national body, Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance with their recent adoption of Dance to their official name. Their action places a value on dance as a critical element in the curriculum of physical education and in the development of the person.

7. Allow for clothing choices based on principles of safety and movability. Body image is a giant barrier to girls willingly choosing to participate in physical activity. Respect their choices.

8. Consciously evaluate the program and teachers for gender biases, especially with gendered stereotyped activities for both boys and girls, with gendered expectations, sex-role stereotyping, gendered messages, and with assessment. Ensure assessment strategies are broadened beyond skill acquisition. A message about a girl's place in physical activity and sport is clearly presented with letter grades. Question the traditional ways.

9. Provide student driven initiatives, leadership, and fair play. Girls want responsibility and need to know they can be leaders in physical activity and sport. Leaders can be role models. Fair play principles lead to better experiences in sport and improves the potential sport offers as a way to build confident team players in our world.
REFERENCES


I have received and read the attached letter and this consent form. I understand what is required of the participants in the study entitled *Understanding girls' experiences in physical activity in an elementary school context.*

**Parent/Guardian Consent:**
I **DO consent** to having my daughter interviewed.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

I **DO NOT consent** to having my daughter interviewed.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

I **DO consent** to having my daughter's voice tape-recorded.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

I **DO NOT consent** to having my daughter's voice tape-recorded.

Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

**Daughter's Consent:**
I **DO consent** to being interviewed.

Daughter's Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

I **DO consent** to having my voice tape-recorded.

Daughter's First Name (Please Print) ___________________________

*Please return this form by Thursday, November 3rd - Thank you.*
Focus Group Sample Questions:

What does being physically active mean to you?
Do you like being physically active? Why or why not?
What do you think about your physical education classes?
What do you think about your physical education teacher?
What activities do you like the most? What activities do you dislike? Why or why not?
Do you like to do activities in mixed classes or sex-segregated? Why or why not?
What role has physical activity played in your life outside of school? family influence?
Do anyone in your family encourage you to be active? or discourage?
What do you think the school should provide you in terms of physical activity?
Do you foresee being active when you are older? Why or why not?
Do you see a difference in being a girl from being a boy? In what ways?
Do you have family traditions or cultures that affect your activities?
Is there anyone who encourages you to participate in activities?
APPENDIX B

Focus Group Session Guide

I have asked you to join me today to discuss physical activity. I want you to feel comfortable to tell me anything - none of this will be repeated elsewhere. There are NO right answers. I want to hear from everyone and we'll have to remember not to speak when someone else is speaking. I will tape record this session. Before I ask some questions I would like you to introduce yourselves to me - tell me your name, your age and your favourite thing about school. I will then play it back to make sure that the tape machine can pick up your voice. Speak loudly and clearly.

Questions

1. What do you think of when I say the words "physical activity". What other words come to mind? Why?

2. What are some of your favourite activities/sports that you do at school? What do you like about them? What do you dislike? Why?
   What about lunch hour games, after school games, or games against other schools? Who do you like to play with? Why?
   What do you do during recess and lunch hour?
   Probe: boys, friends, teacher, pe teacher, principal, fairness, competition

3. Are girls and women supposed to participate in physical activity and sport? Why or why not?
   Are there sports for just girls/boys? Why or why not? Who told you this - how do you know this? When learning a new sport do you think there is a difference in being a girl from being a boy? Why or why not?


5. Is it important to win in your gym classes? Do some of the kids like to win more than others?
   How do you feel if you do something wrong during the class? Or how do you feel if you are good at something in gym? How does your teacher tell you that you are doing something wrong or that you are doing something well in gym? Do you think your teacher is fair? Why?
   Do you think she is good a physical activity? Why or why not?

6. Why do you think you have to take gym class? Is taking gym important to you? Why or why not?
   If you could plan your own gym classes from now until June what would you do - any changes? Why or why not?
   Are there any sports or activities that you have always wanted to do? Why?

7. Does your principal think gym is important? Why or why not? Does she get involved in some activities in the school? Does she ever come to your gym class to watch? Does your teacher?

8. Do you think that you will always participate in activity - even when you are as old as your parents? Why or why not?
APPENDIX C

Interview Guide for Grade Four Girls
Thank you for joining me. We will be focusing on your physical activity experiences in this school. This will mean talking about your gym class, lunch hour games, recess play, after school activities and what you like or dislike about them. We want to understand what girls your age think about these activities. Please talk clearly so that the tape will pick up your voice.

Personal Background:
1. Where you were born?
2. How long have you been in Canada?
3. What language do you speak at home?
4. How many in your family and who?
5. What your parents/guardians do?
6. What do you live in? House/Apartment/Shared Co-op?
7. How long have you been attending this school?

Physical Activity:
1. What do you think of when I say the words "physical activity". What other words come to mind? Why?
2. What are some of your favourite physical activities/sports that you do at school? What do you like about them? What activities do you dislike? Why?
3. When you are participating in an activity that you like how does it make you feel?
4. Who do you like to play with? Why?
5. What do you do during recess and lunch hour?
6. Are girls and women supposed to participate in physical activity and sport? Why or why not?
7. When learning a new sport do you think there is a difference in being a girl from being a boy? Why or why not?

