

UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN  
URBAN HIGH SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON CHOICES OF  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN COLLEGE

by

JEREMY SHANE LACKMAN

(Under the Direction of Jepkorir Rose Chepyator-Thomson)

ABSTRACT

Public education is a rite of passage for youth; it is an avenue to acquire social and educational skills that promote social advancement. Yet some urban schools lack necessary facilities and equipment to allow for adequate learning (Montalvo, 2007). There is evidence that factors such as poverty and violence influence the quality of education that students receive (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993; Wells, Lipton, Hirshberg & Oakes, 1995). Student voice research in education is integral in understanding how to improve educational settings for students (Corbett & Wilson, 2002; Dyson, 2006; Graham, 1995; Pissanos & Allison, 1993). The purpose of this study was firstly to understand first-year college students' reflections on their urban school PE program and secondly to ascertain the impact that high school PE had on their participation in college physical activity. Participants of this study were sixteen college Freshman students enrolled in basic physical education classes in the Fall semester of 2013 who had taken at least one physical education class in an urban school setting during their high school years. Data collection methods included semi-structured, open-ended, qualitative interviews. Constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and thematic content analysis were used in data analysis. Several findings emerged and they include the following: (a) state mandated

courses in physical education, (b) unfavorable teaching conditions that included overcrowded schools and a lack of material resources, (c) teacher characteristics such as a lack of: enthusiasm, teaching, caring, and structure, (d) teacher/coach role conflict, (e) favoritism towards athletic students, and (f) sexism in teaching. Students desired changes for the improvement of urban physical education programs which included: development of a diversified curriculum where non-traditional sports and activities are offered, more in-depth coverage of sports that students care about, and provision of adequate equipment and resources to promote student engagement in physical education. Finally, scholars in teacher training programs need to prepare teachers for the difficult and challenging world of urban schools.

**INDEX WORDS:** Physical education, Urban high school, College, Student experiences, Physical activity, Curriculum

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## DEDICATION

I was told that this page and the acknowledgments (next few pages) are the only pages that are truly mine in my dissertation as the rest has been adjusted and edited by others (namely my committee). Therefore I want to say what I want to say.

I try to live by the quote “live for today, dream for tomorrow, learn from yesterday”. So this is dedicated to all those dreamers out there. This dissertation is also dedicated to everyone I have ever met in my life, believe it or not, you have influenced me in one way or another to make me who I am today, and for that I thank you. I specifically would like to dedicate this to my parents who weren’t given the opportunity to go to college like I was and if it was not for them, I simply would not be here.

People usually dedicate this section to some sort of higher power, but for me, when asked the question “If you don’t believe in a higher power, what do you believe in?” the answer was always “myself”, so I am dedicating this to me, after all, I did the work. Finally I want to end with a quote I came up with. It is “If you were to die tomorrow, it would be sad. But wouldn’t it be sadder if you died not having lived your life the way you wanted.” *by Jeremy Lackman*. So, be yourself and live your life for you, after all, it is your life and no one else’s.

I am not sure who is going to read these 228 pages. The actual dissertation (chapters 1-5 and references and appendices) is 211 pages, with 17 pages at the beginning of title pages, abstract, dedications, etc. If you do decide to read it, curl up in front of a fire, grab a hot cup of cocoa, and snuggle in a blanket and have fun, it will keep your attention and is a page turner, you may finish it in one sitting!!!! I am the new Dan Brown, Stephanie Meyer, J.K. Rowling, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Alexandre Dumas, and William Shakespeare.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Obesity is a worldwide problem. In the last decade, the prevalence of obesity has increased significantly in populations worldwide (Withrow & Alter, 2011). In 2005, the World Health Organization estimated that at least 400 million adults were obese worldwide and projected this number to nearly double by 2015. Although obesity has traditionally been associated with Western, high-income countries, low and middle-income countries are increasingly bearing the burden of these conditions (World Health Organization, 2012).

The United States (U.S.) “has one of the highest rates of obesity compared to other countries throughout the world” (Lee, 2011, p. 215). Indeed, there has been a sharp increase in obesity across all population groups over the past several decades, and about 400,000 deaths each year in the United States is attributed to obesity, making it the second leading cause of preventable death (Lemonick, 2004).

In the U.S. K-12 school population, childhood obesity is a major problem and is considered a national epidemic (Xu, Chepyator-Thomson, & Culp, 2010). In the past 25 years, the prevalence of overweight and at risk children quadrupled, increasing from roughly four to sixteen percent (National Center for Health Statistics, 2004). Overweight children (with a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile) are more likely to become obese adults (Whitaker, Wright, Pepe, Seidel, & Dietz, 1997). Among children ages 8–15, who were overweight or at-risk for overweight (with a BMI at or above the 85th percentile), three-quarters were also overweight or obese as young adults (Field, Cook, & Gillman, 2005). Numerous identified health concerns are linked with childhood obesity such as pediatric hypertension,

asthma, type 2 diabetes, and increased stress on weight bearing joints, impacting obese children negatively (Shaya, Flores, Gbarayor, & Wang, 2008).

Involvement in physical activity is an important part of the prevention of obesity (Bonomi & Westerp, 2012). There is an abundance of research studies that link the effects of physical activity to positive physiological and psychological health outcomes (Kilpatrick, Hebert, & Bartholomew, 2005; Pate et al., 1995). Regular physical activity is linked to reduced risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease (Conroy, Cook, Manson, Buring, & Lee, 2005; Kahn et al., 2002; Pate et al., 1995), Type-II diabetes, depression, osteoporosis, and cancer (American College of Sports Medicine [ACSM], 2006; Kahn et al., 2002), and has been shown to reduce cholesterol and hypertension (US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1996). Further Lucas, Schiller, and Benson (2004) found that physical activity decreases with age and Sallis et al., (1999) found that the most significant declines in physical activity occur between the age range of late adolescence and young adulthood (Calfas, Sallis, Lovato, & Campbell, 1994; Malina, 2001; McKenzie, 2001; Sallis, 2000; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000; Stone, McKenzie, Welk, & Booth, 1998). In fact, the largest drop off rate of regular physical activity occurs immediately after high school (Nader, Bradley, Houts, McRitchie, & O'Brian, 2008; Stephens, Jacobs, & White, 1985; USDHHS, 1996), and college students often experience challenges that minimize their involvement in physical activity, leading to a major decline in physical activity (Grace, 1997).

While physical activity decreases in adolescence, the risk is greater for urban, economically disadvantaged, and minority youth (Dyson, Coviello, DiCesare, & Dyson, 2009). Children from resource limited communities or belonging to racial or ethnic minority backgrounds tend to be most vulnerable for obesity and being overweight in this country

(Gordon-Larsen, McMurray, & Popkin, 2000). Among children ages 6–11, 22 percent of Hispanic children and 20 percent of African American children are overweight compared to just 14 percent of non-Hispanic white children (Ogden, Flegal, Carroll, & Johnson, 2002). Children in some economically disadvantaged families may also face higher risks of being overweight (Ogden et al., 2002). It has been documented that children of immigrants appear to be more vulnerable to being overweight, particularly the children of recently arrived immigrant parents, who tend to weigh more and are at greater risk of being overweight than are the children of natives, with boys being at the greatest risk (Balistreri & Van Hook, 2009). Urban adolescents reported lower engagement in physical activity than suburban and rural adolescents (Springer, Hoelscher, Castrucci, Perez, & Kelder, 2009) and low family income and high neighborhood crime (often urban environments) are associated with decreased physical activity (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2000).

These trends imply a greater need to focus on health and wellness in urban areas of the United States (Ogden, Carroll, Curtin, Lamb, & Flegal, 2010). Regular physical activity through school physical education programs can play an important role in helping reduce childhood obesity. The idea of school based curricular interventions is not a recent occurrence and increasing physical activity has been used to try and combat obesity (Xu et al., 2010). Physical education (PE) is a key component, as it provides a foundation for the promotion of lifelong activity and promotes healthy lifestyle choices (Xu et al., 2010). In fact, “PE classes may be the only opportunity for many adolescents to engage in weekly physical activity” (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2000, p. 88; Graham, 2008). For this study, physical activity was defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that result in an expenditure of energy (Sallis & Owen, 1999; US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2008). Using this definition,

physical education in high school and college inherently involves physical activity, but they are not synonymous. Physical education classes in college and high school involve physical activity, nutrition, health, wellness, sports, and fitness. However, physical education in college differs from physical education in high school. For this study, physical education in high school refers to classes taken that were part of the physical education department or curriculum at each individual high school that students were required to take. Physical education in college refers to a specific PEDB course at the southeastern university that the student self-enrolled in. At the southeastern university, there were two main types of basic PE courses: sports classes and fitness classes. The sports classes were individual and team sports and were considered to be traditional PE, similar to what most students experience in high school. Some examples of sports classes are basketball, volleyball, tennis, softball, etc. The fitness classes were classes that focused on health, nutrition, and physical activity for a lifetime. Some examples include aerobic dance, indoor cycling, and walking.

Educational systems help prepare future citizens and a big part of being a citizen is to engage in a healthy lifestyle, which includes physical activity. Physical activity is part of a healthy lifestyle. Living an active lifestyle has been shown to decrease the risk for becoming obese or overweight, which is a major risk factor for many diseases (Pate et al., 1995; Treuth, Butte, & Sorkin, 2003; Whitaker et al., 1997). If the goal is to increase fitness education and have students be more active, then understanding why students choose to engage or not engage in physical activity and physical education needs to be studied. Two important areas that need to be studied are 1) why certain students choose to engage in physical activity and why some avoid it, and what factors differentiate one group from the other and 2) why students choose to enroll in certain physical education classes and why other students choose different physical education

classes, when given the choice. What students like, want, desire, and need must be understood in order to suggest changes that will have the most positive effect on those students. Previous studies related to this study focused on students' experiences in high school physical education. Students from urban high schools have different experiences than rural and suburban students and usually have lower levels of physical activity (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2000). In line with these previous studies, this study focused on students' physical education experiences in urban high school and how those experiences influenced the students' college physical education and physical activity choices and experiences.

An epistemological framework, a theoretical perspective, and a methodological framework all influenced this study. All will be discussed more in Chapter 3, but to help the reader understand the focus of this study, some information will be provided here. Social constructivism is the epistemological framework that guided this study. Constructivists assume that there is no one universal truth and that the world view and ontological reality are based on the observer and participants (Patton, 2002). Constructivists also believe in multiple realities and that there is no clearly defined reality or truth, but rather, multiple and conflicting interpretations (Schwandt, 1994). Individual's knowledge and meaning are culturally and socially developed (Patton, 2002), and through human interactions, meanings of importance are placed on involvement in sports and physical activities in college. Why a person decides to participate in physical activity is multidimensional (Duda & Tappe, 1989; Gill et al., 1983; Kenyon, 1968; Markland & Hardy, 1993). Thus, the researcher's use of a social constructivist epistemological perspective allowed for the investigation of students' social constructions of knowledge within a specific cultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Patton, 2002). For the purposes of the current study, the examination of students' experiences in high school PE and

its influence on future physical activity and physical education was inherently constructivist in nature. Each student had their own experiences that were separate and unique; there was not one absolute truth. Each student created their own reality, with their own motivations, based off of their previous urban high school PE experiences, for enrolling in a specific PE class and for participating in physical activity in college.

Symbolic interactionism served as the theoretical perspective to guide this study.

Symbolic interactionism is an interpretive tradition that takes human interpretation as the starting point for developing knowledge (Prasad, 2005). Symbolic interactionism is a theory which states that objects and events have no intrinsic meaning apart from the meaning assigned by people while socially interacting (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interactionism is similar to social constructivism in that symbolic interactionism states that all objects, events, and actions hold meanings, but those meanings are different for each individual, based off of their cultural experiences. In addition, the roles people take on and the meanings people associate with social phenomena in society are constantly changing and being modified. For this study, the researcher tried to understand each individual students' experiences in urban high school physical education and how that experience influenced their future choices in regards to physical education and physical activity. Because symbolic interactionism seeks to understand social situations by understanding the participants themselves, it was used as the theoretical perspective to guide the research.

The methodological framework used in this study, or the way the data was analyzed, was by using a constant comparative method, which is a form of grounded theory analysis. Constant comparison method is a method of grounded theory that involves coding to identify categories and then working those categories inductively into themes. The themes developed helped to

answer the research questions and came directly from the data, not from the researcher's pre-conceived notions or from previous theories. The researcher developed a codebook and analyzed the transcriptions of the interviews into categories and themes using memoing and in-vivo coding, all of which are discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Kilpatrick et al. (2005), 50% of all college students have reported a decrease in physical activity following high school graduation and found that physical activity patterns of college students are insufficient to improve health and fitness. In addition, 31% of 18 to 24 year olds reported having no leisure physical activity time (US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2000). Many young adults on college campuses are not meeting current physical activity recommendations and substantial proportions are leading sedentary lifestyles (Behrens & Dinger, 2003). Because health behaviors are still developing in late adolescence and early adulthood, interventions that increase physical activity and improve health awareness and behaviors among high school and college students could have important consequences for preventing serious acute and chronic health problems (US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1995). One form of prevention to slow the effects of these trends listed above is to increase physical activity of college students and K-12 students. The college years are obviously a very important and critical time in people's lives to change their lifestyle, but little is known about what motivates students to increase or decrease their physical activity levels.

Trends show that students from urban high school settings engage in less physical activity than students from suburban and rural areas (Springer et al., 2009). Another trend is that students in college engage in low amounts of physical education and physical activity. This is



particularly important for first-year students, as the famous “Freshman 15” is a common occurrence. These trends can become problems as a sedentary lifestyle can lead to health issues such as obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases (Shaya, Flores, Gbarayor, & Wang, 2008).

It has been found that knowing students’ perspectives has the potential to impact curriculum and instructional processes (Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Pissanos & Allison, 1993). This study aimed to understand students’ motivations to engage in physical activity. From this understanding, the researcher provided suggestions for improving urban high school PE curriculum and teaching styles. These suggested improvements in the curriculum and teaching effectiveness may, in turn, increase students’ physical activity involvement. This provides a benefit to the individual student and society as a whole, by reducing the negative effects of obesity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand first-year college students’ experiences of physical education in urban high school settings and how those experiences affected their decisions to enroll in basic physical activity courses and participate in physical activity at a southeastern university.

### **Research Questions**

Creation of new knowledge is critical to the advancement of the profession and the following questions provided below were used in this dissertation study.

1. What were first-year college students’ experiences of their urban high school physical education program?

2. What critical incidents stood out for students about their urban high school physical education program?
  - a. What do students recollect about the high school PE curriculum? What did they find valuable? What would they prefer eliminated?
  - b. What were students' experiences of the instructional strategies? Which ones stand out as being useful or effective? Which ones were negatively experienced?
3. What kinds of decisions were made in the selection of basic physical education classes?

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in: (a) providing new insights and suggestions to help in the development of high school and college PE course curriculum, (b) generation of new teaching strategies and best practices to improve PE course offerings, and (c) the addition of new content to the literature on student experiences in urban high school physical education environments. Furthermore, this study directly impacts high school and college PE teachers and college teacher preparation programs in generation of new information on different methods and styles of teaching as well as improved curricular choices.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were useful in this project:

*Attitude*- used in both positive and negative situations to express a state of “mind, feeling, or disposition of an individual” (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2002, p. 3). Attitude influences whether an individual begins or continues with certain activities (Silverman & Subramaniam, 1999).

*Basic PE Classes*- used to denote a one credit hour course at the southeastern university offered to undergraduate or graduate students that start with the course heading “PEDB”. These

courses range from team sports like basketball and volleyball to individual sports like golf and swimming to fitness classes like spinning and aerobic dance. All basic PE classes are pass/fail. To graduate, all undergraduates must pass at least one basic PE class or have the credit requirement met by credit from another institution, which must be approved by the registrar's office.

*Constructivism*- an epistemology that assumes learners construct their own knowledge on the basis of interaction with their environment (Crotty, 2003).

*Curriculum*- an educative agency's plan for facilitating learning (Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995).

*Enrolled*- a person listed on the official registrar's roster and instructor's class roll as being registered to take the basic PE class in the current semester.

*Exercise*- physical activity of a repetitive nature that is planned or structured to improve or maintain one or more of the health-related fitness components (USDHHS, 2008).

*First-year*- an undergraduate student enrolled at the university. Also commonly known as a Freshman.

*Motivation*- an internal state or condition (described as a want, need, or desire) that serves to activate, energize, arouse, and influence behavior and give it direction (Franken, 1994; Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981). In this study, motivation is the need, want, or desire that influences a student to enroll in a PE class at the university or to participate in physical activity.

*Physical activity (PA)*- any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that result in an expenditure of energy (Sallis & Owen, 1999; US Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2008). Therefore, using this definition, any student who chooses to

enroll in a basic PE class participates in physical activity to some extent, regardless of the class or teacher.

*Student*- any person currently enrolled in a basic PE class at the university.

*Urban High School*- it refers to a high school (grades 9-12) in a city with greater than 100,000 people (Kozol, 1991, 2005). Participants in this study self-selected themselves as having attended a high school in an urban environment on the survey. Also, during the interviews, participants were asked if they attended high school in an urban setting, and further they were asked to elaborate on their high school environment in terms of location and student demographics.

### **Delimitations**

1. Surveys delimited to southeastern university's undergraduate first-year students who chose to enroll in a basic PE class during the Fall 2013 semester.
2. Interviews delimited to first-year students enrolled in a basic PE class in Fall 2013 who also attended an urban high school and completed at least one PE class in high school.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher assumed that self-reported measures were accurate in regards to the close and open ended survey questions and the responses to the interview questions. Therefore it was assumed that the students responded truthfully to the survey items and interview questions. It was also assumed that the survey questions and interview questions successfully elicited fair representation of the students' experiences in urban high school settings, and their physical activity.

### **Limitations**

This study took place at a specific southeastern university during one semester. The study was short term and location specific and further there were no intentions to generalize information gathered to other colleges or universities or to other college-aged students. Another limitation of the study was that students self-reported themselves as having attended an urban high school. There was no specific definition of urban environment provided or used because they were asked to select from the following: urban, suburban, or rural high school location; therefore the researcher relied on the students' self-categorization to determine their urban high school attendance and thus may not be representative of other urban inner-city students. This study was also limited in that it was only investigating physical education and physical activity experiences of students from urban high school environments by situating PE with the students' broader experiences with physical activity. A methodological limitation was that the participants were only interviewed once; therefore elaboration and follow up questions on specific topics were not possible beyond the one interview. The researcher also did not analyze any other data besides the interviews, so no further analysis was conducted on instruction or student experiences.

### **Subjectivities**

As Maxwell (2005) states, the subjectivity statement's purpose is to "identify those goals and experiences, and the beliefs and emotions that connect to these, that are most relevant to your planned research, and reflect on how these have informed and influenced your research" (pp. 27-28). The researcher was a basic PE instructor of record at the southeastern university being studied for four years, as well as a participant in some basic PE classes. As a public school student and in college, the researcher enjoyed participating in physical education class activities.

The researcher also lived numerous years in urban environments, in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City. The experiences of living and teaching physical education in urban environments framed the data collection in that some of the interview questions were developed from previous experience. Knowing what students and teachers experience in urban physical education and having studied urban physical education research framed part of the interview guide to focus on things central to urban PE like overcrowding, lack of equipment, limited resources like funding or facilities (due to lack of space). However, the researcher used an open-ended interview format, whereby questions could be asked or omitted, where the interviewer could ebb and flow as needed and therefore did not have to follow a regimented interview protocol. The researcher also was not concerned with pre-conceived notions of what urban PE should be like, but rather, was concerned with each of the participants' lived experience. Constant comparison, a grounded theory analysis, which was the methodological framework used in this study, focuses on having the researcher be open to new connections and involves inductive reasoning. The researcher was guided by the data into new areas of understanding and also monitored the data throughout the data analysis and followed up if anything became significant. The data was analyzed inductively from the ground up, therefore the researcher's main goal was to have the participants inform the study and use their own voice in the data analysis, which is integral to social constructivism, symbolic interactionism, and constant comparison method.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter focuses on the review of literature and centers on the following areas: 1) the popular theories and theoretical perspective used to guide this dissertation study, 2) high school physical education curriculum, instruction, and student experiences, 3) urban K-12 physical education curriculum, instruction, and student experiences, 4) student voice research on physical education, 5) physical activity and physical education class choice in college as related to high school physical education, and 6) a summary of the relevant literature surrounding this research study.

#### **Popular Theories of Motivation and Theoretical Perspective**

This section provides a literature review of two popular theories of motivation and the theoretical perspective used to guide this dissertation research. The two theories of motivation are used as background information to understand some theories used in education related to students' exercise and activity choices. They are not used specifically as theories to analyze the data, as the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism serves this purpose. Symbolic interactionism is mentioned in this section to ground the reader to understand the direction of the study. Further information on symbolic interactionism, social constructivism, and constant comparison method of data analysis are discussed in Chapter 3.

#### **Social Cognitive Theory**

From the social cognitive theory perspective, the situations and experiences one encounters affect the psychological states by which one perceives oneself and the world, and how one makes behavioral decisions (Bandura, 1989). In social cognitive theory, it is acknowledged that people interact with their environment and past experiences to make present

and future behavioral decisions (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitive theory works on the assumption that learning and behavior has a triadic relationship with the environment. Based on this perspective, students are neither totally autonomous agents nor mechanical respondents to environmental influences. The person's actions, environmental events, and personal factors are reciprocal forces which affect behavior (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitive theory revolves around the process of knowledge acquisition or learning directly correlated to the observation of models. The models can be those of an interpersonal nature or come from an outside source such as the media. Past experiences and self-perceptions influence the type of behavior that will occur, students' choice of environment, and how they act in their environment. It is the students' capacity to manipulate their environment and engage in reflective thought that allows them to generate new ideas and interactions built on past experiences. This capacity also allows students to avoid certain experiences.