Gym Class:
1. Do you look forward to gym class? Why or why not?
2. What do you like about your gym classes? Why? What do you dislike? Why?
3. Sometimes you have multicultural games - what are these and do you like them? Are there any games/sports from your country/culture that you know of?
4. What do you know about the Quality Daily Physical Education Program Awards that your school receives? Have you seen the banners in your gym?
5. What do you know about the Premier's Sport Awards Program? Are you familiar with the coloured crests? Do you like this program? Why or why not?
6. How do you feel if you do something wrong during the class? Or how do you feel if you are good at something in gym? How does your teacher tell you that you are doing something wrong or that you are doing something well in gym?
7. Is it important to win in your gym classes? Do some of the kids like to win more than others?
8. Why do you think you have to take gym class? What do you get from it? Is taking gym important to you? Why or why not?
9. If you could plan your own gym classes from now until June what would you do - any changes? Why or why not? What would you add/get rid of? Why or why not?
10. Would you want to have gym with girls only? Why or why not?
11. Do you think that it is hard being a girl sometimes?

Gym Teacher:
1. What do you think about your gym teacher? Do you like her? Why or why not?
2. What does being fair mean? Do you think your teacher is fair? Why or why not?
3. Do you ever help set up the gym or get equipment out? Who does? Do you want to help? Why or why not?
4. Do you like the way your gym teacher teaches? Why or why not? What are some examples of her teaching style? What would you change? What is the perfect gym teacher? Describe him or her?
5. Your gym class has teams. How were these created? Do you like the one you are in? Why or why not? Are you in these teams all year? Which team would you like to be in? Why? If you were able to make the teams how would you do it?
6. Have you participated in any of the team sports for after school teams? Why or why not?
7. Do you ever get hurt during gym class? lunch hour games? How and how much and how do you deal with this - who do you tell and what happens?

Extracurricular activities:
1. Do you participate in lunch hour activities? Why or why not?
2. Is it important to win at the lunch hour games? Why or why not?
3. Do you go with your friends or on your own?
4. What after school activities are offered at your school?
5. Do you participate in after school activities? Which ones? Why or why not? Do you participate on your own/with friends or family? Why or why not?
6. Do you participate on any teams and play other schools? Why or why not? Did anyone encourage/discourage you to play on a team. Do you like this? Why or why not? Would you rather participate in an activity on your own or in a team?
7. Outside the regular classroom activities, what other school activities do you like/dislike? Why or why not?

Social and Cultural Influence:
1. Does your principal think gym is important? Does your class room teacher?
2. What does your family think about sport for you? Do they want you to participate in sport? Is anyone in your family participating in sport or have favourite sports?
3. Is being physically active important to you?
4. Do you think that you will always participate in activity - even when you are as old as your parents or your teachers? Why or why not?
5. Are there any sports or activities that you have always wanted to do and haven't done yet? Why? Why haven't you done them yet?
Interview Questions for Physical Education Teacher

Personal Information:
1. Describe your position and responsibilities.
2. How long have you been in this position and what experiences have you brought to this position?
3. What was your career path/education?
4. What is your favourite part of your job? Why?
5. What is the most difficult part of your job? Why?
6. What are your future plans for your career?
7. What volunteer positions have you taken on? What do they involve?

Organizational Information:
1. In your view, what is the mission of this school? Do you feel that other members of the school agree with this mission?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this school in comparison to others that you are familiar with?
3. Has the operation of the school changed over the time that you have been here? How?
4. How are decisions made? In your view does this system work?
5. Considering the demographics within this community, how does this fit into the organization of this school?

Physical Education Program:
1. Your school is said to operate "a comprehensive physical education program". What does this mean to you? Has your interpretation changed over the years?
2. Are you satisfied with the current resources (human, financial, flexibility, priority) dedicated to your physical education program? Why or why not? Any examples?
3. How do you decide what elements to include in your programs?
4. You are involved in the QDPE Program and the Premier's Sport Awards Program. How do these help you to accomplish your objectives? What do you like about them or dislike about them? Start with QDPE. What are the programs that you are offering this month that would be considered part of the QDPE Program? What sport programs do you usually use the PSAP? Why?
5. How do you evaluate the success of your program? Do you ask for input/feedback from the kids? Does the principal influence your program?
6. What school/school board policies are in place to assist or hinder your physical activity program?
7. Are you satisfied with your school's role in physical activity? Why or why not?
Government Influence
1. How do you interpret the provincial physical education curriculum into your own program?
2. The government is introducing a statement of grades for physical education now. What does this mean to you? How will you implement this? How do you think this will impact on the girls in your class?

Physical Education For Girls:
1. Do you feel that there are differences between boys and girls in physical education re: the type of programming necessary, the instructional style, their attitudes, their capabilities/skills, their cultural backgrounds? Any examples?
2. Do you feel that your program is encouraging girls to participate in and enjoy physical activity? Can you give any examples?
3. Is there anything you do specifically for girls? Why or why not? Do you think they need special attention? Why or why not? Are they on the average as good as the guys? Why or why not?
4. When assessing the pupils, do you get a sense of whether the kids are satisfied with their assessment? Do they ever question you or do their parents/guardians? How do you deal with this?
5. What do you believe the role of physical education is specifically for girls? Is this different for boys? Why or why not?
6. QDPE and PSAP. How do these programs influence the girls' experiences in physical education?
7. Numerous teaching styles can be implemented when teaching some driven by situation and sometimes driven by your nature. How would you describe your teaching style? How do you think your style is interpreted by the kids? by the girls? Why? Any examples?
8. Do you feel you treat the boys differently from the girls? Are your expectations different? Why or why not?

Gender Equity:
1. There is a lot of noise about gender equity in physical education. What is your sense of what gender equity mean in physical education and have you addressed this within your situation? Is gender equity something that the school addresses through policy or other means? Any examples?
2. There is evidence to state that sex-segregated physical education is more beneficial to girls. How would you respond to this? Why?

Documents:
- Yearly program outline, lesson plans, extracurricular activity documentation, QDPE criteria outline
- Collect Consent Form
APPENDIX D

DOCUMENTS REVIEWED