Social cognitive theory states that an individual's knowledge acquisition can be directly related to observing others within the context of social interactions, experiences, and outside media influences (Bandura, 1989). People learn by observing others and the environment, while behavior and cognition are factors that influence development. Each behavior that a person witnesses can change a person's way of thinking or cognition (Bandura, 1989). Vicarious learning, or the process of learning from other people's behavior, is a central idea of social cognitive theory. This idea states that individuals can witness observed behaviors of others and then reproduce the same actions. As a result of this, individuals refrain from making mistakes and can perform behaviors better if they see individuals complete them successfully.

**Social cognitive theory and education.** Social cognitive theory provides foundations that allow for interventions to be designed in classrooms to improve student's learning. In



education, teachers are the model in a child's learning acquisition. Teachers model both material objectives and the hidden curriculum. Teachers should also be dedicated to the building of high self-efficacy levels in their students by recognizing their accomplishments. Further development in social cognitive theory posits that learning will most likely occur if there is a close identification between the observer and the model and if the observer also has a good deal of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs function as an important set of determinants of human motivation, affect, and action which operate on action through motivational, cognitive, and affective intervening processes (Bandura, 1989).

In order for optimal learning to take place, the teacher should use the five core concepts of social cognitive theory: modeling the behavior, outcome expectations, perceived self-efficacy, goal setting, and self-regulation.

***Modeling the behavior.*** One of the core concepts of the social cognitive theory is that learning occurs through observation. Teachers, peers, and parents can act as models for students to observe and learn behavior. Verbal and written behavior can act as indirect forms of modeling. Modeling not only allows students to learn behavior that they should repeat but also to inhibit certain behaviors.

***Outcome expectations.*** In order to learn a particular behavior, people need to understand what the potential outcome will be when they repeat that behavior. In the case of a student, the instructions provided by the teacher, will help the students see what outcome a particular behavior will lead to. It is the duty of the teacher to teach a student that when a behavior is successfully learned, the outcomes will be meaningful and worthy to the students. Outcome expectations are important in social cognitive theory because they shape the decisions people

make about and what actions to take and which behaviors to suppress. Whether a particular behavior gets rewarded or punished will lead to the behavior being repeated or not.

***Perceived self-efficacy.*** Self-efficacy reflects the belief of an individual about themselves whether they have mastered a particular task or not. Students will become more effortful, active, will pay attention, and will become effective learners when they perceive that they have mastered a particular task. It is the duty of the teacher to provide feedback and to understand a student's level of proficiency. Teachers should ensure that the students have the knowledge and strategies that are needed to be successful at completing the tasks.

***Goal setting.*** This is another core concept in the social cognitive theory. Goals reflect cognitive representations of future desired outcomes. According to social cognitive theory, teachers can provide helpful instructions and the students can form effective goals which can lead to better learning.

***Self regulation.*** Self-regulated learning is the idea that a student can take control and evaluate his/her own learning. This is dependent on goal setting, in that students are thought to manage their thoughts and actions in order to reach particular outcomes (Bandura, 1989). The skills needed to manage one's behavior, as well as the beliefs and attitudes that serve to motivate self-regulation, can be obtained through modeling. Teachers need to make sure they teach the students how to self-evaluate themselves and manage their progress over time.

**Social cognitive theory as it relates to physical education.** Social cognitive theory also has been applied extensively to understanding classroom motivation, learning, and achievement and has been used in athletics and physical activity improvement. Accordingly, from social cognitive theory perspective, students' experiences in high school PE class influence how students respond to PE classes in the future (for instance, in college). The child who had

positive, successful PE experiences in previous PE classes will likely have the confidence to continue PE and will likely choose to lead a healthy lifestyle, engaging in higher levels of physical activity later in college. Hellison (1985) recognized perceived success of activity experiences as the most important factor in motivating students to increase their activity involvement. Therefore, for this study, social cognitive theory was used as a guide to find out what students liked and disliked about their urban high school PE experiences and how that affected their college physical education class choice and physical activity experiences.

### **Self-Determination Theory**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a framework for the study of motives for physical activity. Deci and Ryan (1985) developed SDT to examine how different types of motivation lead to varying degrees of self-determination. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation helps distinguish individual self-determination (Carron et al., 2003; Vallerand & Losier, 1999) and one key term in self-determination theory is amotivation, which is the absence of motivation for an activity. Another term is intrinsic motivation, which is the motivation to do an activity for its own sake or for the pleasure it provides. These can be seen as being along a continuum, with amotivation and intrinsic motivation on opposite ends of the spectrum. Levels of extrinsic motivation fall between these extremes. As individuals move along the continuum toward higher levels of self-determination and intrinsic motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) identified three important psychological needs that facilitate more internalized forms of self-determination (Biddle, 1999; Carron et al., 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). These needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. An individual's motivational state, wherever it lies along the continuum between amotivation and intrinsic motivation, can be described by the extent to which these needs are met (Kilpatrick, Hebert, & Jacobsen, 2002).

**Intrinsic motivation.** Intrinsic motivation is the highest level of self-determination. To be intrinsically motivated one must deem the activity as being enjoyable or interesting (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand & Losier, 1999). Enjoyment is the primary intrinsic reason that students give for participating in physical activity (Blankenship, 2008). Individuals who exercise for the enjoyment of the activity are those who are intrinsically motivated, therefore individuals who enroll in PE classes or participate in physical activity for the enjoyment could be seen as being intrinsically motivated. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated to exercise or those who are motivated to enroll in PE classes do not do so to achieve an outcome, rather they engage in physical activity and classes as an end in itself.

**Autonomy.** Autonomy is the independence to choose for oneself what behavior or activity in which to engage (Levesque, Stanek, Zuehike, & Ryan, 2004). Individuals need to feel as if they are in control and not being controlled. Autonomous actions are more flexible and allow individuals to be more creative in their exercise programs than do controlled actions. Autonomous exercise motives are the reasons that individuals engage in higher levels of physical activity (Ingledeu, Markland, & Medley, 1998; Mullan & Markland, 1997; Wilson, Rodgers, Fraser, & Murray, 2004). Therefore, SDT was used to help explain college aged students self-enrolling in PE courses for reasons other than they were required to take it to graduate. It was also used to help explain why students participated in physical activity on their own outside of class. SDT was not used to help explain anything that had to do with high school students who were required to take a PE class.

**Competence and relatedness.** While competence is the belief that one is capable of producing a desired outcome (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000), relatedness refers to how close one feels to others. Individuals must perceive their activities from a self-determined (i.e.

autonomous) point of view for perceived competence to be influenced and motivation to be internalized. Relatedness is characterized as a bi-directional construct, encompassing not only being cared for, but also caring for others. Ryan and Deci (2000) describe the components of relatedness as the quality of relationships with others, feeling understood, participating in meaningful dialogue, and having fun with others. Markland (1999) argues that it is important to create self-determining conditions for exercise classes that include autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

**Extrinsic motivation.** Many individuals who exercise do so for extrinsic reasons. Those who are extrinsically motivated perform the activity and enroll in the class or participate in physical activity for some benefit they will receive or to avoid negative consequences (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vlachopoulos et al., 2000). At varying levels of extrinsic motivation, the degree of internalization increases as one moves along the continuum toward intrinsic motivation (Landry & Solmon, 2002). Extrinsic motivation helps to explain the reasons people participate voluntarily in exercise without ever seeming to enjoy the activity (Wilson & Rodgers, 2002). Extrinsic motivation is multidimensional in nature, as it has been categorized into four levels of regulation: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation.

***External regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation.*** External regulation is at the lower end of the continuum closest to amotivation. At this level of regulation, motivation is solely due to rewards or avoidance of punishment. At the next level, introjected motivation, the action is more internalized, but is still linked to external reasons. The activity is beginning to take on value, but individuals engage out of guilt or obligation rather than choice (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Identified regulation occurs when

individuals freely choose to participate in an activity or enroll in class because they begin to value it and feel that it is important. Individuals who fall in this category, exercise and enroll because they value the benefits of exercise and the class. At this level, the individual is moving closer to becoming more self-determined and is approaching an autonomous level (Biddle, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The highest form of extrinsic motivation, the one closest to intrinsic motivation, is integrated regulation. The two are very similar, but individuals who are motivated at a level of integrated regulation do not exercise or take PE classes for the sake of the activity and class itself, but instead, regulate their behavior to achieve some outcome, such as to improve or maintain fitness. This continuum demonstrates how an individual can feel quite self-determined in his/her regulation of exercise but yet be extrinsically motivated to perform the exercise or enroll in classes for reasons such as improving appearance, maintaining fitness, or losing weight (Mullan & Markland, 1997).

**Motivation for physical activity as it relates to self-determination theory.** Self-determination theory can be utilized to help understand why students engage in physical activity and why they enroll in PE classes. It can also be used to determine if students intend to exercise in the future. To understand, one must identify the type of motivation the student possesses that will influence the activities selected, the effort and adherence portrayed, and the effects of the experience (Carron et al., 2003). However, a person's motives for physical activity are also important. The most common motives for participating in physical activity are to improve or maintain health, improve physical appearance, experience enjoyment, enjoy a social experience, and obtain psychological benefits (Ryan, Fredrick, Lepas, Rubio, & Sheldon, 1997). Adherence to motives that are extrinsically motivated (i.e. improving physical appearance) may not be as enduring as those that are intrinsic (i.e. enjoyment, social, and psychological) (Ryan et al., 1997).

The individual's perception of autonomy is a determining factor. If the individual perceives that he/she lacks control and free choice, then the likelihood of adherence decreases. When a person feels competent in their sports skills, then they have a sense of self-control or input into activities; they see that activities are relevant to their lives and feel motivated to be active or want to participate in physical activity.

Several studies have used self-determination theory as a framework to investigate the physical activity behaviors of college students (Levesque et al., 2004; Maltby & Day, 2001; Wilson et al., 2004; Wilson & Rodgers, 2002). Wilson et al. (2004) found that exercise regulations discriminated between motivational consequences among college men and women, with women having stronger introjected regulations than men. However, identified regulation was found to be the most important predictor of exercise in both sexes.

In a cross-cultural study, Levesque et al. (2004) investigated the role of autonomy and competence in university students from Germany and the United States. The measures of autonomy and competence, as well as motivational causes were found to be applicable across cultures. Positive informational feedback and lower perceived pressure were positively related to perceived autonomy and competence.

College aged women have also been studied in exercise research using self-determination theory. Wilson and Rodgers (2002) studied the relationship between autonomous exercise motives and physical self-esteem in collegiate female exercise participants. Females who were higher in identified regulation and/or intrinsically motivated reported higher levels of self-esteem, whereas those females who exercised for extrinsic reasons reported lower levels of self-esteem. There was also a positive relationship between autonomous exercise motives and self-esteem. Women who valued the important health outcomes of exercise or those who found

exercising to be self-rewarding and fun were likely to have higher self-esteem. Similar findings were reported by Maltby and Day (2001) when they surveyed male and female undergraduate students. They found that extrinsic exercise motives were significantly related to poorer psychological well-being, whereas, intrinsic motives were accompanied by higher levels of psychological well-being.

Maltby and Day (2001) argue that exercise motives and psychological well-being interact, leading to a reinforcement of positive feelings that causes exercise to become more rewarding, thus more internalized. The goal is for individuals to progress through the continuum of motivation until their motives become internalized, which is crucial for adherence to continued physical activity. As students move towards the intrinsic side of the continuum, they are likely going to enroll in PE classes and participate in physical activity for the benefits they believe they attain from those activities such as enjoyment. These intrinsic motives result in students' higher self-esteem and higher levels of psychological well-being. Individuals' motives for exercise do change over time from extrinsic to more intrinsic motives (Maltby & Day, 2001).

### **Symbolic Interactionism**

The previous popular theories on motivation serve as examples of theories used in education to explain students' reasons for actions, but come from the sociological movement of symbolic interactionism. The determination and labeling theories like SDT and social cognitive theory mentioned above were provided for a basis of understanding but were not the theories used to guide the study, nor the theories used to analyze the data. For this study, symbolic interactionism was used as the theoretical perspective. In the following paragraphs, symbolic interactionism will be discussed in further detail.



Symbolic interactionism is an interpretive tradition often used in research. As Prasad (2005) states, “Interpretive traditions emerge from a scholarly position that takes human interpretation as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world” (p. 13). All interpretive traditions believe that our worlds are socially created and also that constructions are only possible based on people’s abilities to attach meanings to events, objects and interactions. It is the goal of all interpretive traditions to understand the common constructions that humans share (Prasad, 2005).

Symbolic interactionism owes its popularity to Herbert Blumer and his seminal 1969 work which translated complex ideas into simpler terms that social researchers could use. Herbert Blumer was an American sociologist who gave symbolic interactionism its name (Prasad, 2005). Blumer (1969) believed that objects and events have no meaning apart from those meanings assigned by individuals during social interaction. The focus on meaning and interaction is the term symbolic interaction itself (Prasad, 2005). Blumer’s (1969) three fundamental assumptions of symbolic interactionism are: 1) human beings act toward objects on the basis of the meanings that the objects hold for them, 2) the meaning of the objects arises out of the social interactions a person has in larger society, and 3) the meanings are not completely predetermined and are constantly being changed through an individual’s interpretations (Prasad, 2005, p. 21).

Symbolic interactionism states that all social phenomena are symbolic and that objects, actions and events hold different meanings for different people (Prasad, 2005). Individuals exist in varying environments, resulting in acquisition of different lived experiences. Another central concept of symbolic interactionism is the idea of roles that people create and play a part in. A person’s self-image influences the process by which they assign meaning to events and objects.

A role refers to the socially defined expectations of behavior for individuals in particular social situations (Colton, 1987). These roles in turn affect future decisions and constructions of realities (Blumer, 1969; Prasad, 2005). The roles and the meanings of roles also constantly change and different social situations require different roles (Prasad, 2005). In this study, the roles the participants were that of first semester, first year students in a southeastern university reflecting back on their urban high school experiences in PE. Their role identity had likely changed from what it was in high school and will likely constantly change through their college career as they age. Their role, as that of recently graduated high school students, was important to the study because the researcher wanted to have students reflect back on their previous high school PE experiences; a central aspect of the study was having students be in the role of student, and not in the role of brother, daughter, friend, or employee. Therefore, all participants were obtained at a university in an existing PE class and interviewed in an office at the university about their experiences in their urban PE school program. All of this lead the researcher to assume that the role the participants were displaying at the time of the interview was that of student.

Another important concept of symbolic interactionism is negotiated orders. Negotiated orders is how social reality is reached, the realities of people are adjusted into something that all individuals can agree upon. The important aspect of negotiation is the fact that it is socially constructed through interaction (Prasad, 2005). For instance, the concept of a school system is socially constructed and is negotiated in an on-going basis in everyday situations. It is not fixed, but rather, fluid and is amenable to change (Prasad, 2005). In this study, the concept of PE within the school system was socially constructed by the parents, the teachers, the school's funding, the principals, the school board, the students, and the location of the school within a

certain city setting. Therefore, it is a held belief of the researcher that PE can be changed and improvements can be made to the teaching strategies and curricular offerings.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, self-determination theory states that in regards to motivation and autonomy, people who have input or choices regarding their activities and goals are more vested in the time, energy, and effort spent working to accomplish their goals. Conversely, when goals are externally controlled, people lack commitment and are more likely to withdraw or to expend less energy in the activities.

Motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is a key aspect to physical activity adherence (Kilpatrick et al., 2005; Lox, Martin Ginis, & Petruzzello, 2006; Thurston & Green, 2004). Competition, affiliation, enjoyment, appearance, and challenge are various motivators that play a significant role in the maintenance of exercise behavior among young adults; thus, research shows that students are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Students are also motivated by the inherent pleasure of participating as well as outside factors like achieving a goal (Lox et al., 2006).

Everyone has different motives in regards to participating in physical activity (Duda & Tappe, 1989; Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Kenyon, 1968; Markland & Hardy, 1993) and therefore people have different goals when thinking about enrolling in a PE class in college or when deciding to participate in physical activity. Studies have shown that people's motives for participating in exercise and choosing to enroll in PE classes may comprise social, physical, cognitive, psychological, competitive, or recreational reasons. These reasons vary based on gender (Cunningham, 1971; Finkenber, 1991; Gill et al., 1983), exercise form (Frederick & Ryan, 1993), and age (Gill & Overdorf, 1994; Koslow, 1988). There is evidence that more self-

determined individuals are more likely to be active on a regular basis, but there has been limited research on the motivations of college students to be physically active and no research on the extent to which urban high school PE experiences influenced college activity class choice. Due to the fact that the college years are such a critical period of time, more research is needed in this area.

### **High School Physical Education**

This section will focus on high school physical education specifically, including research on student experiences, curriculum, and instructional strategies in all schools (urban, suburban, and rural). The next section following this section focuses specifically on urban schools and urban physical education.

#### **Student Experiences**

This section will look at students' experiences in their high school PE class. Some studies have interviewed and surveyed students while they are currently in high school PE classes, while other studies have interviewed college students and asked them about their previous high school PE experiences, in other words, they were asked to reflect back on their previous experiences. Both types of studies offer valuable information about student experiences in PE class in high school. The major findings are: 1) there exists social stratification in PE, 2) students' participation decreases as they become older and that students' abilities in PE play a role in their experiences, and 3) that the students' prior experiences in PE play a critical role in understanding physical activity levels of students later in life.

**Social stratification.** Chepyator-Thomson (1990) interviewed students in secondary school physical education in a Midwestern school and found that students' relationships reflected individual relationships in the American society at large. The fabric of students' lives was

interwoven with experience inside and outside physical education classes. Students' racial backgrounds played a major role in their identity formations and the students separated themselves by racial backgrounds in the selection of physical education classes and the patterns of participation and interaction. In addition, students' divisions by class were embedded in clique formations which were in turn related to the visible material possessions of students and to the neighborhoods in which they lived.

**Participation and student ability.** Student participation in PE is much more involved in the early years and diminishes as time progresses. Students tend to participate most in PE courses during elementary school, fewer in middle and high school, and almost none in college (Chepyator-Thomson, Russell, & Culp, 2007). Increasingly with age, students become less involved in physical education class.

Student abilities, such as their skill level and what they can and cannot do, become important determining factors in their physical education participation. Research has shown that low-skilled students experience physical education differently from high-skilled students (Silverman, 1993; Silverman, 2005). If students feel they cannot complete the required tasks in physical education, or if they feel they will be made fun of for their inability to get involved in physical activities, they often disengage from physical education and physical activity (Sykes, 1997; Van Daalen, 2005). Student ability influences student experiences (Sykes, 1997). In Syke's (1997) study, low-skilled students believed they were at an even greater disadvantage and many students felt disenfranchised. Many low-skilled students will avoid participating in PE due to their lack of skill (Montalvo, 2007). Low skilled students are often the students that need PE the most, yet they receive little instruction and rarely improve. Research has suggested that

when low-skilled students experience success in PE, their perceptions of PE may improve (Carlson, 1995).

Changes need to occur in teaching strategies and the curriculum to further assist students who feel “left out” of physical education. In addition, teachers need to encourage students who are less skilled by focusing their attention on individualized goal setting and individualized instruction.

**Attitudinal differences in student participation.** Students’ experiences in high school physical education can be positive and negative. While a negative experience in high school PE can cause a student to discontinue PE and not participate in physical activity, a positive PE experience can cause a student to enroll in PE classes in college and can lead to healthy exercise, nutrition, and physical activity habits. Research has indicated that attitude may influence youth’s future participation in physical activity (Carlson, 1995; Silverman & Subramaniam, 1999). Furthermore, students’ beliefs about high school physical education tend to critically influence student selection of physical education activities and behavior in physical activity.

**Negative experiences.** Qualitative research inquiry can be used to understand students’ experiences in high school PE classes. Carlson (1995) surveyed and interviewed high school students who disengaged from PE class and found that the reasons for not enjoying PE were due to: lack of control, isolation, and lack of personal meaning. Student disengagement varied by gender. Kimball, Jenkins, and Wallhead (2009) found males to overwhelm or intimidate females in high school physical education, which resulted in negative feelings about physical activity. Females stated that their current level of physical activity was influenced by how little they learned and the lack of comfort they experienced during high school physical education. Student participation that encompassed forced competition, degrading evaluation, and sexual harassment

from peers and teachers caused female students to choose not to continue with their physical education past grade nine (Van Daalen, 1995). Trout and Graber's (2009) study indicated obese high school students avoided participation because they were traumatized to the extent of exhibiting symptoms consistent with learned helplessness. These participants demonstrated greater concern about being seen during physical education than they did about their performance, which suggests they might engage in physical activity if they were allowed to participate in physical education away from the view of their peers. Research has also shown that students who exhibit unfavorable feelings toward physical education may refrain from engaging in physical activity outside of school (Carlson, 1995; Ennis, 1996; Portman, 1995; Robinson, 1990).

***Positive experiences.*** The majority of students tend to have positive attitudes toward physical education, with 80% of students indicating that they enjoy the subject (Butcher, 1982; Carlson, 1993, 1994; Coe, 1984; Rice, 1988; Williams & Nelson, 1983). Correlation tests revealed that the majority of students who indicated they enjoyed physical education were more likely to enjoy school as well (Bibik, Goodwin, & Omega-Smith, 2007). Many of the students also pointed out that physical education was important to their high school education, rating it just after math, English, and science. Corbin (2002) stated that when students have fun with physical activity, it increases the likelihood of it continuing, which in turn leads to positive attitudes towards lifelong physical activity. About half of the students would enjoy having more sports or games in their physical education curriculum, meaning they were asking for more physical education (Bibik et al., 2007).

**Conclusion.** The experiences of students in high school PE varies, as each person is an individual and has their own unique experiences and life. Overall, most students enjoy PE, and

those students often have positive experiences later in life in regards to physical activity and often lead healthy and active lifestyles. Sometimes there are students that do not have positive experiences in high school PE and experience degradation and humiliation by peers and sometimes teachers. These students are not likely to enroll in PE classes if they have a choice, whether it is in high school or college, and often exhibit actions that are unhealthy. To combat this problem, the curriculum and teaching methods should be changed to maximize the possibility that all students will enjoy PE, thereby laying a solid foundation for that student later in life to lead a physically active and healthy lifestyle. The next two sections discuss curriculum and instructional strategies for high school physical education.

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum has a variety of definitions, theories, and approaches (Apple, 1995). Scholars often differ on the use of the term curriculum (Jewett et al., 1995). Curriculum can be a subject that the student studies, the complete educational experience of the student, the process of learning and praxis, the product of education, or an arrangement based plan for training students (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997; Grundy, 1989). Curriculum could consist of the entire phenomenon that takes place within the school walls, indicating various components. Curriculum influences student experiences (Sykes, 1997). Curriculum is used as a broad generic term, which includes instruction. The components of curriculum include teaching, learning, assessment, and the hidden curriculum. Curriculum is often divided into units and these can be seen as a specific group of lessons that are part of the overall curriculum.

**Physical education curriculum.** Curriculum is either state-based or it is left to the individual district, county, region, or city. Part of many schools' curricula is a physical education program. These physical education programs are influenced by many different parties. An



example of this is national groups such as the National Association of Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), which has developed physical education curricula standards for many states. An essential part of any curriculum is the set of standards and objectives that are associated with the subject. An important aspect of designing and implementing curriculum is curricular knowledge. Curricular knowledge is defined as the ability to select and convey content-appropriate topics to the learner (Ennis, 1994).

***Sports focused curriculum.*** Most physical educators prefer the multi-activity curriculum model. This model introduces students to a variety of sports for a limited time then is followed by competitive games (Montalvo, 2007). Some less-skilled students are relegated as a bystander while the more skilled students play. Students often develop negative attitudes towards PE and may choose not to participate in this popular curriculum (Montalvo, 2007). Research has shown that experienced teachers do not have a 'concrete' curricula model that they follow (Dodd, 1994); instead they use different curricula models when they are teaching different types of learners. This means that they normally implement a student-centered curriculum. On the opposite end of the spectrum, inexperienced educators adhere stringently to their curricula for all learners.

***Non-traditional curriculum.*** The goal of any physical educator should be to teach and modify what is being taught to help each individual learner and also the class as a whole. Research has shown that curriculum that focuses on competitive sports and activities, can contribute to negative student attitudes towards PE (Carlson, 1995; Ennis, 1996; Portman, 1995, Robinson, 1990) and curriculum that emphasizes the same activities year after year with little or no change results in negative student attitude (Carlson, 1995; Graham, Holt-Hale, & Parker, 1998). Focus on changing the curriculum to include non-traditional sports can also level the playing field and can allow less skilled students to feel better about their lack of abilities. Ennis

(1994) stated “teachers need to transform curricula to grow out of students’ identity rather than pressuring the students to conform to the specifications of a rigid curriculum” (p. 4). Other changes are to design PE programs that increase student attitude toward PE and create programs that students can enjoy that are tailored to their skill levels.

### **Instructional Strategies**

Physical education teachers play an integral role in shaping the future of students’ physical activity levels and future physical education class choice(s). Research has demonstrated the profound influence that teachers can have on the outcomes of students from many different academic and social backgrounds (Montalvo, 2007). Teaching strategies influence student experiences (Sykes, 1997). Teacher quality and teacher behavior has been found to be an important predictor of student achievement in lots of subject areas (Steinberg, Cushman, & Riordan, 1999). In regards to physical education, Luke and Sinclair (1991) indicated that the physical education teacher is a more powerful determinant of negative attitudes than positive attitudes. This section will review teacher behavior, planning, and lesson presentation as it relates to high school physical education.

**Teacher behavior.** Teacher behavior is a key component in student attitudes towards physical education (Luke & Sinclair, 1991). Studies have shown that how the student feels about the teacher is linked to positive attitudes towards physical education (Carlson, 1995; Sanders & Graham, 1995; Solmon & Carter, 1995). Teachers should not be apathetic toward their students’ behaviors and should not putdown students. Putdowns and insults influence student attitudes towards PE (Montalvo, 2007). Sometimes the putdowns are based on race, gender, sexist and elitist views (Bain, 1990; Dodds, 1993; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; Kirk, 1992). The hidden curriculum, or messages relative to social values that the teacher intentionally or unintentionally

communicates, often reflect negative views that teachers have in regards to students. Sometimes teachers will not pressure students to acquire skills in exchange for compliant behavior. This is known as the “I don’t bother you, you don’t bother me” mentality prevalent in some schools (Montalvo, 2007). This leads to little learning and students often disengage from physical education and physical activity. In Syke’s (1997) study, participants indicated that little teaching was occurring. Keeping students “busy, happy, and good” (Placek, 1983, p. 48) is paramount for teachers, while student learning takes a back seat. Teacher educator programs should highlight training that assists teachers in viewing students more positively and seeing students as unique individuals with differing backgrounds, levels of knowledge, and experiences (Montalvo, 2007).

**Teacher planning.** Research has shown that when teachers plan, their planning is influenced by student behavior (Mustain, 1990). If a teacher plans an activity and the students perceive it an un-enjoyable, negative student attitude can result. This negative student attitude can deter the teacher from planning future lessons. If teachers perceive student behavior as bad, their planning can suffer and become non-existent. Therefore, teachers need to focus on planning their lessons to foster student enjoyment (Montalvo, 2007).

In high school PE settings, often there is little teacher planning and therefore, limited student learning. There is little pressure on students to meet challenges or exert much effort (Rog, 1987). Placek (1983) examined teacher planning in PE at the high school level and found that teachers placed more emphasis on the act of teaching than on student learning.

**Lesson presentation.** Teachers must also develop appropriate practice exercises that are not too hard or too easy. Teachers need to employ strategies that will support positive practice trials and reduce the amount of inappropriate practice trials (Silverman, 1993, Silverman,

Kulinna, & Crull, 1995). Teachers must reduce the complexity of tasks for lower skilled students and as the skill for these students increases, tasks should become more complex.

Teachers must also describe the skill to be taught logically in step-by-step progressions, provide brief explanations and full demonstrations, then the students must practice the task (Rink, 2002).

Teachers must also hold students accountable for correctly performing skills as it reduces off-task behavior (Lund, 1992). Holding students accountable indicates to the student that the teacher is aware of their efforts and can help improve student performance (Montalvo, 2007).

Unfortunately some PE teachers in secondary schools do not effectively teach the subject matter, and simply allow students to participate in poorly supervised games and activities with no specific educational purpose and no task presentation. This often leads students to achieve less and have negative attitudes towards physical education.

### **Urban Schools and K-12 Urban Physical Education**

This section focuses specifically on the research on urban schools as compared to suburban or rural schools and the unique experiences that occur in urban environments focusing on urban physical education at all grade levels.

#### **Urban Schools**

**Adverse conditions.** Reports on the condition of urban schools conducted over the past decade indicate that students and teachers in urban schools have greater challenges than suburban schools. On average, urban schools have larger enrollment than suburban schools (Montalvo, 2007). Urban schools are more likely to serve low income students (McQuillan, 1998). There is evidence that factors such as poverty and violence influence the quality of the educational environment (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993; Wells, Lipton, Hirshberg, & Oakes, 1995). Students in urban schools have lower achievement scores (writing, math, science, and

reading) than students in suburban schools (Anyon, 1997). In three out of four Chicago schools, half of the students read below grade level and in Philadelphia, 65% of students were below the basic level in reading and 85% were below the basic level for math (Wolk, 1998). Students in urban schools have a greater likelihood of: being absent from school, encountering violence, engaging more often in classroom misconduct, and experimenting with drugs at an early age (Brookins, Peterson & Brooks, 1997; Johnson, 1997; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). Factors such as poor nutrition, unhealthy behaviors, lack of medical care, and substandard living conditions are more common among urban than suburban students (New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2004). Many schools in urban settings are in need of repair, with cracks from overuse and overcrowding (Montalvo, 2007). Students can interpret the disrepair of schools as negligence and can lead to apathy which can affect student learning (Montalvo, 2007).

**Student diversity.** Teachers in urban schools are faced with a wide range of diversity among students, with prominent differences being racial, cultural, economic, and academic differences (Griffin, 1985). These issues coupled with teaching students of differing ethnic backgrounds, learners for whom English is not their first language, and in physical environments that lack space and equipment often results in a complex and daunting learning environment (Griffin, 1985; Kulinna, McCaughtry, Cothran, & Martin, 2006). Research results have indicated that urban students encounter a less than positive educational environment and that teaching is a more difficult task for urban teachers (Purkey & Rutter, 1987). Furthermore, teachers in urban schools are more likely to be more inexperienced than their suburban counterparts (Prince, 2002). Teachers in urban schools tend to be the least prepared and urban schools have the largest number of new, inexperienced teachers (Montalvo, 2007). New York City has the state's highest percentages of uncertified teachers and teacher turnover (Montalvo,

2007). Teachers in urban schools become less interested and motivated to reach students as they can perceive students as un-teachable. Due to this, teachers often lower their expectations of their teaching (Ennis, 1994). However, there is a bright side, many urban educators are great teachers, reaching out to students and creating order from chaos. To create an effective learning environment, urban teachers were found to use redirection, humor, and knowing the students behaviors (Dodd, 1995; Duke & Henninger, 2002). It is important for teacher preparation programs in urban environments to encourage teachers to add elements of humor, redirection and understanding students' behaviors into every lesson, and one way to do so is to research innovative physical education curricula.

### **Urban Physical Education**

While urban general education research has provided us with useful information concerning urban schools and students, physical education in urban settings has also been investigated. Teaching physical education in an urban setting presents many challenges for teachers often compounded by issues such as poverty, neglect and discord (Ennis, 1995; Ennis et al., 1997). Many urban schools do not possess adequate facilities and classes are conducted in cafeterias, hallways and classrooms (Montalvo, 2007) and often urban students experience overcrowding and a lack of equipment. The following sections discuss students' experiences, curriculum, and instructional strategies in regards to K-12 urban physical education.

**Students' experiences in K-12 urban physical education.** One seminal work was conducted by Ennis et al. (1997). The researchers interviewed 51 students at five urban high schools about their experiences in physical education. Ennis et al. (1997) noted that effective teaching in urban schools requires a greater understanding of the students and the situational and personal contexts of urban schools. "Studies of curriculum-in-context...may provide the

foundation for creating new, more meaningful forms of physical education curriculum that are more relevant for students and teachers within the complex, demanding environments in urban schools” (Ennis et al., 1997, p.54). The following are themes found in the research in regards to students’ experiences in urban PE.

***Irrelevance.*** In many studies, urban students disliked PE because they viewed the content as repetitive, boring, and irrelevant to their lives. Ennis and colleagues noted that urban high school students found their physical education programs to be boring, irrelevant, and intimidating (Ennis et al., 1997; Cothran & Ennis, 1999). In a study of students’ feelings of relevance, connection, and membership in a large, urban high school, Cothran and Ennis (1999) revealed that students believed the physical education curriculum had little relevance or value to their lives. James and Collier (2011) studied middle school students through an ecological examination and found that students thought the curriculum had little relevance to their lives and often engaged in social skills such as talking to their friends. Carlson (1995) found that students viewed the PE content as irrelevant and lacking personal meaning. Students felt isolated, lacked confidence, and faked illnesses or injuries to avoid participation in physical education often due to the fact that the students felt they were wasting their time on irrelevant activities and sports.

***Lack of resources.*** Dyson et al. (2009) studied middle school students’ PE experiences in urban environments and found that overcrowding, the same repetitive boring exercises and the lack of challenge impeded students’ active participation in physical education. Cothran and Ennis (1999) found that large, overcrowded PE classes impeded students’ ability to interact with others and students remained disconnected from classmates. At the middle school and high school level, Carlson (1995) reported that over 20% of students felt alienated in their physical education classes, which did not encourage them to fully participate in their physical education

classes. Lack of equipment or adequate space is another issue. Teachers often share gym space (if they are lucky to have a gym) with another class of 60+ students, thereby stretching the resources and space even further, often posing safety issues. Many PE programs in urban environments lack outdoor athletic fields, pools, and gymnasium space, with classes often being conducted in cafeterias, hallways, and classrooms (Montalvo, 2007). Often a high school basketball class can consist of 60 students and 5 basketballs. Due to the large amount of time spent waiting, disruptive behaviors and apathy can develop.

*Gender inequality.* Girls believed that boys were too aggressive during team sports and all participants expressed fear and alienation in their urban physical education programs (Ennis et al., 1997). In a similar study, Lineham (2003) represented the voices of high school students who were typically non-participants in physical education. They were “turned off” to PE because of gender inequity and too much competition in the gymnasium. “There seems to be unwritten rules with boys in PE that they should never pass to a girl” (Lineham, 2003, p. 41). Dyson et al. (2009) also found that in middle school, gender inequality existed and students expressed that as a major concern in their PE classes. Chepyator-Thomson (1990) found that gender identification influenced students' selection of activities and their styles of participation in physical education classes. Because of mounting evidence that young women's loss of opportunity and motivation to participate in physical education in their high school years starts in early adolescence, Gibbons and Humbert (2008) explored the experiences of female students in co-educational middle school physical education classes. Girls were not satisfied with the existing content in their PE classes and believed the curriculum focused on the interests of the boys. Gibbons and Humbert (2008) suggested the improvement of physical education



instruction by expanding the choices offered in the curriculum to maintain the interest of middle school students, especially girls.

*No voice.* Hunter (2002) studied students' transitions to middle school to gain an understanding of their perspectives. The students argued that they were not consulted or listened to by the teachers or administrators at their schools. The students felt that school was an adult world dominated by adult opinion. Student learning is often less important to teachers in urban schools than the act of teaching, so when teachers plan, they focus on the managerial tasks and what students will do, not what they will learn (Placek, 1983). Research has shown that teachers often ask for little input from students and develop the curriculum based off of their interests. Teachers teach the same activities year after year and often develop few new games or activities (Carlson, 1995; Graham et al., 1998).

*Listening to students' voices and making changes.* Oliver, Hamzeh, and McCaughtry (2009) took the notion of listening to student voices a step further and worked with a small group of Hispanic girls to identify their barriers to physical activity and then collaborated with them to design games that allowed them to be physically active. In a similar intervention, two researchers collaborated with a group of girls in Ireland to create an after-school club to increase their opportunities for physical activity (Enright, O'Sullivan, & The Pres Girls, 2009). The Pres Club girls described how the club began: "Most of us didn't do any physical activity except in PE and we wanted to keep fit and do activities after school and we wanted more time to be with our friends after school and be more sociable" (Enright et al., 2009, p. 2).

Understanding the experiences of urban high school students in their physical education classes has become essential because of declining levels of physical activity during adolescence (especially in urban environments) and the importance of school physical education in combating

this inactivity. The intent of this research was to gain more insightful understandings of teaching and learning environments by studying the subjective meanings that were constructed by students in their urban physical education experiences.

**Curriculum.** Curriculum is defined as the course of study or the process and product of the complete human experience (Grundy, 1989). Physical education curricula can use many different approaches to accomplish the various goals that are associated with physical activity (Jewett et al., 1995). When creating a curriculum, physical educators must consider the three domains of learning, which include the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. Affective goals focus on the behavior and emotion of the student during teaching. The cognitive domain concerns content knowledge of the unit in question. Psychomotor objectives refer to the movement of the students' body or the skills associated with the motor goals of the unit. Physical education curricula can be movement based, sport based, humanistic, multicultural, fitness based, or lifetime-wellness based and are determined by administrators and teachers (Chepyator-Thomson, 2001). When developing curriculum, urban high school physical educators often have to apply methods and strategies that may differ from rural and suburban schools (Ennis & Chen, 1995). Facilities, budgets, and school demographics often have a large influence on what is being taught in terms of urban high school physical education classes. Additionally, the state standards for physical education (often synonymous with NASPE standards) play an important part in what is being taught.

Dyson et al., (2009) found that PE programs had repetitive, monotonous curricula that offered no choice. Other studies have also shown results with students reporting boring, irrelevant, or repetitive curricula (Carlson, 1995; Cothran & Ennis, 1999, 2001; Ennis et al., 1997; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). The middle schools students in the Dyson et al. (2009) study

suggested that teachers improve the curriculum by surveying students about their interests, teaching a greater variety of activities, and providing a choice of activities and that “PE should include attractive, inclusive, invitational, and purposeful curricula for all students” (p. 47). Previous research has shown that students have more favorable attitudes towards PE when they have a choice in the curriculum and are engaged in a variety of activities (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; MacQuarrie, Murnaghan, & MacLellan, 2008; Oliver et al., 2009). At the secondary school level, curriculum has been identified as a major factor in students’ discontent in physical education (Figley, 1985; Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Solmon, 2003). According to Weir (2000), traditional physical education curriculum is team sport based. Team sports such as basketball, flag football and baseball serve as the cornerstone of physical education in the United States since the 1960’s. Many secondary urban physical education programs emphasize a multi-activity approach with little or no change from year to year and research has indicated that this curriculum imparts little knowledge and has little relevance to students’ lives outside of school (Chen, 1999; Hastie, 2000). Carlson (1995) showed that content irrelevance and lack of personal meaning was a serious problem with high school physical education programs.

***Curricular models for urban PE.*** This section will highlight different curricular models used effectively in urban PE settings. Specifically this research focuses on the work of Ennis et al. (1997), Cothran and Ennis (1998), Ennis (1999), and McCaughtry, Barnard, Martin, Shen, and Kulinna (2006), all of whom have examined curricula and curricular approaches that have been used in urban physical education.

***Sport education model.*** One curricular model that may increase student attitude toward physical education is the Sport Education Model. This model highlights students developing skills specific to the sport, and students have a voice in the planning and administration of the

sport (Siedentop, 1994). The model also allows students the time to learn strategies and skills specific to the sport.

*Sport for peace model.* Ennis (1999) found some success in an urban setting using 'Sport for Peace,' a team-sport curriculum that utilizes basic curricular structures of Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994). This model includes an additional focus on conflict negotiation, personal and social responsibility as well as care and concern for others. Results indicated that the Sport for Peace curriculum improved the sport environment for both boys and girls by creating authentic cooperative environments and encouraging the use of second chances to promote understanding and learning (Ennis, 1999).

*Multicultural based curricula model.* The goal of a multicultural based curriculum is to help create a view of the world, culture and reality through the eyes of an educated, well exposed teacher (Bennett, 2007). A multicultural based curricula reform would take into account all cultures and foster awareness, acceptance, and appreciation of various games from around the world (Chepyator-Thomson, 2001). Furthermore, multicultural education fosters a pluralistic and democratic society, enabling the community to bond to meet the agenda of the city as a whole (Banks & Banks, 1995). In this model, both the teacher and the students can use their own language and culture to add to the curriculum, using critical thinking and project collaborations within different subjects. As new immigrants come to the United States, the face of urban schools change; therefore faculty must strive for culturally relevant curriculum that fosters inclusion of all ethnic groups. Educational task forces such as, the National Council for the Social Studies, has set forth two suggestions for addressing the diverse needs of the student population in schools. First, schools must take special consideration for low income families and students of color, to allow them to gain knowledge and skills to meet the development of new

jobs. Additional findings state that teachers do not have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of a multicultural school system, which leads to students from different backgrounds failing to make cross-cultured connections with other students.

*Developmental, fitness, humanistic, and movement based models.* There are many paradigms that can be implemented when creating or remodeling a physical education curriculum which include: developmental, fitness, humanistic, and movement models (Chepyator-Thomson, 2001). According to Chepyator-Thomson (2001) developmental curriculum is based on age appropriate goals for each grade level, whereas, movement-based curriculum focuses on analyzes of movement patterns. Fitness-based curriculum largely focuses on health-related fitness. The humanistic approach involves affective (social) goals, which lead to a more holistic way to implement curriculum. Additional researchers conclude that fitness and movement dominate curriculum (Jewett et al., 1995). A necessary element for developing a curriculum is to maximize student participation and develop meaning for students.

**Instructional strategies.** In investigating how teachers respond to the challenges of teaching physical education in urban school environments, researchers have examined instructional strategies. Often, the school environment restrains teachers from providing students with a quality physical education experiences. Due to lack of funding, inadequate facilities and resources, overcrowding, lack of equipment, and lack of administrative support, PE teachers have had to adjust their goals to achieve what is possible in their programs. As a result, little teaching occurs and the PE program resembles a recreation program where students play team sports. Ennis et al. (1997) identified the importance of establishing strong rapport with students in urban settings. Value orientations play a large role in what is being taught at a school regardless of the location (Ennis & Chen, 1995).

***Teacher values.*** Teachers' values are what teachers think are important in the ways they implement and design curricula. Numerous curriculum developers have thought about philosophical perspectives when creating curricula (Jewett et al., 1995). Curricular decisions, design and development are largely based on what the teacher and staff value. Teachers' value orientations also play a large role in deciding what type of curriculum teachers follow (Ennis, 1994). Most researchers have concluded that value orientation is the main driving force behind which curricular theory the developer follows (Jewett et al., 1995). The values that a teacher has will clearly be displayed by the choice of activities found in their curriculum. If the teacher's value orientation subscribes to "disciplinary mastery" perspective, they would hold skill and strategy as the most imperative part of a physical education curriculum. Value orientations therefore are the most popular factors influencing curricula design, and most importantly in curricular implementation. In an additional study, Behets' (2001) survey focused on 1000 teachers, which included: pre-service and certified teachers and the results indicated that urban teachers place their greatest curricular concentration on social responsibility orientation, over disciplinary mastery. This means that teachers, in their implementation of the curriculum, at the beginning of their careers, will try to implement affective concepts associated with the self-actualization, social reconstruction, ecological integration, and social responsibility. Multi-activity curricula should allow the teachers' values to show through, thus allowing the teacher to decide to mix the culture of the student with the games and activities in the classroom (Ennis, 1997). This is important for the teacher who is implementing the curriculum in order to build in awareness of activities that the students find authentic and applicable to their day-to-day lives (Azzaritio & Ennis, 2003). Most importantly, once the teachers' values and the students' values are taken into consideration, an urban teacher can design a culturally responsive curriculum. In

regards to teacher preparation programs, Stroot and Whipple (2003) have suggested that pre-service teachers should be required to perform student teaching in urban schools to help assist teachers in understanding the diversity that exists in students' lives.

### **Student Voice Research in Physical Education**

Students' experiences in PE are very important in helping to suggest changes to the curriculum and teaching strategies to better improve the quality of PE classes and programs (Pissanos & Allison, 1993). Teacher educators, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders can learn a great deal about teaching and learning by listening to students' voices (Corbett & Wilson, 2002; Dyson, 2006; Graham, 1995; Pissanos & Allison, 1993). "The work of authorizing student perspectives is essential because of the various ways that it can improve current educational practice, re-inform existing conversations about educational reform, and point to the discussions and reform efforts yet to be undertaken" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3). Paying attention to students' voices is crucial for not only understanding physical education but for recognizing what motivates young adolescents to engage in physical activity (Dyson, 2006; Graham, 1995).

Students have rarely been asked for their perspectives by their teachers or researchers in all fields of educational research (Cook-Sather, 2002; Corbett & Wilson, 2002; Dyson, 2006; Erickson & Schultz, 1992; MacQuarrie et al., 2008). However, recent studies have begun to study what middle and high school students believe, think, and feel about physical education (Carlson, 1995; Cothran & Ennis, 1999, 2001; Dyson, et al., 2009; Ennis, et al., 1997; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Hunter, 2002; Lineham. 2003; Oliver, Hamzeh, & McCaughtry, 2009). The next section will review students' general motivations for physical activity in college.

## Motivations for Physical Activity in College

Enjoyment is the primary intrinsic reason that students give for participating in physical activity (Blankenship, 2008). The following section will discuss and critically assess the demographic, biological, environmental, and external factors that influence physical activity levels. This section also includes a review of qualitative studies on physical activity motivation and participation among college aged students.

### Demographic Factors

Several measured demographic variables are associated with physical activity among college aged adults. These demographic variables include gender, education level, age, race/ethnicity, and income (Addy et al., 2004; Dowda, Ainsworth, Addy, Saunders, & Riner, 2003; Horn, O'Neill, Pfeiffer, Dowda, & Pate, 2008; Owen et al., 2007; Pan et al., 2009; Pierce, Denison, Arif, & Rohrer, 2006; Popham & Mitchell, 2006; Seo, Nehl, Agle, & Ma, 2007; Seo & Torabi, 2007; Seo, Torabi, Jiang, Fernandez-Rojas, & Park, 2009; Weiss, O'Loughlin, Platt, & Paradis, 2007). The findings for each of the demographic variables are summarized in the following paragraphs.

**Gender.** Gender was demonstrated to have a strong association with physical activity. There was an association between gender and the increased likelihood of engaging in physical activity. Dowda et al. (2003) used a cross sectional survey design and bivariate analysis procedures and reported that men were significantly more likely to engage in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity than women. Similar associations were reported when physical activity was dichotomized as vigorous- or moderate-intensity. Seo and Torabi (2007) used a cross sectional study design and multivariate regression procedures and reported that men were significantly more likely to meet vigorous physical activity guidelines and more likely to meet



moderate physical activity guidelines. Seo et al. (2007, 2009) used a cross sectional study design and multivariate regression procedures and reported that men were significantly more likely to meet vigorous physical activity guidelines and added that men were significantly less likely to be in a low active category.

While the researchers generally agreed, there were gender differences based on physical activity intensity. However, this intensity based difference may have been the result of sample differences. Specifically, Seo et al. (2009) limited the study sample to university students enrolled in health related courses. Consequently, men in the sample may have been more inclined toward higher intensity physical activity. These results are consistent with the gender trends of men and women in physical education courses. Women are typically under-represented in PE, while men dominate. This is a representation of the larger United States society as a whole. Changes to the curriculum and teaching strategies need to be made so strides for women can be achieved in equal representation in physical activity and physical education levels.

**Age.** There is a negative association between age and participation in physical activity. In the United States and the world over, young people engage in physical activity at higher levels. As humans age, their body cannot maintain the strenuous activities they competed in as young adults, so their activity patterns slow and change. Weiss et al. (2007) used a longitudinal study design and multivariate regression procedures and reported that aging increased the odds of becoming inactive. In a second study, Pan et al. (2009) identified physical activity patterns among Canadians (N = 5,167; aged 15-79 years) and reported a trend in the percentage of adults who reported meeting sufficient physical activity guidelines. In a more robust study, Addy et al. (2004) used a cross sectional study design and multivariate regression procedures and reported that younger individuals were significantly more likely to engage in physical activity and

walking behaviors. Similar associations were reported when total physical activity was dichotomized as vigorous or moderate-intensity. However, the strength of the association was mediated by gender and higher intensities. Seo and Torabi (2007) used a cross section study and bivariate procedures to evaluate a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults (N = 981; aged 18 years and older) and reported a significant negative association between age and those having met both vigorous and moderate physical activity guidelines. While negative associations remained, subsequent multivariate analyses indicated that age was only predictive of vigorous physical activity. Dowda et al. (2003) used a cross sectional study design and bivariate analysis procedures to examine the physical activity patterns of young adults enrolled as participants in the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey ([NHANES III]; N = 4,152; aged 18-30 years) and also reported age as negatively associated with moderate-to-vigorous physical activity in men, but there was no significant association among women. A multivariate analysis indicated that there was no statistical significance for men or women. Overall, the studies reviewed indicated there was a negative relationship between age and physical activity participation.

One key aspect is that the focus of this study is on college-aged students, meaning 18-25 year olds. Even during this time, physical activity levels decrease dramatically (Sallis et al., 1999). With this study, the researcher hopes to offer insight into ways to increase physical activity involvement of college aged students by suggesting changes to the curriculum of urban high school PE courses and the instructional strategies of urban high school teachers.

**Race/Ethnicity.** Dowda et al. (2003) used a cross sectional study design and two regression models to examine the association between race/ethnicity and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. The first model included demographics only. Accordingly, it was reported

that non-Hispanic African American and non-Hispanic white women were significantly more likely to report higher levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. The second model included demographics and all variables significant in bivariate analyses. In support, it was reported that non-Hispanic Black men and non-Hispanic white women were significantly more likely to report higher levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity when accounting for significant lifestyle, biologic, environmental, and social support variables. Horn et al. (2008) used a longitudinal study design and bivariate analysis procedures and also reported that non-Hispanic white women were significantly more likely to engage in higher levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. An additional study that dichotomized total physical activity as vigorous- and moderate intensity physical activity partially supported previous findings. Seo and Torabi (2007) used a cross sectional study design and multivariate regression procedures and reported that Hispanics were significantly less likely to meet vigorous intensity physical activity. However, in contrast with previous findings, it was further reported that Hispanics were significantly more likely to meet moderate intensity physical activity guidelines than non-Hispanics. According to He and Baker (2005), Hispanics were more likely to report lower levels of leisure time and higher levels of work related physical activity than whites. Consequently, the higher proportion of Hispanics reporting moderate intensity physical activity may, in part, be the result of work related and/or household related sources that do not meet the guidelines for higher intensity physical activity. This dissertation research will likely involve white, African American, and Hispanic students, as the study will interview students enrolled in a PE class in college who had attended an urban high school.

## **Biological Factors**

Biological variables measured in the studies reviewed included body mass index (BMI) and self-reported health status (Dowda et al., 2003; Pan et al., 2009; Pierce et al., 2006; Seo & Torabi, 2007, Seo et al., 2007, Seo et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 2007). The findings for each biological variable are summarized in the following paragraphs.

**Body mass index (BMI).** Research indicated that there was an association between body mass index (BMI) and physical activity. However the relationship was dependent upon gender and physical activity intensity. Weiss et al. (2007) reported that adults with a higher BMI (greater than 25) were significantly more likely to become physically inactive. Seo and Torabi (2007) reported significant association between BMI and exercise intensity with adults within a normal BMI range (BMI = 18.5 to less than 25) accounting for the highest proportion meeting both vigorous and moderate intensity physical activity. Seo et al. (2007) reported that BMI was only predictive of vigorous physical activity. Subsequent multiple regression analyses indicated that those who were overweight (BMI = 25.0-29.9) were most likely to meet vigorous physical activity guidelines and those that were underweight (BMI less than 18.5) were least likely to meet vigorous physical activity guidelines. While those who were classified as obese (BMI greater than 30) were also less likely to engage in vigorous physical activity, there was no statistical significance. It was posited that overweight individuals may be using vigorous physical activity as a preferred weight loss method and obesity may preclude others from higher intensities for health reasons. Dowda et al. (2003) reported a significant negative correlation between BMI and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity among women, but not men.

**Self-reported health.** Research consistently reported a positive association between self-reported health and physical activity. Dowda et al. (2003) reported a significant positive

association between self-reported health and higher levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity among both men and women. However, when accounting for demographics and other significant variables, the association was only significant among women. Weiss et al. (2007) reported lower self-rated health was predictive of decreased physical activity participation. Pierce et al. (2006) reported a significant negative association between self-reported health and walking behaviors. Pan et al. (2009) reported men and women with lower self-rated health were less likely to have sufficient physical activity than those with higher self-reported health. As is seen, gender can play an intervening factor in self-reported health and BMI.

### **Environmental Factors**

Environmental variables measured in the studies reviewed included education level and income (Dowda et al., 2003; Pierce et al., 2006; Seo & Torabi, 2007, Seo et al., 2007, Seo et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 2007). The findings for each environmental variable are summarized in the following paragraphs.

**Education level.** Education level was positively associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in physical activity. The findings were mediated by gender and physical activity intensity. Addy et al. (2004) used a cross sectional study design and multivariate modeling procedures and reported that men and women with at least some college were significantly more likely to engage in more walking behavior than those that did not attend college. Pan et al. (2009) used a cross sectional study design and bivariate analysis procedures and reported that higher education levels were associated with an increased likelihood of having sufficient physical activity. However, following regression procedures, the association was only significant among women. These results supported earlier findings. Dowda et al. (2003) examined the relationship between education and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. The

first regression model included demographic variables only and indicated a significant positive association among men and women and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. The second regression model included both demographics and significant categorical variables and reported, however, there was only a significant positive association among women and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. VPA and MPA, as independent measures, influenced the association between education and physical activity among adults. Seo and Torabi (2007) reported a significant association between education the likelihood of meeting vigorous physical activity guidelines, but not moderate physical activity guidelines. According to multivariate analysis procedures, those adults with less than some high school were significantly less likely and those with less than some college were more likely to meet vigorous physical activity guidelines. While those with less than some high school education or more than some college education were less likely to meet moderate physical activity guidelines, the association was not significant.

### **Psychosocial Factors**

Psychosocial factors contributing to health behaviors including physical activity have been identified in the literature. Social-cognitive theory acknowledges persons as interacting with their environment and incorporating past experiences to make present and future behavioral decisions. Actions, environmental events, and personal factors, particularly self-perceptions of competence, are reciprocal forces that effect behavior (Bandura, 1989). Psychosocial variables measured in studies regarding motivation for physical activity of college aged students included self-efficacy, perceived barriers, perceived benefits, and social support (Dowda et al., 2003; Maglione & Hayman, 2009; Pan et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 2007). Self-efficacy was operationalized as exercise specific and pertained to the individual's confidence in their ability to

engage in physical activity. Social support was defined as encouragement from others to participate in physical activity.

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy is the belief or perception an individual has of his or her own ability to complete a given task (Bandura, 1982). Bandura (1982) proposed that motivation to perform a certain behavior was based on two factors: expectations of outcome and cognitions about self-efficacy. Research has consistently shown self-efficacy to be the strongest predictor of exercise behavior (Buckworth, Granello, & Belmore, 2002; Marcus & Owen, 1992; Reynolds et al., 1990; Sallis et al., 1986; Sallis et al., 1989; Sallis & McKenzie, 1991; Sorensen, 1997; Sullum, Clark, & King, 2000; Trost et al., 1996).

In other words, self-efficacy means that people engage in those activities in which they have had positive experiences and perceive they have competence to perform. The application of self-efficacy into the real world of activity classes would lead one to believe that those who perceive they are competent in a particular physical activity and/or have had positive past experiences in that activity, will likely desire to continue participating in the activity and would also enroll in PE activity classes more frequently. On the other hand, those people who do not perceive they are competent and/or have had negative experiences in an activity situation will likely not want to continue participation, therefore they would not enroll in PE activity classes or participate in physical activity. Those individuals with low perceived confidence in their ability to exercise are more likely to be inactive compared to those with high levels of perceived confidence (Leenders, Silver, White, Buckworth, & Sherman, 2002; Silver, Buckworth, Kirby, & Sherman, 2000). Self-efficacy has consistently been positively associated with being physically active and adherence to physical activity programs (USDHHS, 1996). Research findings have

supported the premise that self-efficacy is predictive of exercise adherence in college students with a low self-efficacy resulting in a greater likelihood of relapse (Sullum et al., 2000).

There was a positive association between self-efficacy and physical activity engagement. Weiss et al. (2007) reported that those who had higher self-efficacy were more likely to adopt or continue to engage in leisure time physical activity than those who had lower self-efficacy. Pan et al. (2009) reported a significant positive association for men and women. The positive relationship remained when stratified by age, education, and income. Maglione and Hayman (2009) reported that self-efficacy was a significant independent predictor of physical activity among those who were sampled. However, it was further reported that the relationship between self-efficacy and physical activity was mediated by an individual's commitment to a plan of physical activity.

**Perceived barriers.** There was a negative association between perceived barriers and physical activity. Pan et al. (2009) reported perceived barriers as independently related to physical activity. Perceived barriers were associated with lower odd ratios (ORs) of having sufficient physical activity, but the association was not significant in men. Perceived barriers were also associated with lower ORs of having sufficient physical activity in individuals aged 15-64 years. While perceived barriers were also associated with lower ORs of having sufficient physical activity across all educational levels (secondary or lower; tech school or college; university) and family income levels less than \$80,000, the associations were not significant.

**Perceived health benefits.** There was a positive relationship between perceived health benefits and physical activity. Pan et al. (2009) used multivariate modeling procedures and reported a positive association between perceived health benefits and engagement in sufficient physical activity among men and women. However, when stratified by age, the association was



only significant among adults aged 40-79 years. When stratified by education, university educated participants had the highest ORs, having engaged in adequate physical activity. While the ORs remained relatively consistent among incomes greater than \$80,000, those with family incomes less than \$80,000 had the highest ORs of having engaged in adequate physical activity. In summary, each psychosocial variable was associated with physical activity engagement.

**Social support.** Research examining the relationship between social support and physical activity is mixed. Dowda et al. (2003) reported a significant positive relationship between social support and moderate to vigorous physical activity among men and women. Maglione and Hayman (2009) reported a statistically significant positive relationship between social support and physical activity. However, Pan et al. (2009) and Weiss et al. (2007) reported no significant relationships between social support and physical activity. Pan et al. (2009) used social environmental variables (such as tangible aid and service, advice, suggestions and information) as measures of social support. Weiss et al. (2007) limited the definition of social support to a single dichotomized question as to whether surveyed participants were encouraged to be physically active. Differences in how social support was operationalized and survey measures may, in part, account for the inconsistent findings.

Self-efficacy, social support and perceived benefits were reported to have positive associations. Of the studies reviewed, the reported results were most consistent for self-efficacy. The studies reviewed for social support reported inconsistent findings. However, the inconsistencies may be the result methodological differences. For perceived health benefits, older age, higher education, and higher family incomes increased the odds of engaging in sufficient physical activity. Perceived barriers were reported to have a negative association for

sufficient physical activity with women and adults over age 65; they had the lowest odds of engaging in adequate physical activity.

### **Further Review**

A review of qualitative studies found that weight management, social interaction, and enjoyment were common reasons for participation in sport and physical activity. In addition, concerns about maintaining a slim body motivated participation among young girls (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006).

A small study of participants in aerobics and martial art classes found that competence and enjoyment were primary motives for martial arts, while body related motivations were linked to aerobics. In this study by Biddle and Bailey (1985), women rated tension release and social factors as top reasons for participation in class, while men rated health, fitness, and competition as motives for participation.

Studies have also shown that motivation for exercise is different than for sport in that exercise is normally motivated by extrinsic factors while sport is normally motivated by intrinsic factors (Kilpatrick et al., 2005). A study by Mathes and Battista (1985) surveyed a college sample of athletes and non-athletes concerning their motives for participation in exercise found that competition, social experience, and health and fitness were reasons for participation. Women in the study tended to place more emphasis upon social motives, whereas men placed a greater emphasis on competition. Another study by Dwyer (1992), found that university students participated in physical activity to 1) maintain fitness, 2) experience fun, excitement, and challenges, and 3) acquire and improve skills. Mathes and Battista (1985) examined attitudes of college athletes and non-athletes and the results showed that the reasons for participating in

physical activity were “health and fitness”, “competition”, and “social” aspects, with “health and fitness” being the number one reason overall among the college students surveyed.

## **Conclusion**

This section shows that there are many different reasons why students participate in physical activity and many research studies have been conducted on why college students participate in physical activity. Many of these motivations are a carryover from youth and high school experience (Ciucci, 2010; Hildebrand & Johnson, 2001).

### **Reasons for Enrolling in College PE Classes**

A few studies have investigated reasons college aged students choose to enroll in basic PE activity classes. The major themes developed are: the major motivational components for enrolling in college PE courses; and that students enroll to have fun, to stay in good physical condition, and to exercise regularly.

## **Motivational Components**

Motivation is an internal state or condition (described as a want, need, or desire) that serves to activate, energize, arouse, and influence behavior and give it direction (Franken, 1994; Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981). Motivation is important because it is a stated reason by a participant, in their own words, as to why they chose to do something (like enroll in multiple PE courses in college). Chen (2000) studied the motivations of college students to enroll in skill and fitness physical activity classes that were not required for graduation at southeastern university. Motivational components critical to the students who enrolled included the following concepts: “physical”, “enjoyment”, “learning”, “improvement”, “challenge”, and “social”. When dividing the classes between skill-oriented classes and fitness-oriented classes, students in the skill-oriented classes were motivated by “learning” and “enjoyment”, while students in the fitness-

oriented classes were motivated by “physical” and “improvement”. This means that for sport related classes, students’ reasons for enrolling were for fun, while in fitness related classes, their motivations included exercising regularly and staying active.

Student motivation in class selection of activities differs based on objectives. The objectives of students who participate in activity classes have remained constant throughout the years (Lumpkin & Avery, 1986; Lumpkin, Leath, & Almekinders, 1990; and Lumpkin, Ormond, & Smith, 1995; Soudan & Everett, 1981). These objectives include: having fun, keeping in good health and physical condition, and getting regular exercise. In later years, these objectives changed to the following: “achieving success”, “self-worth”, “having fun”, “earning a high letter grade”, and “improving self-confidence” Savage (1998), which became the top five motivating objectives for student participation in the basic PE activity classes. The three lowest objectives for males and females were “providing vocational preparation”, “developing leadership”, and “sportsmanship”. In addition, the study found that “keeping in good health and physical condition”, “getting regular exercise”, and “having fun” were the three most important outcomes of participating in a basic PE activity class (Savage, 1998).

**Having fun.** Just as enjoyment is the primary intrinsic reason that students give for participating in physical activity (Blankenship, 2008) in college, the majority of students in college tend to enroll in PE courses for enjoyment. The majority of students chose to enroll in their college PE activity class because they enjoyed the activity and they had interest in the activity (Hildebrand & Johnson, 2001). Further, for college students, fun was the dominant reason for enrolling and participating in all PE activity classes (Ciucci, 2010). Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) and Leenders, Sherman, and Ward, (2003) corroborate Ciucci’s (2010) study in finding fun to be the number two reason students enrolled in physical education classes.

**Keeping in good health and physical condition.** Another popular reason students enroll in PE classes in college is to stay healthy. A study by Leenders et al. (2003) found that most frequently students chose to enroll to 1) learn a new skill (20%), 2) have fun (18%), 3) improve skills (11%), 4) exercise regularly (9%), and 5) improve health and fitness (9%). These reasons accounted for 67% of the total reasons for enrolling in the PE activity course. The results show that skills and improving health and fitness (keeping in good health and physical condition) account for 49% of the 67%. A study by Finkenbergl (1991) and a study by Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) showed that “health and fitness” was rated the most important motive for participation, which supported previous research by Kenyon (1968), Cunningham (1971), and Mathes and Battista (1985).

Exercising regularly is another popular reasons college students have given as to why they enroll in PE classes. Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) investigated why students participated in a non-required exercise and sport activity courses found that top three reasons for participating for males and females in all classes were 1) improve fitness, 2) have fun, and 3) exercise regularly. The number three reason for participating in a PE class was exercising regularly. For the sport specific classes, having fun was the primary reason for enrolling, while in the fitness courses, improving fitness was the primary reason for enrolling. The study also asked students to list the perceived benefits of enrolling in a PE activity course and the results showed that the majority of students chose the response “helps me stay active”.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, as is seen in the above literature, there have been some studies conducted that determined the motivations or reasons why students enrolled in physical education activity class in college. These studies have consistently shown that students in college enroll in physical

activity classes for reasons of fun/enjoyment, to learn new skills, to work out/exercise regularly, to earn credit, to be social, to challenge themselves, to improve their previous skills, and many other reasons. Males and females often differ in their reasons for enrolling in PE activity classes and reasons also vary based on the type of class (fitness oriented or sport oriented). These studies are important and need to be continued. As Savage (1998) stated “...surveys which solicit student responses to questions concerning objectives and program characteristics...are necessary for providing important information to help faculty continue to develop and expand quality basic instruction programs and continue to serve university students” (p. 61).

### **High School PE Experiences Related to Physical Activity Levels in College**

By creating a solid foundation in high school for activity and good eating habits, hopefully students will continue these positive behaviors into college and adulthood. The physical education teacher is integral in helping establish this process. The following section will review the research that has been conducted that links students’ physical education experiences in high school with their physical activity levels in college. The major themes are: curricular diversity and increasing physical education requirements.

#### **Curricular Diversity**

Curricular diversity enhances the learning experience and students exposed to different curricular choices in high school physical education often exhibit higher levels of physical activity in college. Mears (2005, 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2010) reported that physical education curricular design and graduation requirements while in high school can lead to higher levels of physical activity as young adults. Being exposed to PE curriculum in high school positively impacted students’ performance in moderate, vigorous, and strength exercises later in college (Dale & Corbin, 2000). However, a study by James (2012) indicated there were no significant

differences in moderate, vigorous, and moderate-to-vigorous participation between college students who met and those who did not meet physical education requirements while in high school. However, in the study, both groups (those who met and those who did not meet high school physical education requirements) demonstrated physical activity participation rates that exceeded the national averages, meaning the groups may have been exceptions to the normal population due to location, importance of activity in the community, or other physical, social, and psychological factors.

As a secondary finding, the results also suggested that total school based physical activity participation while in high school may be a better general indicator of subsequent physical activity as young adults than PE alone (James, 2012). Mears (2007; 2008a) examined the impact of PE content diversity (i.e. rhythmic and team activities, individual activities, aquatics, outdoor adventure, and physical conditioning) while in high school. He found that those students who had higher content diversity (greater than three content areas) in high school had significantly higher levels of physical activity, cardio vascular endurance, and flexibility as young adults than those students who had lower content diversity (fewer than three content areas). Collectively, these findings suggest that more diverse physical education content in high school would increase the likelihood of higher physical activity as young adults and those attending college.

### **Increasing and Diversifying PE**

Diversifying and increasing the courses taught in high school physical education would likely lead to an increased physical activity level in college students. Mears (2008b) found that undergraduate students from states with higher physical education requirements demonstrated significantly higher levels of cardiovascular participation than those from states with lower physical education requirements. Specifically, the high requirement group of students reported

meeting the cardiorespiratory exercise guidelines 71.1% of the time, while the low requirement group only met requirements 62.2% of the time. While higher physical education requirements increase the likelihood of being physically active as young adults, research has indicated that other school based activities like marching band, JROTC, interscholastic sports, and cheerleading, which are often used in lieu of physical education requirements, have not had a significant impact on physical activity participation as young adults (Mears, 2008b). This means that PE should not be substituted for other extracurricular events because the benefits of physical education class are often lost. In regards to students receiving a waiver to not participate in PE, Mears (2010) found that the non-waiver group, when compared to waiver group, participated in cardiovascular conditioning, muscular conditioning, and flexibility conditioning more often later in life. This finding suggests that the substitution of physical education with alternative school based activities should not be encouraged and students should be required to take high school physical education and hopefully take it more often. Colleges and universities should take heed of this and require more physical education credits in order to graduate or start by making elective physical education credits required if they are a school that does not have physical education as a graduation requirement (Brynteson & Adams II, 1993; Lock, 1990; Roberts, Evans, & Ormond, 2006; Slava, Laurie, & Corbin, 1984).

## **Conclusion**

One important thing to take from this section is the study conducted by Mears (2008b). In that study he analyzed students physical activity levels in college, but he compared students from high schools that required multiple PE credits in order to graduate with students from high schools that required low PE credits to graduate. What was found was that the students who had to complete multiple credits were more physically active later in life in college. This higher



level of physical activity can lead to overall improved health and all the benefits that come from physical activity.

No research to date has studied the experiences of urban high school PE students and how their experiences have influenced their future physical activity in college. Determining how physical education experiences in urban high schools have influenced students' physical activity in college is important and it is equally important to find out what impact, if any, urban high school physical education experiences have had on college PE activity class enrollment and choice.

### **High School PE Experiences Related to College PE Activity Class Choice**

Limited research has been conducted on the link between high school PE experiences and college physical education class enrollment and no research has looked at urban high school PE experiences as related to college PE. Two themes developed from the literature: students with negative experiences in PE in high school often do not choose to participate in more PE classes in high school or college, and that students who enjoyed PE in high school often enroll in PE in college.

### **Negative Experiences Lead to No Future Enrollment**

A study conducted by Van Daalen (2005) investigated the reasons why female students in high school chose not to enroll in further PE classes in high school after grade nine. While this study is not reflective of college PE activity class choice, only one study has been conducted on the relationship between high school PE experience and college PE activity choice. It is also very likely that if a female student chose to discontinue PE after grade nine in high school, that they would likely not enroll in PE activity classes in college (unless required). The study was a qualitative feminist study and used interviewing as the method of study and grounded theory

(constant comparison) as a method of analysis. The researcher interviewed five women who had made the decision to drop PE after grade nine. Van Daalen (2005) found that as soon as PE requirements were met, many girls dropped PE because PE was not a positive experience. It was found, in this small group that the experience of having their bodies aesthetically and athletically evaluated combined with competition in the gym and the changing room created a negative vision of PE. The peer mistreatment, constant evaluation, competition, and continual attack on self-esteem were reasons why the females of this study chose not to participate in further high school PE.

A study by Chepyator-Thomson et al. (2007), asked women in college PE activity classes to reflect back on their K-12 PE experiences. The researchers asked which activity class they were currently enrolled in and why they chose it. The results of why the students chose their college PE class was not reported or discussed, but that was not the focus of the study. The study's purpose was to understand African American women's experiences in their K-12 PE courses by asking students enrolled in a college PE class to reflect on their previous experiences. The study found that participation in PE declines steadily from elementary to the high school years, and is almost non-existent in high school and college. This was often due to negative experiences encountered during PE in middle and high school.

### **Positive Experiences Lead to Further Enrollment**

Only one study to date has looked at the relationship between PE in high school and college PE activity class choice. A study by Hildebrand and Johnson (2001) found that experiences in quality physical education classes have resulted in higher levels of physical education enrollment in university. The researchers examined the reasons university undergraduates chose to participate in university physical education classes. This study was a

quantitative survey and the variables examined were perceived competence in the activity, enjoyment of the activity, and perception of high school physical education experiences. The study was conducted at a southeastern university and the students from twelve different activity classes were given the survey during the second week of the semester. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and all individuals who took a survey returned it. The classes were basic skill and strategy classes specific to the sport being taught. The PE classes were not required for graduation. There were 443 female students (55%) and 369 males students (45%), from all class levels (first-year through senior), which was representative of the general student body. The survey was adapted from a previous study by Hildebrand (1995). Descriptive statistics were run on the data once surveys were returned.

Of the 812 participants enrolled in a university level physical education class, 85% had positive perceptions of their high school physical education experiences (rated them “good” or “very good”), while 13% rated their high school physical education programs as “poor” or “very poor.” Students in this study perceived themselves to be generally competent in the skills needed for success. They did not report enrolling in the class in order to learn a new skill but rather to continue participation in an activity they already knew they enjoyed. They also felt they had previously been successful in high school physical education. 82% of the students enrolled in a college PE activity class stated that they were successful or highly successful in high school PE, while only 16% of the students enrolled in the PE activity class in college deemed themselves as unsuccessful or very unsuccessful in high school PE. In addition, 86% of these students had opted to take more than the one required semester of physical education in high school, suggesting they enjoyed physical activity because they were inclined to partake in physical education class when it was not required. Implied in the Hildebrand and Johnson (2001) study is

the need for high school physical education courses to be structured in such a way that the experience promotes continued physical activity participation later into adulthood and college. Determining the reasons students enroll and participate in physical education classes in college can be influenced positively by students' high school PE experiences as has been shown by Hildebrand and Johnson (2001), and can also be influenced negatively for further enrollment in PE in high school and perhaps college as shown Van Daalen (2005). Quality high school experiences can be influential in reducing the physical inactivity trends of college adults (Hildebrand & Johnson, 2001), while negative high school experiences can have the opposite effect.

### **Conclusion**

From the literature it has been seen that many studies have researched student experiences in PE courses, and have found that students those students that do not enjoy PE often do not participate later in life and often lead unhealthy lives. In contrast, those students who enjoy PE often engage in healthier behaviors later in life which include enrolling in college PE courses. The motivations of college students to participate in physical activity in college are varied, but qualitative studies have shown that college aged students participate for weight management, social interaction, and enjoyment. The reasons why students enroll in college PE classes are for fun, to exercise regularly, and to improve their fitness. High school PE experiences can influence college physical activity levels, it has been found that students who enrolled in more PE in high school, were more physically fit in college. One study (Hildebrand and Johnson, 2001) has been conducted so far on the relationship between high school PE experiences and college PE class choice and it was found that those individuals who were competent and successful in high school PE continued to enroll in college PE courses. This

dissertation study focused on students reflecting back on their previous urban high school PE experiences and discussed the extent to which those experiences influenced the students' future physical activity and college PE class experiences. "Paying attention to students' voices is crucial for not only understanding physical education but for recognizing what motivates young adolescents to engage in physical activity" (Dyson et al., 2009, p. 47). This study offers changes to the urban PE curriculum and instructional strategies to improve the physical education programs to better meet the needs of students. The next section will discuss how this study was conducted and the methods used.

### **Summary of Relevant Research**

From the previous research, many questions are left unanswered, and it is the researcher's belief that this study answers some of those questions. In this section, the previous literature will be highlighted, focusing on the major findings, and those unanswered questions will be stated along with the ways this study addresses them.

The largest drop in physical activity in a young person's lifetime is during the transition from high school to college, making this an integral time to develop strategies to increase physical activity for this age range. It has been shown that PE in school systems plays an integral role in physical activity later in life. In high school PE, many students have both positive and negative experiences related to the courses offered, the curriculum, or the way the teacher teaches. Many high school PE programs focus on traditional teams sports like basketball and offer limited options for students, especially sports or activities that students are interested in. More research must be done to find out what students want out of their PE experience, what they enjoy and dislike, and what they need. This study asked those questions in the hopes of suggesting changes to improve PE programs to meet the needs of students.

Urban school systems pose further concerns as they often are understaffed, have unqualified teachers, have limited funding, have a lack of resources including equipment and space, the students have lower achievement scores, and the students feel the PE curriculum is often irrelevant to their lives. Student voice research in PE has shown that paying attention to students' voices is crucial for not only understanding physical education but for recognizing what motivates young adolescents to engage in physical activity (Dyson, 2006; Graham, 1995). Finding out what it is that urban students want from their PE program is an integral part of this research study and one that has not been studied much in the past. By understanding what students want and desire from their PE experience, researchers can suggest changes to the PE curriculum and teaching strategies of teachers to improve PE for urban students. This improvement can help lead to further enjoyment in physical activity by students and can help them to lead a healthier and happier life, one with decreased risks for obesity and diseases.

In regards to physical activity and physical education class choice in college, many factors affect a person's physical activity level, and previous PE experiences is one of those factors. The reasons students enrolled in college PE, based on previous studies, was for fun and to stay in shape or to maintain good health. This study sought to understand the influence that urban high school PE had on college PE class choice and college physical activity involvement. By asking students about their experiences in high school with regards to physical activity and PE, and by asking about the students' experiences choosing a PE class in college and about their physical activity involvement in college, the researcher gained intimate knowledge about students' experiences. Those experiences, their likes and dislikes, their desires and needs, as expressed by the participants, were the integral variable in this study, and one not previously studied.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this study was to understand first-year college students' experiences of physical education in urban high school settings and how those experiences affected their decisions to enroll in basic physical activity courses and participate in physical activity at a southeastern university. As Maxwell (2005) states, "It is useful to distinguish among three different kinds of goals for doing a study: personal goals, practical goals, and intellectual (or scholarly) goals" (p. 16). The intellectual goals of this study were to determine the factors influencing urban high school experiences and the students' decisions to enroll in physical education and to participate in physical activity in college. The practical goals of this study were to find out what can be done to change the curriculum, course offerings, and teaching strategies in high school to improve the quality of physical education programs in urban environments.

The epistemological framework of social constructivism served as a guide for and the reasoning behind the methods used in this study. This study used a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research was used instead of quantitative research because Culp (2008) states that "Qualitative research is a valid mode of inquiry that can be used to study urban physical education" (p. 33) and qualitative research may be able to provide an answer as to why adults do or do not participate in sport and physical activity (Allender et al., 2006). In addition, qualitative inquiry is a methodology by which "voice" can be given to marginalized groups, thus presenting a means by which to gain different interpretations of events that cannot be shown solely by information reported from quantitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this study, urban PE students are considered a marginalized group for two

reasons: 1) PE students are not typically asked to talk about their experiences, therefore they are underrepresented, and 2) at the specific southeastern university where the study was conducted, students from urban environments are considered the minority among the student population as most students enrolled come from suburban school systems. Furthermore, qualitative methods offer an in-depth insight into individuals' experiences and perceptions of the motives and barriers to participation in sport and physical activity (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005). Qualitative research was also chosen as recent trends in research on sports and movement related concepts like physical activity supports the incorporation of qualitative methods based on growing interest in deeper level analysis (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

This chapter is organized into several sections. The first section focuses on the epistemological framework, the theoretical perspective, and the methodological framework used in this study. The second section centers on the research design, the participants, the site, and the methods of data collection. The third section explains the analytical strategies used to analyze the data, specifically the constant comparison method of grounded theory.

## **Epistemological Framework**

### **Social Constructivism**

Social constructivism served as the framework used for the overarching approach to this study. This research was an attempt to make sense of and interpret students' experiences. In this study, students' experiences were used to help enact change in urban PE curriculum. One way to access students' voices is to use a constructivist approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 1994). In social constructivism, it is stated that humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives – we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). There are three main tenets of



social constructivism, each will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs: 1) constructivists assume that there is no one universal truth and that the world view and ontological reality are based on the observer and participants (Patton, 2002), 2) constructivists also believe in multiple realities and that there is no clearly defined reality or truth, but rather, multiple and conflicting interpretations (Schwandt, 1994), 3) constructivists believe that an individual's knowledge and meaning are culturally and socially developed (Patton, 2002), and through human interactions, meanings of importance are placed on actions, events, and situations.

Constructivism is rooted in a relativist ontology, a transactional epistemology, and a hermeneutic dialectical methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In contrast to the post-positivistic approach, a basic assumption of constructivism is the idea that human social worlds are distinct from the natural and physical world and must be examined differently (Guba & Lincoln, 1990; Patton, 2002). In concert with postmodernism, constructivists purport a relativistic stance, whereby meaning and knowledge are relative to a specific time and place (Patton, 2002). The nature of knowledge is therefore acquired through individual reconstructions (e.g. everyday interactions, etc.) and supported through consensus (e.g. confirmation through multiple sources, affirmation from multiple individuals in different contexts, etc.) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). More specifically, Patton (2002) explained that “scientific knowledge, then, is socially constructed like all other knowledge systems and, as such, is relative to and contingent on the methods and paradigms within which it was generated” (pp. 100-101). Furthermore, knowledge is a reflection of social structures and power relations that permeate a specific context (e.g. nation, state, local, etc.). Social constructivists argue facts are social constructions and their truthfulness is predicated on what is considered a fact and by

whom those determinations are made (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Patton, 2002).

Social constructivism states that there is no one universal truth and that the world view and ontological reality are based on the observer and participants (Patton, 2002). In social constructivism, it is provided that individuals in society seek an understanding of the world in which they live, and these individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences which are directed towards certain objects or things (Creswell, 2009). These subjective meanings are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in their lives (Creswell, 2009). Constructivism is related to how human beings interpret the world in which they live through interactions with others in society. This allows each person in society to have a subjective view of different situations.

Social constructivism maintains that an individual's knowledge and meaning are culturally and socially developed (Patton, 2002). Through these interactions, meanings of importance have been placed on athletics and sport in college. In this study, the researcher looked at how college students interpreted their world and how they came to make decisions of the classes they took, based off of their interpretations of the world. The researcher spoke with students to see how they made meaning of what classes were important and why those classes were important to them. The researcher also asked about the students' past experiences in urban high school PE and the extent to which those past experiences influenced their current decisions of physical activity and physical education.

For the purposes of the current study, the examination of students' experiences in high school PE and its influence on future physical activity and physical education was inherently constructivist in nature. Each student had his/her own experiences that were separate and

unique; there was not one absolute truth. Each student created his/her own reality, with his/her own motivations, for enrolling in a specific PE class and for participating in physical activity. Why a person decides to participate in physical activity is multidimensional (Duda & Tappe, 1989; Gill et al., 1983; Kenyon, 1968; Markland & Hardy, 1993). Thus, the researcher's use of a social constructivist epistemological perspective allowed for the investigation of students' social constructions of knowledge within a specific cultural context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Patton, 2002). This research study solicited ways college students decided to enroll in PE classes and their recollections of lived experiences in previous PE courses. It also solicited an understanding of how previous PE experiences in urban schools influenced future PE and PA choices. The researcher asked students about their previous PE experiences and found out how their lived experiences in the past influenced their current physical education and physical activity choices. These ways of thinking are transmitted and reinforced somehow in their culture and society, but are different for each person, there is no one universal truth as to why all students participate in PE or PA in college, and no two people had the same experiences in their previous PE courses. As an example, someone might be motivated to participate in a PE class because they like a certain teacher, but they can just as easily be motivated not to engage in PA if their friends do not value physical activity. Students may have had negative or positive previous PE experiences, and these may influence their college PE choice and PA levels differently. The researcher's task was to find out to what extent experiences in urban high school PE had on the student's college PE choice and PA level.

## Theoretical Perspective

### Symbolic Interactionism

The theoretical perspective used to guide this dissertation study was symbolic interactionism. In this study, symbolic interactionism was used to determine the students' motivations and reasons for enrolling in PE and for participating in physical activity in college based off of their past experiences in urban high school physical education. Symbolic interactionism has some common core concepts that are closely related to concepts in social constructivism, such as the focus on individual meaning, social interaction, and constant change in society.

Blumer, the father of symbolic interactionism, believed that objects and events have no meaning apart from those meanings assigned by individuals during social interaction. The focus on meaning and interaction is the term symbolic interaction itself (Prasad, 2005). Blumer's (1969) three fundamental assumptions of symbolic interactionism are: 1) human beings act toward objects on the basis of the meanings that the objects hold for them, 2) the meaning of the objects arises out of the social interactions a person has in larger society, and 3) the meanings are not completely predetermined and are constantly being changed through an individual's interpretations (Prasad, 2005, p. 21).

Symbolic interactionism states that all social phenomena are symbolic and that objects, actions and events hold different meanings for different people (Prasad, 2005). In this study, this is an important tenet as each individual participant had a different lived experience due to their experiences in urban high school physical education and how their interpretation and meaning they created from those experiences influenced their actions in college. Each participant had a

different meaning and that meaning influenced them in different ways in regards to their physical activity involvement and college PE class choice.

Another central concept of symbolic interactionism is the idea of roles that people create and play a part in. A person's self-image influences the process by which they assign meaning to events and objects. A role refers to the socially defined expectations of behavior for individuals in particular social situations (Colton, 1987). These roles in turn affect future decisions and constructions of realities (Blumer, 1969; Prasad, 2005). The roles and the meanings of roles also constantly change and different social situations require different roles (Prasad, 2005). In this study, the roles the participants were that of first semester, first year students in a southeastern university reflecting back on their urban high school experiences in PE. Their role identity had likely changed from what it was in high school and will likely constantly change through their college career as they age. Their role, as that of recently graduated high school students, was important to the study because the researcher wanted to have students reflect back on their previous high school PE experiences; a central aspect of the study was having students be in the role of student, and not in the role of brother, daughter, friend, or employee. Therefore, all participants were obtained at a university in an existing PE class and interviewed in an office at the university about their experiences in their urban PE school program. All of this lead the researcher to assume that the role the participants were displaying at the time of the interview was that of student.

Another important concept of symbolic interactionism is negotiated orders. Negotiated orders is how social reality is reached, the realities of people are adjusted into something that all individuals can agree upon. The important aspect of negotiation is the fact that it is socially constructed through interaction (Prasad, 2005). For instance, the concept of a school system is

socially constructed and is negotiated in an on-going basis in everyday situations. It is not fixed, but rather, fluid and is amenable to change (Prasad, 2005). In this study, the concept of PE within the school system was socially constructed by the parents, the teachers, the school's funding, the principals, the school board, the students, and the location of the school within a certain city setting. Therefore, it is a held belief of the researcher that PE can be changed and improvements can be made to the teaching strategies and curricular offerings.

In regards to research, "symbolic interactionists seek an intimate understanding of social situations largely from the standpoint of the participants themselves" (Prasad, 2005, p. 23) Symbolic interactionists also desire to enter into the everyday worlds of the people they are interested in and want to understand these worlds from the perspectives of the individuals who inhabit them (Prasad, 2005). For this study, the researcher wanted to learn about the experiences of each participant from their own words, therefore symbolic interactionism fit as a theoretical perspective to guide this study. The methods favored in the tradition of symbolic interactionism are observation and interviews (Prasad, 2005) and the researcher used interviews that were in-depth and meaning centered. Symbolic interactionism is closely related to grounded theory in that the researcher poses broad questions and refrains from introducing too many theoretical propositions at the start of the study and theory is generated out of the research findings, rather than the researcher having a clear set of conceptual relationships that need to be confirmed (Prasad, 2005). Constant comparison method is a method of grounded theory analysis and will be discussed next.

## **Methodological Framework**

### **Constant Comparison**

In this research, the researcher did not conduct grounded theory, the researcher was not looking to develop and test a cohesive theory that applied to why all urban high school students enrolled in certain college PE classes, but rather the researcher used a method of grounded theory analysis, which is the constant comparative method. In the constant comparative method, the data were analyzed only enough to generate or suggest theory, but not to actually develop or test a theory. The researcher used raw data to develop a thematic overview of important participant perspectives emerging from their urban high school PE programs. Constant comparative method is likely to be applied to any kind of qualitative data including interviews. The constant comparative method often draws on some of the tenets of symbolic interactionism and due to its similarities with symbolic interactionism and social constructivism, it was chosen as the method of data analysis for this study.

The methodological framework used in this study, or the way the data was analyzed, was by using a constant comparative method, which is a form of grounded theory analysis. Constant comparison method is a method of grounded theory that involves coding to identify categories and then working those categories inductively into themes. In this method, the researcher develops ideas on a level of generality higher in conceptual abstraction than the qualitative material being analyzed. Constant comparison method was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is “concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems” (p. 104). There are four stages of the constant comparative method: 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category,

2) integrating categories and their properties, 3) delimiting the theory, and 4) writing the theory. Each will be discussed below.

**Comparing incidents applicable to each category.** To start the researcher codes the data into as many categories as possible, as data emerges to fit a category, or as categories emerge to fit the data. An important aspect of the coding is that the researcher must compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As categories emerge, the researcher notices that there are categories constructed by himself (often the explanations) and ones that come from the language of the research (often the labels). After coding three or four times, the researcher records a memo of their ideas (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Memoing is explained later in this chapter and is an integral part of the constant comparative method. As clear ideas on emerging theory are recorded, the researcher continues coding and comparing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Integrating categories and their properties.** In this part, memos are still short, but as coding continues, the units change to categories that resulted from initial comparisons of the incidents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this stage, the categories start to become integrated, resulting in a unified whole. The theory develops as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons that force the researcher to make some theoretical sense of each comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Delimiting the theory.** Delimiting occurs at the level of theory and at the level of categories. As the researcher thinks about his/her data and constantly compares the data and looks closely at the categories, similarities and broad generalities occur. Reduction and generalization occurs when the researcher can formulate the theory with a smaller set of higher order concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the number of categories are reduced, and the



theory grows, the researcher becomes committed to the theory and his/her coding and analyzing of data can become more focused. In this stage, theoretical saturation occurs. Theoretical sampling occurs as part of the process of achieving theoretical saturation, which is when there are no new aspects or information emerging from the data to warrant developing comparisons and coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

**Writing the theory.** Once the researcher has the coded data, the memos, and the theory, they present the major themes of the theory. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) state “when the researcher is convinced that his analytic framework forms a systematic substantive theory, that is a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied,...he can publish his results with confidence” (p.113). To start writing a theory, the memos are organized from each category and summarized and written about (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Constant comparative method is further discussed in the data analysis section later in this chapter, and outlines how the researcher used Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) work in this study, highlighting coding, memoing, categories, and themes.

### **Research Design**

The overall design of this research was based on qualitative open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Constant comparison method was used to analyze the data. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What were first-year college students’ experiences of their urban high school physical education program?
2. What critical incidents stood out for students about their urban high school physical education program?

- a. What do students recollect about the high school PE curriculum? What did they find valuable? What would they prefer eliminated?
  - b. What were students' experiences of the instructional strategies? Which ones stand out as being useful or effective? Which ones were negatively experienced?
3. What kinds of decisions were made in the selection of basic physical education classes?

### **Site Selection and Contextual Information**

Colleges and universities are important settings to advance awareness and promotion of healthy behaviors. The campus community provides a unique setting ideal for promoting lifestyle change among a captive audience (Sparling & Snow, 2002). The many opportunities available to participate in physical activity such as intramural sports, PE classes, campus recreation, and varsity sports make the university setting a great asset to change the health behaviors of students (Calfas et al., 2000). The site selected for this study was a NCAA division I four year public university in the southeastern United States.

The southeastern university is comprised of approximately 36,000 undergraduate and graduate students. The city the university is in has a population of approximately 115,000 people. The college population is 60% female and 40% male. The university has graduate students, students from other states and countries, and students from different ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The university has a wide variety of majors. Of students who were Freshman enrolled in a PEDB course in the Fall 2013 semester, 77% of survey respondents were Caucasian, 10% were Asian, 10% African-American, and 3% Hispanic. Most students also attended a suburban high school (69%), while 16% attended a rural high school and 15% attended an urban high school. The majority of students at the university also came from wealthy households, with 48% of the Freshman having a family household income of \$90,000 or

higher. In general, most students at the southeastern university are white, from suburban areas, and come from fairly wealthy families.

### **Basic Physical Education Program**

All undergraduate students at the university are required to take and pass a one credit hour PE class in order to graduate or have the credit requirement met by credit from another institution, which must be approved by the registrar's office. Any student (graduate or undergraduate) can choose to enroll in a basic PE class. Students self-register for courses after meeting with their academic advisor. All PE activity courses were pass or fail, no letter grades were given. The classes required online reading and quizzes, regular attendance, and goal setting. The PE activity program usually consists of approximately 100 sections for students to choose from each Fall and Spring semester, and about 20 sections during the summer semester. During the Fall 2013 semester, there were 99 sections of PE available. In each section of each course, every semester, there are approximately 30 students enrolled, and the number of first-year students enrolled in each section varies. All courses were one credit hour and met either twice a week for 50 minutes for 16 weeks, for 50 minutes three times a week for 10 weeks, or for 1 hour and 15 minutes two times a week for 10 weeks. All courses were taught by teaching assistants (TA's) or by instructors employed by the university. Courses were taught indoors or outdoors, depending on the course.

The courses offered were either sport specific (badminton, basketball, bowling, golf, racquetball, softball, soccer, Ultimate Frisbee, swimming, tennis, and volleyball) or health/fitness specific (ropes, outdoor adventure, backpacking, self-defense, weight training, aerobic dance, spinning, body conditioning, jogging, walking, FFL Swimming, and weight management).

Please see Table 3.1 for a list of the courses at the university and their classification as fitness or sport oriented.

There were beginning and intermediate levels offered for certain sport specific courses (golf, tennis, volleyball, racquetball, and swimming). Aerobic dance, spinning, body conditioning, jogging, walking, weight management, and one swimming class were all considered Fit for Life (FFL) classes and they met for 10 weeks. The main purpose of the FFL classes was to enhance fitness levels, convey knowledge, and promote understanding which facilitated an awareness and interest in life-long physical activity and wellness.

Courses like the basic PE classes at the southeastern university in this study provide an opportunity to develop and increase understanding and appreciation for lifelong participation in a healthy lifestyle that includes regular physical activity (Leenders et al., 2003). This specific school was chosen for many reasons. The school requires all students to take at least one PE activity class, giving them the opportunity to experience what PE is like in college. Another reason the school was chosen is because the school typically enrolls white, wealthy, suburban students. Minorities on campus include international students, African American, Hispanics, Asians, students from low-income families, and urban students. The students interviewed all self-reported as attending urban high schools, some from poorer families, and some from non-white ethnic backgrounds; therefore the researcher thought the setting could provide rich and detailed data as urban students are not the norm.

### **Participants**

The individuals included in this study were undergraduate first-year students at the southeastern university that were enrolled in a basic PE activity class during the Fall of 2013. All participants were between 18-25 years old and included both genders.

Table 3.1  
*List of all PEDB courses and their classification as sports or fitness oriented*

<b>Health/Fitness Class</b>	<b>Sports Class</b>
FFL Jogging	Basketball
FFL Walking	Badminton
FFL Swimming	Bowling
FFL Weight Management	Beginning Golf
FFL Spinning	Intermediate Golf
FFL Body Conditioning	Beginning Racquetball
FFL Aerobic Dance	Intermediate Racquetball
Intro to Weight Training	Beginning Tennis
Self-Defense	Intermediate Tennis
Ropes	Beginning Volleyball
Outdoor Adventure	Intermediate Volleyball
Backpacking	Beginning Swimming
	Intermediate Swimming
	Soccer
	Ultimate Frisbee
	Softball

### **Why the Participants Were Selected**

The researcher focused on first-year students, as they were closest to having just finished high school and could reflect back on their previous experiences and explain how those experiences influenced their future PE and PA decisions. In addition, they were enrolled in a PE

class in college and could compare their college PE experiences with their high school PE experiences.

### **Purposeful Sampling**

Purposeful sampling was used to target the specific institution and participants that met a certain criteria for the study (Gratton & Jones, 2004; Patton, 2002). According to Maxwell (2005), purposeful selection is “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88). Roulston (2010) would call the selection of participants a cluster sampling, as the researcher obtained the participants from one naturally occurring group (PE class enrollees during the Fall 2013 semester at a public southeastern university who previously took an urban high school PE class).

The researcher classified the participants into two categories: 1) the survey participants and 2) the interview participants, but the relationship between the two categories is that the interview participants were also survey participants, as the interviewers came from the pool of survey participants.

### **Survey Participants**

**IRB approval.** The researcher gained IRB approval during the summer of 2013 from the university’s IRB office.

**Approval from PEDB supervisor.** The researcher emailed the PEDB supervisor to obtain the email addresses of current TA’s and to ask permission to email them to garner participants for the study (See Appendix A).

**Approval from TA’s.** The researcher emailed TA’s at the start of the Fall 2013 semester asking them for permission to come and administer a survey during the first few weeks of their

class (See Appendix B). After gaining approval, the researcher set a date and time for the class visit.

**Administering the survey.** The researcher travelled to all PE classes that did not conflict with his academic schedule. During the second, third, and fourth week of classes, the researcher visited the PE class at the predetermined time. The researcher asked to have a few minutes at the start of class after the instructor had taken attendance and made announcements. The researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of the study and confidentiality (See Appendix C). The instructor then had first-year students follow the researcher to a quiet area. The researcher gave students a pen and two copies of the informed consent form (Appendix D). The students did not have to participate in the study. If they did not wish to participate, they rejoined class. If they chose to participate in the survey, they signed both copies of the consent form and handed one copy to the researcher, keeping the other for their records. The researcher then gave the students a copy of the survey (Appendix E) and they started filling it out. Students therefore were self-selecting themselves and the researcher must rely on their responses as truth. Once the students were done with the surveys, they turned the survey in and then returned to class. The surveys were collected by the researcher and stored in the researcher's office in a locked desk.

**Classes attended.** The researcher attended 77 sections of the 99 possible sections, meaning 78% of all PE classes were visited. Classes not visited due to scheduling conflicts were: 5 bowling sections, 11 golf sections, 1 ropes section, 1 outdoor adventure section, 2 backpacking sections, 1 self-defense section, and 1 directed study section. This means that 22 of the 99 sections were not visited by the researcher and therefore, no surveys were administered.

The researcher visited 39 sports class sections and 38 health/fitness class sections. The number of students in each class that were first-year students varied.

**Survey participant statistics.** In total, the researcher met initially with 389 Freshman in the 77 sections of the PE classes. Of those 389, only 4 did not wish to fill out the survey, meaning 385 surveys were returned. This is a response rate of 99%. Of the 385 surveys returned, only 1 was not completely filled out, meaning it was unusable. 384 of the 385 surveys were usable, meaning 99.7% of the surveys given out were completed in full. Of the 384 completed surveys, 57% of the students enrolled in a sport related PE class as Freshman, while 43% of the students enrolled in a fitness related PE class as a Freshman. Of the 384 completed surveys, 15% of the students attended rural high schools 70% attended suburban high schools, and 15% attended urban high schools. Of the 384 completed surveys, 35% of the survey participants were male, while 65% were female, which was close to the 60% female and 40% male gender distribution of the university Freshman class (Factbook, 2012). Of the 384 completed surveys, 78% of the respondents were white while 22% were non-white, which was very close to the 73% white and 27% non-white ethnic distribution of the university Freshman class (Factbook, 2012). However, qualitative studies do not necessarily look for generalizability, thus the sampling does not need to reflect the larger population.

### **Semi-structured Interview Participants**

**IRB approval.** The researcher gained IRB approval during the summer of 2013 from the university's IRB office.

**Approval from interviewees.** Once all surveys have been collected, the researcher looked at each survey and looked at student responses to the questions of “where did you attend high school” and “how many PE classes did you take in high school”. If a student selected the



“urban” box as having attended high school in an urban setting and if they also selected at least one or more for the number of PE classes they took in high school, their surveys were pulled aside for further review. The surveys were used as a selection criterion to get a diverse sample for the interviews. Forty nine of the 384 completed surveys (or 12.8%) met the above mentioned criteria; therefore the pool from which potential interviewees could be obtained was 49 students. The researcher then emailed (See Appendix F) the 49 students by using their email address provided on the survey and asked them if they would be willing to be interviewed. If a student did not want to be interviewed, they were not interviewed. If a student agreed to be interviewed, the researcher set up an appointment to conduct the interview.

**Administering the interview.** Of the 49 possible interviewees: 2 responded that they wished to be interviewed, but the researcher and the interviewee could not organize a time; 1 responded to be interviewed and a time was set, but the interviewee never showed up and did not respond to follow up emails, and 30 never responded to the email. Therefore, of the 49 possible interviewees, 16 students (or 33%) actually participated in the interviews. Once the date and time of the interview was set, the researcher met the student in the lobby of the gym on-campus and then led the interviewee to a conference room in the same building. Informed consent was obtained by giving two copies of the informed consent form to the participant (See Appendix G). The participant could choose not to be part of the interview, and if so, were free to leave. Of the 16 interviewees, all signed informed consent and all participated fully in the interview, no one voluntarily withdrew. After signing the informed consent, the researcher explained the interview protocol (See Appendix H). For the interview phase, the researcher asked open-ended interview questions (Appendix I). The researcher interviewed 16 students for approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes each, focused specifically on their urban high school PE experiences and how those

experiences influenced their college PE class choice and PA level. The researcher understands that 16 participants is a small number, but the amount of participants is not important, but rather, the quantity of participants should align with the purpose of the study and the depth of the analysis (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Each of the interview participants was involved in in-depth interviewing that elicited rich and detailed experiences and information. The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes.

**Interview participant statistics.** All of the 16 interviewees had attended an urban high school and had participated in at least one PE class in high school and all were Freshman in college. Based on the survey responses of the 16 interviewees, 12 were white or Caucasian while the other 4 were from a non-white ethnic background, meaning a 75% white and 25% non-white breakdown, which was very close to the 73% white and 27% non-white ethnic distribution of the university Freshman class (Factbook, 2012). In addition, 12 of the 16 were females, while 4 were males, meaning a 75% female and 25% male breakdown, which was fairly close to the 60% female and 40% male gender distribution of the university Freshman class (Factbook, 2012), but even closer to the 65% female and 35% male distribution of Freshman taking PE classes who filled out a survey. Of the 16 interviewees, 12 enrolled in a sports related PE class, while 4 enrolled in a fitness related PE class their freshman year of college. In addition, most of the interview participants came from wealthy households, with 69% of the participants coming from a combined family household income of \$90,000 or more. Only 13% of the participants interviewed came from a family that had a household income of \$10,000-\$29,000. The interviewees as a whole were fairly representative of the university as a whole, of the Freshman class, and of the Freshman enrolled in a PE class who filled out the survey, however, qualitative studies do not necessarily look for generalizability, thus the sampling does not need to reflect the

larger population. Table 3.2 shows a summary of the interviewees' demographics sorted by course type.

Table 3.2  
*Summary of interviewees*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>PE class in College</b>	<b>Sport or Fitness College PE</b>
Callie	Female	Caucasian	Beg Volleyball	Sport
Chris	Female	Caucasian	Beg Volleyball	Sport
Sylvia	Female	Caucasian	Beg Volleyball	Sport
Juliet	Female	Caucasian	Beg Volleyball	Sport
Emily	Female	Caucasian	Beg Volleyball	Sport
Zane	Male	Caucasian	Beg Tennis	Sport
Sally	Female	Hispanic	Beg Tennis	Sport
Sandy	Female	Caucasian	Intermediate Tennis	Sport
Jamie	Male	Caucasian	Beg Racquetball	Sport
Amber	Female	Hispanic	Beg Racquetball	Sport
John	Male	Caucasian	Basketball	Sport
Stacy	Female	African-American	Badminton	Sport
Diamond	Female	Asian	FFL Jogging	Fitness
Hannah	Female	Caucasian	FFL Jogging	Fitness
Dale	Female	Caucasian	FFL Swimming	Fitness
Johann	Male	Caucasian	Weight Training	Fitness

### **Methods of Data Collection**

This research study involved two parts. The first part was a close and open-ended survey administered to all first-year students enrolled in a college physical education class for the Fall 2013 semester. The second part involved interviewing selected first-year students who filled out the survey and took at least one PE class during high school. The researcher administered surveys to all first-year students in 77 PE classes during the Fall 2013 semester. Then the researcher contacted all students who stated on the survey that they attended an urban high school and asked for volunteers to interview. The researcher conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews. The unit of analysis was the individual student enrolled in a PE class at the

southeastern university who had previously attended an urban high school and who was enrolled in at least one PE class in high school. The researcher conducted 30 to 45 minute interviews with 16 participants during the course of the Fall 2013 semester. The researcher followed the interview guide in Appendix I.

### **Survey**

The survey (Appendix E) contained close and open-ended questions on why students enrolled in college PE; the health benefits they expected to receive from college PE; their experiences in high school PE; how their high school PE influenced their PA and PE choices; whether they went to an urban, suburban, or rural high school; and demographic information. The survey was modified from a survey used by Weinfeldt and Visek (2009) which was previously used by Leenders et al. (2003) and Savage (1998). Leenders et al. (2003) field tested the questionnaire and reliability was established. The kappa index for reliability was greater than 0.52. Test-retest reliability was between 0.90 and 0.96. Using recommended survey methodology as a guide, items were developed with appropriate response options to identify the range of potential answers (DeVellis, 2003; Rea & Parker, 2005).

The survey was administered to all first-year students in 77 classes. The survey was used as a way to gain access to students from urban high schools. Unfortunately the researcher could not visit all 99 sections of PE classes, which is a weakness to the study. Due to scheduling conflicts, all classes could not be visited. The researcher tried to combat this issue by visiting the largest number of classes possible during the three week period. The researcher used the surveys to obtain a diverse population of students to interview. The surveys were a secondary source of data collection to the interviews, which comprised the majority of the data of this study.

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

The individual interviews were semi-structured and open-ended (Patton, 2002). This allowed the researcher to have an interview guide (Appendix I) to help focus the questions, but also allowed the researcher to ask for more clarity or to focus on specifics as the interview progressed. The interview guide ensures that the same basic questions and lines of inquiry are taken with each participant (Patton, 2002). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) state, “the interview format should accommodate contextual shifts and reflexivity” (p. 55). The interview guide allows the researcher to ask questions to guide the study pertaining to the research questions, but allows the respondent to give insight in a free flowing manner that is not restricted.

The interviews provided the researcher with more rich, detailed data due to access to the participants’ thoughts for a longer period of time. The focus of the interviews was specifically on the experiences the students had in urban high school PE and on the extent to which those experiences influenced their future decisions regarding enrolling in their college PE class and on their current physical activity involvement. This allowed each participant’s voice to be heard and allowed them to tell their own story. Questions were asked about basic background information to develop comfort and trust. Questions were asked about their high school PE experiences, about their first enrollment in a PE class at the university and reasons for choosing it, what they liked and disliked about their PE classes, and what aspects of their PE experiences had been enjoyable and what could have been done differently.

The participants were selected for the interviews by emailing the students who completed the survey by using their self-reported email address off of the returned surveys (See Appendix F). The students who were contacted for interviews were those that stated on the survey that they had attended an urban high school and had taken at least one PE class in high

school. The researcher set the dates and times for the interviews with those students willing to participate in the study. The interviews took place in a conference room in the gym on campus, which was a safe and quiet place. It is important when interviewing, to find a place that is private enough where the participant feels safe and secure in answering questions and that is free from off-putting background noise (Gratton & Jones, 2004). The interview room was welcoming, yet removed from the students' daily routine enough to let the participant know it was a serious interview. The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and the students were allowed to stop the interview at any time if they chose. All students consented to the interview and all interviews were digitally recorded. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively for themes.

The researcher was unable to interview every first-year student enrolled in a college PE class during Fall 2013 who had taken at least one PE class in an urban high school setting due to non-response from potential interviewees. Thirty students did not respond at all to the email, meaning they could not be interviewed; therefore the researcher had to rely on those individuals who volunteered to be a part of the study. This is a weakness in this study, as people who volunteer may be inherently different from people who do not volunteer. The researcher tried to combat this issue by getting a diverse sample of students from different types of classes, genders, and racial background (See Table 3.2).

## **Data Analysis**

### **Survey**

The survey provided a background for the interview in that it was used to obtain the participants for the interviews. The surveys from all first-year students were looked at and those students who responded that they attended an urban high school and took at least one high school

PE class were separated. Of the 384 completed surveys, 49 surveys (or 12.8%) met the above requirement. This was the pool from which the researcher contacted students for interviews.

The surveys were not analyzed further for this dissertation.

### **Semi-structured Interviews**

Of the 49 potential interviewees, 16 students (or 33%) actually participated in interviews. From a methodological standpoint of analysis, the research conducted was analyzed using a constant comparison method, which is a form of grounded theory analysis. Constant comparison method is a method of grounded theory that involves coding to identify categories and then working those categories inductively into themes. Grounded theory analyses include moving from lower level coding to higher level theorizing (Patton, 2002). Grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the researcher generates a general explanation of a process shaped by the views of the participants (Creswell et al., 2007). The researcher gathered data from the participants and this data guided the study. This allowed for greater objectivity as conclusions and theories came from the data and the participants, but not from the researcher's preconceived beliefs (Patton, 2002). The key was to give voice to the participants (Patton, 2002; Charmaz, 2006). This means the researcher relied heavily on the emergent data that came from the participants of the study (Charmaz, 2006). As Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) state "the purpose of this process is to present the reader with the stories identified throughout the analytical process, the salient themes, recurring language, and patterns of belief linking people and settings together" (p. 31). Using this methodological framework, the researcher was able to understand the students' experiences in urban high school PE and how their previous experiences influenced their curricular and physical activity choices in college. The researcher wanted to give voice to each of those students and understand their previous experiences and how those

experiences influenced their present behaviors. The researcher then drew conclusions from the data they provided.

Constant comparison, as part of grounded theory, refers to approaching data with an open mind to the results that come from the data. In contrast to the positivistic paradigm, this stance suggests social worlds must be examined through the interpretation of subjective human experience. Therefore, the claims of objective realities are not upheld. This stance also rejects claims of causal explanations and methods of analysis; rather this stance views the lived experiences of individuals as complex.

To begin the analytic process, the researcher developed codes (See Appendix J for example codes). In this stage of analysis, the codes were short and focused on defining the action (Charmaz, 2006). Codes allowed the researcher to organize the transcriptions for constant comparison. The codebook was used for all open ended responses and all interviews in order to be compared to one another with all possible codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The next step was for the codes to be developed into categories (See Appendix K). As the data was coded the responses were compared within categories and between categories, also called constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), emerging themes developed (See Appendix L). This process generated the findings of the study. Emergent themes and commonalities were looked for in the data and grounded in the responses of the participants. The themes developed helped to answer the research questions and came directly from the data, not from the researcher's pre-conceived notions or from previous theories. The researcher specifically used in vivo coding and memoing during the data analysis while developing the codebook, the categories, and the emergent themes.



**In vivo coding.** In vivo themes were the main form of theory development in order to ensure that the findings came from the participants and that each of them were given a voice to express their experiences in urban high school PE (Patton, 2002; Gratton & Jones, 2004; Charmaz, 2006). To begin the analytic process the researcher developed codes (See Appendix J). For the interpretive analysis, these codes were short and focused on defining the action (Charmaz, 2006). These codes allowed the researcher to keep the records organized and available for constant comparison. This constant comparison was done once the codebook was established. This codebook was used for the interview responses in order to be compared to one another with all possible codes, which is at the center of the constant comparison method. Then the categories were determined by refining the codes (See Appendix K). The categories were then categorized into themes (See Appendix L) using memos. The in-vivo codes allowed the researcher to use insider terms from the participants that captured and reflected their perspectives better than using the researcher's own codes (Charmaz, 2006).

**Memoing.** Another integral concept of the constant comparative method of data analysis is memoing. As the researcher went through the transcripts, he looked for common themes in the data and then coded them with an overarching theme so that they could be lumped into certain categories. Memoing usually occurs after the researcher has coded data from interview transcripts (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Memos are things the researcher notices and eventually can be built into a theory following a grounded theory method. Memos are ideas and thoughts the researcher has in regards to theory development and are usually taken in note form throughout the constant comparative method. Memos catch the researcher's thoughts and capture the comparisons with the codes which tell the researcher the directions needed to pursue (Charmaz, 2006). These memos allowed the researcher to develop some themes backed with evidence,

which allowed the researcher to draw conclusions and answer the research questions. If enough commonalities were noticed in the data to support a grounded theory, the researcher would have developed a theory as to why students decided to enroll in certain PE classes in college based off of their previous experiences in urban high school PE programs. The data would be generalized into a cohesive theme, in essence a grounded theory. For this study, a grounded theory was not developed, but rather, a thematic analysis was conducted using the constant comparison method. Themes were developed and the next chapter will discuss these themes.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to understand first-year college students' experiences of physical education in urban high school settings and to examine how these experiences affected their decisions of enrollment and participation in basic physical activity classes at a southeastern university. The research questions used to ground this study were as follows: 1) What were first-year college students' experiences of their urban high school physical education program?, 2) What critical incidents stood out for students about their urban high school physical education program?, and 3) What kinds of decisions were made in the selection of basic physical education classes?

An interpretive research paradigm was used to analyze the participants' experiences in urban settings. Interpretation requires familiarity with the data, concentration, and openness to subtle undercurrents of social life (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The researcher used constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in the analysis of the data. The data were coded (See Appendix J), and then organized into categories (See Appendix K) and then into themes (See Appendix L). The data were coded using a constant comparative analysis, which allowed for comparisons between and within categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparative method was combined with memoing, leading to the emergence of several themes. The themes serve as a way to give voice and meaning to the participants' experiences as consistent with the theories of social constructivism and symbolic interactionism.

This chapter details the results of this dissertation study. In section I, the emphasis is on the students' involvement in physical activity during high school outside of the physical education setting. In section II, the focus is on the structure of urban high school PE programs

and its impact on student experiences in terms of likes and dislikes in regards to curriculum and instruction. In section III, the stress is placed on how student experiences influenced selection of college physical education classes and physical activity choices and experiences. In section IV, a summary of the results is provided.

### **Section I: Physical Activity during High School Outside of PE**

The major theme in this section concerns high level involvement in physical activities outside of the PE program, and a minor theme centers on low level involvement in physical activity outside of the PE program. Participants in this study described their levels of physical activity outside of the PE program as high and low. The theme of high level involvement has several subthemes. The students who were fairly active took part in: 1) structured physical activity opportunities, 2) unstructured physical activity opportunities, and 3) partook in social networks that included physical activity participation. The subtheme of low level physical activity involvement during high school was that the students' schoolwork overrode physical activity participation.

#### **Activities Outside of PE**

The majority (14 of 16) of participants interviewed were fairly active outside of physical education in high school. The interviewees provided information about structured physical activities such as: school sports teams, community/church sports, club sports, and unstructured physical activities such as: pick-up games, working out, outdoor activities, and the use of social networks in physical activity outside of the school PE setting, such as walking.

**Structured physical activities.** Participants were often involved in structured physical activities, meaning sports or activities organized by other people in the community or by the school. These structured activities were sponsored by an organization such as a school or club

sport or church and involved organized sports with structured practices, leagues, competition, uniforms, coaches, referees, scheduled games, playoffs or championships or tournaments, and fans. These sports were often fairly competitive and were elitist, in the fact that students often needed to be good enough at a sport to be on the team or because of the inherent financial obligations of a sport such as uniforms, travel to and from games, etc. The majority of the participants were involved in one way or another in structured physical activities, meaning they enjoyed the structure provided by others over the freedom of doing what they wanted when they wanted.

*Student involvement in school sports teams.* Of the 16 participants interviewed, 13 played at least one year on a sports team affiliated with the school they attended. School sport teams were what most people would say are varsity sports and involved structured practices, hired coaches, uniforms, regular games, statistics, playoffs, divisional, and state championships. School sponsored sports often require the participant to be good enough to be on the team as there are limited positions and these can often require fees for uniforms and travel. Therefore, there is a financial obligation and a time commitment from the standpoint of the parent for travel to and from games. The school sports represented were: tennis, basketball, lacrosse, swimming, cross country, soccer, and track and field. Many participants participated all four years for one sport, Hannah stated “I made varsity my freshman year in high school and played for four years, captain my senior year”. Others participated for one or two years, Juliet stated “I ran track for two years”. Some individuals competed in multiple sports in high school, for all four years, Emily stated “I was on cross country and lacrosse, so I like had a spring and a fall sport”. Most sports involved multiple practices a week for a few hours during season plus games. Sylvia stated “for cross country it would be just the fall, it would be five days a week and then our

meets on Saturdays. And then for soccer, five days a week during the spring and then games frequently”. Johann stated about the length of practice “Cross country varied a lot, depending on the run. It could be anywhere from 30 minutes to like two hours. Then soccer usually was an hour and a half”.

***Student involvement in community/church sports.*** A few students played community sports which were recreational in nature and often had more limited practices and a few games. The nature of community or church sports was that they were had structured practices, volunteer coaches, regular structured games, playoffs and sometimes championships. Church and community sports were often less elitist than club sports or school sponsored sports; often community and church leagues would take a participant simply because they had the desire to play. Unlike most team sports, church or community teams rarely selected players based on skill. In regards to financial and time obligations, church and community teams are often less demanding when compared to elitist sports; uniforms are often not required or provided by the organization, there are limited fees, and there are fewer games and practices. The community and church sports involved more leisure and less of a focus on competition; many of the participants did the sports and activities for fun and enjoyment. Emily stated “yeah, it was more, it was through my church so it was more, it wasn’t like intense like we cared about winning or anything. It was just like for fun and those practices were usually Saturdays and then we would have games Sundays”. Dale stated that “soccer was through the Y [YMCA] and places like that and we practiced two or three times a week”. Diamond stated that “I did dance with my temple and I did recreational swimming”.

***Student involvement in club sports.*** A few participants played on club teams, which are teams not affiliated with the school, and are typically more serious than community or church

leagues. Volleyball, tennis, soccer, and Ultimate Frisbee were all represented club sports in this study. Club sports often are considered to be a higher level than some high school sports, with soccer, volleyball and AAU basketball being examples of sports where clubs are often considered more elite than the high school sport. In volleyball and soccer, you usually play for your high school and also, if good enough, for a club team. The way you get recognized for college sports recruitment is often through club sports, instead of through high school sport. Club sports involve structured practices a few times a week, hired coaches, uniforms, regular games, statistics, playoffs, tournaments and club championships, dues or fees, and travel. Often participants in club sports must pay high fees to be involved, which help pay for the coach, the tournaments, the uniforms, the travel, and other fees. Therefore club sports are often for elite players and people from a high socio-economic status. A few of the participants involved in this study participated in club sports, but the majority did not. This could be due to the fact that this study focused on urban students and urban families are often from a lower socio-economic status and likely could not afford to have their sons and daughters involved in club sports. In regards to practice times, Chris stated “Then for my club volleyball, it was more, we practiced on Sundays, but it was like three day tournaments and maybe a practice in the weekend along with practice during the week”. Hannah played club soccer and had practices five days a week for an hour and a half per day and games on the weekends. Jamie played club Ultimate Frisbee and had practices three times a week for an hour.

**Unstructured physical activities.** Participants were less often involved in unstructured physical activities, meaning sports or activities that they themselves organized. These unstructured activities involved pick-up games, student initiated physical activity like working out, outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and walking. The unstructured activities were

random, and were done when the participant felt like they wanted to do a sport or activity. Often random walks or pick-up games would occur because the person wanted to do physical activity or because the opportunity presented itself. Unstructured activities did not involve practices, leagues, uniforms, coaches, referees, scheduled games, playoffs or championships or tournaments. These sports and activities often involved limited competition and were communal or were available to any individual, regardless of skill or financial status. The participants involved in unstructured activities enjoyed the freedom of doing what they wanted when they wanted, without having to follow someone else's directions.

***Student involvement in pick-up games.*** Participants also participated in pick-up games with friends occasionally in their neighborhood. Pick-up games differ from actual organized club sports, school sports and community sports in that they are not as structured, have varying rules, often use different equipment and are more informal with no referees. Pick-up games often involve a mixed group of people of differing ages and genders. There are no uniforms and the financial obligation and time commitment is non-existent as people play when it is convenient and when others are outside and willing to play. Sandy said “we would do Ultimate Frisbee or we go hit tennis balls sometimes”. Zane played football in his neighborhood and swam with friends. Emily stated “I would play like lacrosse pick-up games with my friends like if we didn't have practice that day”.

***Student initiated involvement in physical activities.*** Out of student volition, participants engaged in sports activities. Students took part in activities like running, shooting baskets, lifting weights, and doing aerobics. These activities were singular activities and did not involve games or competition between people, but were things people would do on their own for exercise. John would work out five days a week and shoot around on his hoop. He describes his workout



routine in detail: “Monday through Friday I would do, I'd switch off, let's say Monday I would do -- I have an app that I use and I -- it goes through just a bunch of different abdominal workouts, sit-ups, bicycle things, I don't know what you call those, working out obliques by doing touch that elbow to that knee, planks, yeah, I think I would just do each workout for a minute and that would equal up to about 15 minutes on one day and then the next day I wouldn't do abdominals I'd focus on arms and do curls.” Zane stated “I would do a 15 minute run and then come back and focus on legs or upper body or abs, just whatever I was going to do that day”. Hannah stated that her mom loved running with her on the weekends. Emily did hot yoga with her mom in addition to running on her own on the weekends. Chris would go for bike rides and runs along the beach. Amber worked out three times a week and “mostly ran on the treadmill, but also did weight exercises”.

Outdoor activities were designated as activities that the participants did that were not affiliated with a sport. Four participants were involved in these activities in their free time, either alone or with others, and typically involved hiking or camping. They typically were just hikes that they would randomly decide to go on, they were not structured walks with a group. Sylvia stated “I like doing hiking and other outdoor activities like that”. Amber said that “whenever we went on vacations, my parents would have us do family walks and hikes and stuff”. Emily lived close to a park in Georgia and “we would drive there on the weekends sometimes and we would like just hike up and have a picnic or something and just relax”. Sally often went on hikes with her friends.

Of the 16 participants, eight stated they walked on a regular basis. Walking was defined as walking the dogs, walking with friends or family, walking alone, or walking to school but was a structured walking activity, not simply the day-to-day routine of movement at school, but was

unstructured as they decided when and where to walk and were not part of a walking club, class, or group. Often participants would decide to walk with a family member or to school and would do so. Stacy walked on the weekends with her parents, Sandy walked around the track, Juliet walked around her neighborhood and walked her dog, Sally would walk with her friends, Dale would go on walks around the neighborhood with her mom, Chris stated “My mom and I would walk around the neighborhood” and she walked her dogs. Callie stated “but I would walk around my neighborhood, walk to school and stuff”. Amber also walked her dogs.

**Student involvement in physical activity due to social networks.** In all physical activity outside of high school PE, the researcher noticed a strong social component. However, some of the unstructured activities, such as student initiated involvement in physical activities or hiking or walking could involve a participant being alone and hardly interacting with another human being. These unstructured activities could be social or not. However, it was noticed that the majority of the unstructured activities of student initiated involvement in physical activities, hiking, and walking were social in nature. In total nine of the participants involved in walking, in student initiated involvement in physical activities, or in outdoor activities did so with some other person, either friends or family members. For instance: Amber’s walks and hikes involved her family, Stacy would walk with her parents, Chris, Hannah, and Dale walked with their moms around the neighborhood, Sally and Sandy would walk with their friends around the neighborhood at on the track, Johann ran trails with his friends, and Emily went on hikes with her family and also did hot yoga with her mom.

### **Limited Physical Activity Involvement Outside of Physical Education Program**

Only two of the 16 participants had low levels of physical activity outside of PE in high school. The two individuals who did not participate in physical activity outside of high school

were Stacy and Diamond. The main subtheme of the limited physical activity involvement was a focus by the students on academics.

**Schoolwork overrides physical activity involvement.** The two individuals who had little involvement outside of PE in high school both stated that they were focused on academics. They stated that their schoolwork was first and that physical activity took on a lesser importance, in other words, studying and doing well in school was more important than being physically active or being on a team. When asked about her involvement in physical activity outside of PE in high school, Stacy said, “very little, I was so focused on my academics that I just didn’t pay attention to physical activity outside”. She also did not play any sports and never lifted weights, or jogged. The only physical activity she would do was to occasionally walk with her parents. When asked about her involvement in physical activity outside of PE in high school, Diamond said “I did dance with like my temple, other than that, no”. She also did not do summer leagues, or sports of any kind. Her dance at temple was during religious holidays and when asked about the frequency, the researcher was told dances occurred twice in the fall and once in the spring, which is a very small amount of physical activity. Diamond explained that her school offered “a lot of team sports...but I didn’t take it because...I was more focused on the academics”. Diamond is a Pre-med major in college and took very tough classes in high school, she further stated:

Like that could be hard for students who are taking really tough classes. Like I think by the end of high school, I took like 11 A.P. classes. I remember my senior year I was super depressed because I was like in my school work, so I would never be able to manage like a PE class.

## Conclusion

Participants were asked about their physical activity involvement outside of their high school PE program to give the researcher a base understanding of their activity levels. The summary of the physical activity involvement for each participant is summarized in Table 4.1. Two main categories emerged, high involvement and low involvement in physical activity outside of PE. Most of the participants (14 of 16) were highly involved in physical activity outside of PE, while two participants stated having little to no physical activity involvement. Physical activity was structured or unstructured and involved organized school sports, club teams, community and church teams, walking, weight lifting, and pick-up games. Most physical activities involved some sort of social network and students enjoyed that social aspect of sports. The reason participants gave for not being active outside of PE was because they were focused on their academics and had little time for sports and physical activity.

Table 4.1

*Physical activity involvement of participants*

<b>Name of Participant</b>	<b>PA outside of PE?</b>	<b>If yes, days per week</b>	<b>If yes, &gt; 30 minutes</b>	<b>Compared to others your age and gender you are___</b>	<b>Importance of Physical Activity</b>
Callie	Yes	0-2	No	About the same	Important
Chris	Yes	3-5	Yes	About the same	Important
Juliet	Yes	0-2	No	About the same	Important
Zane	Yes	0-2	No	About the same	Very Important
Sylvia	Yes	3-5	Yes	Somewhat more active	Very Important
Sally	Yes	3-5	Yes	Somewhat more active	Very Important
Sandy	Yes	3-5	Yes	Somewhat more active	Very Important
Jamie	Yes	5 +	Yes	Somewhat more active	Very Important
John	Yes	0-2	No	Somewhat more active	Very Important
Hannah	Yes	5 +	Yes	Somewhat more active	Very Important
Dale	Yes	3-5	Yes	Somewhat more active	Very Important
Johann	Yes	3-5	Yes	Somewhat more active	Important
Emily	Yes	5 +	Yes	Much more active	Very Important
Amber	Yes	3-5	No	Much more active	Very Important
Stacy	No	-	-	Somewhat less active	Very Important
Diamond	No	-	-	Somewhat less active	Important

## **Section II: Contextual Experiences of Students Involved in School Curricular Activities**

State or government policies and regulations mandate requirements that inform students' academic and extracurricular experiences in rural, urban, and suburban high schools. In this dissertation study, the researcher sought to understand student experiences with physical activities in urban high school environments. The findings derived from the interviews center on students' experiences as connected with human and material resources, the curricular course offerings, facilities and equipment, as well as on teacher actions such as teaching styles and strategies. Specific themes that emerged as tied to research questions one and two include: 1) beyond teacher control: policy directives on school curriculum, 2) students' reflections on mandated school curriculum in physical education, and 3) teacher content delivery methods.

### **Beyond Teacher Control: Policy Directives on School Curriculum**

This theme captures student experiences tied to mandated requirements, which are outside teacher control, but impact educational activities made available to students. Beyond teacher control regulations come from the federal and the state government and include requirements for graduation, which center on course offerings, time allocation, available equipment or space, and grading formats (pass/fail or for credit, GPA designation). The subthemes that emerged include: 1) curricular policy and mandated curriculum, 2) under-resourced schools, and 3) assessment and evaluation of student learning.

**Curricular policy and mandated curriculum.** The curriculum consists of the entire academic activities that occur within schools, and includes various subjects of study. School subjects are tied to policy requirements in terms of time and content. The United States does not have a government-wide mandated PE curriculum. Rather each state decides what to mandate for PE in elementary, middle, and high school, and each college or university decides its PE

requirements (if any). In most of the states in the United States, the subject of physical education is required to some extent at all levels. Physical education and health education are required for public high school graduation, with most states mandating public high school students to take at least one PE course and one health course as graduation requirements. Schools may require both health and PE as combined content areas in one semester or may require students to take health and PE as separate subjects in different semesters.

Sometimes the health class and the PE class were combined and taught in one semester, as Chris stated “You are only required to have one semester of a PE class...half the semester is devoted to actual PE and the other half is devoted to health”. As John stated “I had just a regular PE/health class which was mandatory for everyone in ninth grade”. Sylvia also had a half PE and half health class in one semester. Sandy said her PE and health class were combined in one semester, first year, and they would spend half of the time learning health topics and the other half of the class running the track.

Other times, the PE and health class were separate and the students had to take one of each, usually in their first year. Zane said “we were really only required to take one PE class and it was the one that all students are required to take so and it was like the nine weeks of health and nine weeks of personal fitness or whatever”. Stacy stated “we had to take I think two PE classes in order to graduate... and like I said, we had to take a physical health, health and fitness, yeah, and then we had to take team sports”. Diamond said “you had to take one year of PE to graduate. It was highly recommended you take it freshman year just to get it over with. It was one semester of PE, then next semester would be like health education”. Amber said “Usually, you would take health class the same year you take gym class”. Emily stated “We had to take one PE credit that was like combined with the health credit, so like a health education credit, so

like the first year my freshman year I did the health and then the second semester I did the PE”.

Juliet said that “You had to take PE for a year like in total so- like and then one of those semesters you had to have like the health component”.

The schools then determine how to meet the policy set forth by the government of one mandated PE course; they can either develop a required PE course or create different PE courses that students could choose. Hence, how PE was operationalized in schools varied. While health was a required class in high school, the subject of physical education was offered in two ways for students to receive credit for graduation. One option was the school had a variety of PE courses and gave students a choice for their required PE credit. These choices were usually different sports and activities such as team sports, lifetime sports, weightlifting, or dance. The other option was that the school did not offer choices for the required PE credit, and students only could enroll in the one PE class, as they did not have any other options. The types of activities offered in that class varied.

Often, the school offered students choices for the mandated PE class. Team sports were a popular course offering, which usually included basketball, volleyball, and some form of baseball, softball, or whiffle ball. At John’s school they offered team sports, lifetime sports, and weight training. Sylvia’s school had intro to team sports, intro to lifetime sports, aerobic dance, and weight lifting. Chris’, Callie’s, Dale’s, and Jamie’s schools offered team sports and weight lifting. In Dale’s weight training class they lifted weights, ran the track, and did P90X (a commercial home exercise regimen). Hannah’s school offered body conditioning, general PE, girls’ PE, swimming, aerobic dance, snow skiing, and lifeguarding. Hannah’s girl’s PE did badminton, dodgeball, tennis, archery, and kickball. Johann’s school offered a choice between general PE, badminton, swimming, basketball, soccer, and track. His general PE class involved

running, basketball, volleyball, tennis, an endurance challenge, dodgeball, and yoga. Zane's school offered the general PE, team sports, dance, and lifetime sports. In his general PE he did football, basketball, and Ultimate Frisbee. Juliet's school offered the general PE and then choices between modern or jazz dance or ballet. Juliet's general PE class played basketball, volleyball, soccer and had weight training. Callie's school offered a choice between general PE and weight lifting. Callie's general PE class was team sports and strategy games like capture the flag, volleyball, and basketball. Emily's school offered a choice from weight training, team sports, or jogging. Emily's general class played kickball, volleyball, whiffle ball, football and ran the track.

Certain PE programs did not offer a choice for the required PE class, there was just one option. For Amber, Chris, Sally, and Diamond, they were only given one option for the mandated PE class. The class offered a variety of different sports and activities. In Amber's PE class they covered archery, kickball, basketball and jogging. In Chris' class they offered basketball, racquetball, volleyball, archery, soccer, flag football, and spiderball. Sally's required PE class had activities like soccer, volleyball, exercises, weight lifting, sprints, and running the mile. In Diamond's experience, they played limited sports, everything was focused on fitness and getting the students fit, they did things like running and weight lifting.

At the high school level, states often mandate how many contact hours students must get in their required health and PE courses. Each state is different in their requirements. In this dissertation study, it was found that most PE classes met a few days a week during the semester for about an hour. Amber stated "it would wither be twice a week or three times a week for about an hour and fifteen minutes". Juliet's classes met three times a week for 50 minutes. Sally's classes met all but one day a week for 45 minutes a period. Some school had PE classes



every day. Emily's, Dale's, and Johann's classes met every day of the week for 50 minutes, Hannah's met every day for 55 minutes, and Zane's met every day for an hour and a half.

**Under-resourced schools.** For public high schools, funding often comes from the state, the federal, and the local (city/town) government (often from taxes). Many urban schools experience lack of equipment, overcrowding, and lack of space due to limited funding. This limited funding can affect learning outcomes and some urban students are left behind in comparison to their richer suburban counterparts. Under-resourced schools often leave students with a negative view of their learning environment and can have a negative impact on their learning.

Participants expressed issues of overcrowding in their urban schools. Callie said that there were about 60 people in the gym at once, and that "it was a lot of people" and "it was a little crowded". Sylvia stated that there would also be 50-60 people in the gym at once and that "it was a pretty large class". Participants also expressed issues of limited or old equipment. Sylvia also said that there wasn't enough equipment for each person to have their own, but they would have to get in groups and play. As Callie stated, "not everyone could play the game that they wanted to play, but we sort of just divided it up". Johann said "there was usually some sparse, spare items. We didn't really have many new items...the weight room...was pretty old, but still worked I guess". Sandy stated "we didn't get to have a lot of equipment as far as PE classes go" and Sally stated her PE experience would have been better if they had more equipment.

Participants also expressed issues of lack of space and resources. Juliet said "we didn't have many resources". At Amber's school, they had one gym, with one basketball court, and one small field, she said "we don't really have a lot of open space; it's more like we are on two

city blocks, not much greenery”. Sandy said they had four tennis courts, “but there were weeds growing out of them and cracks and everything, so you couldn’t play tennis”. Sandy’s school had a tiny weight room, she said “it had a lot in it, they just crammed it all in because my school was so tiny”. Sally said their gym was “tiny” and they had a small weight lifting gym, with “we had a soccer field and there was a two mile cross country course around the school that was very ugly”.

While many states require at least one health/PE class in order to graduate, that is often the only PE class students are allowed to take. They are not allowed to take more than the one PE class during their high school career. Often schools have to make sure all students take PE, and have limited teachers and resources; therefore, students only get to take the one required PE. Even if students wanted more PE, they were often not allowed to take, or discouraged from enrolling in more PE by their counselors/advisors. As Callie stated “We were pretty overcrowded, so I mean if you were a senior trying to get into a gym class it was pretty much impossible if you’d already gotten all of your PE credits. You could try, but you probably wouldn’t get it”. Johann and Jamie said that their counselors wouldn’t recommend taking more than the required PE, but it was optional or a possibility. Sandy stated that they offered team sports and weight training but only athletes could take those classes, and they filled up with athletes. She said, “if you didn’t really need it, they (athletes) would fill up the spots before you could sign up for it” and “we got like art classes or music”. Emily said that her advisors advised against taking more than the required PE.

**Assessment and evaluation of student learning.** Through public policy states require the subject of physical education to be offered in schools, mandating the number of credit hours that students must take to meet graduation requirements. However, states vary in their policy

directives on how grades and assessment of student learning in physical education is undertaken, with grading often being determined at the school or district level. For instance, in some school districts, students are given grades according to a pass/fail criteria or are assigned letter grades, but the grade assigned is non-consequential on students' overall grade point averages. In addition, some school districts may designate that letter grades be given to students and the grade is consequential on the students' overall grade point average.

**Grading policy.** The overall grading policy is not usually determined by the teacher, but is rather determined by the school board and then the teacher determines how specifically to assess their students. Teachers' evaluation or assessment of students in physical education varies, with some schools allowing teachers to determine final grades based on attendance and participation or on skill ability. Variations in student grading were evident in this study. One option was that the PE class was pass or fail or if given a letter grade, the PE letter grade did not affect the student's GPA. Johann's PE classes were pass/fail and he was graded on dressing out and participating. Dressing out in the appropriate attire is often how teachers determine if students get points for attendance. In PE students can be present but if they are not dressed out in the appropriate clothes, they are not counted as present. As Emily stated "it was a letter grade, but it wasn't like factored in the GPA, so most people didn't really care if it was like a 70 or an 80 or 90 or 100, as long as you don't get an F, you are fine". Another option was that the students were graded with a letter grade, which did affect their GPA, but their letter grade was based on attendance and participation. In most PE's that were graded as a letter grade, participation and attendance were the main determining factors in a student's grade. Sylvia stated that "there was participation, attendance. We'd take roll call. Then, dressing out was another part of our grade. If you dressed out, yeah, then the actual participating in class, then

performing”. Amber and Sylvia were graded on participation and dressing out Chris was graded on participation, putting forth effort, and wearing a uniform. Dale stated, “It was based on changing out was part of your grade. If you didn’t change your clothes then you can’t participate and then participation was a grade and I believe that was all”. The third option was that students were given a letter grade, which affected their GPA, but they were graded on a combination of attendance, participation, performance, and improvement. This occurred rarely, but a student’s grade would be dependent on skill ability or improvement. Diamond stated that her class was a letter grade system and “to get an A, you’d have to beat your time, so we had to keep beating our time. Then the final was you had to run a mile under like 9, then that would be an A for the class or for that grade”. At Hannah’s school, they were graded on improvement; she stated “I think the one where you got below B is if you got worse. People purposefully did badly on the first test just to make sure”. At Zane’s’ school, he said you had to show improvement on the mile time to pass at the end of the semester.

**Conclusion.** Many things are beyond the teacher’s control in urban PE settings. These things are often mandated by the state or federal government, and then the teacher has to work within those parameters. These standards are set forth for the number of courses students must take or the number of contact hours they must have in order to graduate from high school. Sometimes students are given choices from different PE classes, and other times, they only have one choice for PE. Students are required to take one PE class but are not allowed to take more PE beyond their first year in high school. The school board often determined ways students were assessed and then teachers were allowed to determine specific ways students were assessed.

## **Students' Reflections on Mandated School Curriculum in Physical Education**

Curriculum consists of the entire experience that takes place within the school walls, and includes various subjects offered through the school curriculum, as well as students' experiential experiences. This section directly answers research question 2a, which asked: What do students recollect about the high school PE curriculum? What did they find valuable? What would they prefer eliminated? The findings revealed that students made suggestions to improve the required PE curriculum. The findings center on the following subthemes: 1) variety of non-traditional sports, 2) superficial coverage of sports content, 3) curricular expansion and frequent coverage of PE courses, and 4) student-centered curriculum.

**Variety of non-traditional sports.** Traditional sports of basketball, volleyball, and running often dominate PE classes; however, students often want to have non-traditional sports. Students wanted variety in the courses they were taught and sought diversity in their PE subjects, games, sports, and activities. As Sylvia explained: "I would like those games and even like some more non-traditional games like more real ones like for example badminton". Sylvia also mentioned she was interested in taking an outdoor adventure class in high school. Sandy stated, "I wanted something that most of us hadn't gotten to do before or something that most people haven't really heard of that kind of sport". Dale wanted "different kinds of sports" and she specifically mentioned swimming and Frisbee as desired classes, because her school "didn't have much options, my school offered maybe like one or two (PE's)". As is seen from the participants own words, they desired variety in the courses they were taught and sought varied experiences.

**Superficial coverage of sports content.** Traditionally in PE, multiple traditional sports are covered in one semester. Not only did students want a variety of non-traditional sports

offered, students wanted a more in-depth focus on one traditional sport versus a survey of many traditional sports offered in physical education classes. Amber and Jamie said that they wished that in high school, their PE classes focused on specific sports instead of an overview of many sports. Stacy said she wished soccer and track and field was offered and that “we played basketball all the time, we would switch to other sports, but that would basically be it”. Zane wanted a softball class and a wider variety of PE’s. Sandy was tired of the same sports over and over and wanted variety, she said:

I think people get discouraged when it's the same sports over and over that are encouraged you feel that if you don't play that sport then yours isn't important or you shouldn't have to play it and I think that all sports should be recognized in a PE class, you should be able to learn about them and practice them so you know if, hey, maybe I wanted to play this, I could take lessons or I could do something else.

**Curricular expansion and frequent coverage of PE courses.** Students often asked for more PE than the required time or semester and wished their school offered more choices, longer times, and allowed PE to be taken in more semesters. John wished for two health classes instead of the one mandatory class. Diamond wished that more PE was required, she stated:

If the P.E. was longer, I feel like more students would want to exercise even outside of class or like just be fit because first semester, semesters go by really quickly. If the class was a yearlong, I feel like the results would be a lot more and students would be a lot more motivated... If the class was a yearlong, I feel like the results would be a lot more and students would be a lot more motivated because after like the semester, I didn't really do like the mile run and all that stuff. I did like fun stuff outside of school, but nothing in school. Maybe if they made it a year or something like that. I know I'm saying it. If I was

like a student and someone said that to me, I'd be like, "Shut up. I just want it a semester." I guess, a year would be better. Extending it. The best thing I can think of.

Sally stated, she wished her high school had more options for PE as well, she said "I guess they could have had more options but like in college how they have like tennis class and other classes". Dale said, "I disliked how short it was, I kind of wish it could've been a little bit longer" and she said "I feel like high school should have PE every year, every day". Chris said:

I feel like it should be required in more than one semester, because one semester in four years, that's negligible. That's nothing compared to all the other classes you are taking. I don't know, I feel like it should be required to at least have two at least because the more it is involved in your life, the more it becomes part of your life, everyday type of thing. I wouldn't say every day of the week, just three days of the week because the more you do it, the less fun it is. If you have it in smaller dosages, it's better. But if it's an hour long every day, you don't look forward to it. But longer period of time, keep it within intervals. That's what I would suggest.

**Student-centered curriculum.** There are typically two different types of curriculum, teacher driven and student-centered curriculum. In PE, teacher driven curriculum is where the teacher determines what to teach, when to teach it, how to teach it, and what sports and activities will be taught. In most PE programs, the focus is on what the teacher wants to teach or what the teacher was told to teach, but students often want a voice in what they learn about and do in PE. Focusing on what the students want, need, and desire is called student-centered curriculum. Participants repeatedly stated they wished for PE courses they desired, and sports and activities that that had meaning for them. Chris also wished her school had more PE options, and expanded on this idea by saying:

For me, I feel like they could have had more options for us to be able to choose what's best. I don't know, maybe for, this sounds terrible, but it maybe for us to have more say in what we do, like what sport do you all want to learn. I know that's hard with a class to have a majority and everything, not everyone is going to be happy, but that even gives more incentive. If I want to learn to play tennis and we are learning tennis, I'm actually going to put effort into learning how to do it correctly and everything. But if it is like we are doing this, it's like, I don't like basketball, I don't want to play. You only put half your effort in, but I think if we had more options or more choices within the class at least or more say then I think it would be more enjoyable.

Sandy also stated that it would have been better to have sports that you wanted to learn about rather than the ones you were forced to do. She wanted a variety of sports offered instead of the one or two sports they offered. Sandy explained:

Well some of us, we don't like running the track every day or we don't want to play racquetball, we want to play something that we thought would be fun so if they offered like more volleyball or they offered tennis or they offered soccer lessons or something else that you got to do then it would be more enjoyable...If you got a choice, you could do the track, you could do Frisbee or throw the football or do something else besides just what you were -- that one thing that you were told to do.

Zane said he thought it would be beneficial for students not as athletic to find out what they are interested in and offer a PE course that meets their needs and Amber stated she wanted to be able to choose a sport and play it, not be forced to do what the teacher told her.

**Conclusion.** Students wanted the subject of PE required, expanded and varied, and made relevant to their lives. They wanted a diverse curriculum that included non-traditional sports,



more time on one sport, and courses of interest to them. Essentially the students wanted urban school PE curriculum to be changed to incorporate student needs and desires to focus on sports that they want. They also wanted courses to focus more in-depth on individual sports instead of glossing over multiple sports and to have PE include dance and outdoor activities. They also wanted to be given opportunities to enroll in more PE courses.

### **Teacher Methods of Content Delivery**

Participants were asked about their likes and dislikes about their physical education program as related to instruction. This section directly answers research question 2b, which asked: What were students' experiences of the instructional strategies? Which ones stand out as being useful or effective? Which ones were negatively experienced? The subthemes include: 1) organizing for instruction and lesson implementation and 2) the teaching strategies and styles used by the teacher in regards to actual instruction.

**Organizing for instruction and lesson implementation.** Rules, routines, and lesson structure are important in any course as they establish standards and provide order to what can often be a chaotic classroom environment. In physical education, rules, routine, and structure are especially important as safety is a paramount issue due to the nature of physical activity and movement. Routines are determined by teachers and most PE programs were organized the same way, with the students going to locker rooms to change into PE clothes or uniforms, then attendance, then warm ups or stretching, and then the focus of the day. Dale stated:

Okay, so I would leave my other class and go there and we had about five, 10 minutes to change clothes. Then you go in the weight room and we would stretch and do just like warm ups, just so you don't injure yourself. Then we would do exercises.

Juliet said “well we did like one lap, like two laps was a warm-up and then whatever sport you were doing”. Sandy’s class would change in the locker room, go to the track, and do stretches and then they would run and the teacher would write down their time when they were finished. Traditionally when asking participants about the structure of the lesson, the experiences fell into two categories: 1) structured and organized lessons and 2) a free for all without any structure.

Numerous teachers provided a well-planned out and organized lesson with structure, and order. Dale’s teacher was very organized, she stated:

No, he had it planned out. No like he would tell you what he wanted you to do. Like he'll put you on so many of us on one thing like, there will be four of us on the bench press that you have someone to spot you and then you would switch places. Then he'd put so many people on something else and he would give you a time or he would tell you how many reps to do, so you would do them and then he would like make you switch.

Sally’s teacher also had organized lessons, she stated:

I mean he would have things that he'd make us do as a class, like he'd be like, we're all going to do power cleans today and watch us all do that and like monitor it. It wasn't just like here's the gym, exercise, he was like guiding us through everything.

Juliet’s class also was structured: “we would run, have a few drills, maybe like high knees or like butt kicks and then...like get on teams and scrimmage or just do like basic drills for that sport”. In Johann’s class, the teacher was “very official” and “wrote everything down, timed you, and then he graded you. You actually had to do some stuff, it wasn't just show up and dress out and you get an A”. Johann expounded and said “The teacher had structured, organized

lessons for, not only the lecture part, but also for the, he would write it on the board". At Chris' school, they would change and then everything was organized from start to finish:

Then you would do about 10 minutes of warm-up, so it leaves like 25 minutes to actually play, but then they usually do five minute intro if we are learning about a specific aspect of a sport or introducing the sport in general. Then we do some drills about it, like that specific thing, skill that we are learning and then normally I would try to play a game using the skills that we learned... No, it wasn't like, alright you guys can do this, it was like, "alright today we are going to play dodge ball". We would all play dodge ball or like this is a fun day, but we are all going to do the same thing. It wasn't a free for all. We were all specifically told what to do.

Unfortunately numerous teachers also did not provide planned-out or organized lessons, and typically let the students do what they wanted. In many instances class became a free period, and the teachers "rolled out the balls". In Emily's class, the teacher provided the equipment and let them do what they wanted, Emily said "so it wasn't like an organized like here's what we're going to do today. It was like here's a bucket of balls". In Sylvia's experience, "some days they would just get a whole bag or bucket or cart full of balls and if we were in the gym we could grab whatever basketball or soccer ball or bouncy ball and just kind of play around". With no structure, often little teaching occurred. In Sandy's class, she said it was "disorganized" and she stated:

If you would just do your work in class it would take like 10 minutes and you'd be done and you'd just sit there. Or if you were an athlete and you finished your lap, your mile in nine minutes then you could just do whatever you wanted and you'd just sit there, you'd talk, there wasn't really anything else to do.

Jamie stated “It was less organized, he was a very relaxed teacher and he didn’t do much, he wasn’t very organized, if I’m honest. It wasn’t a very structured class”. Zane stated “And if I could describe that in one word it would be very laidback, not very much structure it was just kind of do what you want”. Zane even said his teachers would disappear to their office after taking roll, “(they) were just kind of like absentees” and he stated:

So that’s one thing I wish there was more of is teacher involvement in the class and like more -- almost more structure, the teacher kind of makes, the teacher kind of plans something and then you do it that day and then kind of, maybe if you have time, free for all stuff...I wanted more structure.

Johann had free days on Fridays, which was unstructured, but the other days of the week were structured. He stated:

I guess one thing I didn't like is on the free days, they just let everyone go. Usually one group dominated the court. They would let you play, but you wouldn't be fully involved, you would just like be on the side. I guess I wish they had a little bit more structure on Fridays, even though it was technically a free day, do whatever you want.

Callie too had a free period after stretching, she said:

Umm... I mean it was... it was kind of ...We didn't really do that many organized things. They let us loose in the gym, basically every day. I don't know. We would stretch, and then we could just play games. We could play with the volleyball or another game, you know, just anything that we wanted to do, really... I'd say very rarely did we have anything that we were supposed to do. I'd say maybe once every two weeks did we ever have a structured lesson plan at all.

In Hannah's class, the only structure was for stretching and roll call, and then "the coach would either give us a choice of what we wanted to do for the day or just be like, 'This is what we are doing for the day.' But there was no writing on the board of objectives or anything like that".

**Teaching strategies and styles.** Every teacher teaches a certain way, often called a style or strategy. Being able to teach the same content in different ways to accommodate different learners is an important tenet of teaching and education. This section includes aspects dealing with how teachers teach such as variation of classes and activities, teachers not caring, a lack of teaching occurring, competition, the importance of feedback, the teacher/coach dichotomy, the focus on athletes, and sexism.

*Variety in activities for content delivery and teaching to diversity in skill.* Not only did students want a variety of course offerings, as was seen in the previous section about students' reactions to the required curriculum, but they also wished for a variety of activities and different drills to avoid the monotony of class. Juliet wished her teacher had varied the drills based on skill level instead of making everyone do the same drills. She said:

Umm, maybe like split the class up into different levels of skill but I feel like if he would have done that it would have been like offensive, maybe you can split yourself up and do it and my school, they would have good at that because everyone is understanding. So if he had let us and then given us different skills accordingly, that would have been good for sure but making us all do it together just put pressure on the bad people and made the good people annoyed.

Dale did wish for her teachers to be more creative, she said "maybe teach it in several different ways because not every person learns the same. They could appropriately explain it

and then show you or videos maybe”. Sandy wished for more choices, she wanted the teacher to give the students options of what to do and let them choose their activity. Diamond enjoyed having yoga as a choice in her PE class and thought it was a nice break from the regular and traditional fitness activities like running and weight lifting. Callie said that her teacher could have varied up the lessons to make it more interesting, “but he let people do nothing the whole semester, so he obviously wasn’t doing a great job in that regard”. Johann got tired of the same old information, he stated the teachers had to review the stuff he had already learned to say they went over it and “I think for the first two weeks I was like so bored, because it was all basic stuff we already knew”. Sylvia stated “sometimes in our PE class we’d kind of do like similar things all the time so it would get a little repetitive”. Stacy said her class was redundant because they played basketball all the time and she wanted different activities. Sylvia, Chris, Amber, Diamond, and Emily all wanted variety in skill levels for classes. Sylvia said that the teachers could encourage students with lower skills to play by dividing the class by skill level, and showing the lower skilled players how to play the game. Chris wanted different classes like beginners and intermediate volleyball for different player levels and said “Maybe offer different levels of PE for the people who are more athletic”. Emily said:

There could have been like two different semesters for a beginner’s class and like a more athletic, like people who were already athletes like doing sports. I think that might have been better because then you are with people more in your same level and it’s not like as bad as where like the show offs people who would finish super fast. They would be with people more on their level too.

Diamond thought a separate class for athletic students would have been good, she said “Maybe, if there are more athletic students and they want a challenge, then maybe there could be

a more advanced PE class they could just automatically go into. Rather than everybody starting off at the same place”.

*Lack of enthusiasm and caring in teachers' content delivery methods.* Enthusiastic teachers or those who show they are excited about their teaching and content often send a positive message to their students. The students feel that the subject is valued and feel they should care because their teacher does. Some teachers were believed to be the type of person that did not care about teaching; they simply wanted a pay check and didn't care about their students. In Sandy's PE class she stated that her PE teachers really didn't care and they had to do a job, but they weren't enthusiastic and would just hand out worksheets. Her suggestion to improve PE was to have her PE teachers “be more enthusiastic and make it a more fun environment and try to connect people rather than just making it a job just to have to do it”. Amber directly said “he kind of didn't care”. Emily stated that she didn't think the teacher cared about individual students and thought the teacher was insensitive; she wanted the teacher to pay “more attention to the differences in students”. Jamie also had a teacher who did not seem to care, he said:

He didn't really care...Honestly, it was a joke. I mean everybody knew that health class was a joke, everybody in our class, on the final, got a 95. I don't even think he graded the tests if I'm honest, I think he just wrote 95 on it and that was it. Umm, and the weight lifting class, it was more structured but it was still -- a lot of it was just getting out of actually doing work, it was kind of a free period....It did bother me that at least, especially in the health class, that it was so lax and that nobody really cared enough to put time and effort into a class, because as a student -- that's one thing that really bothers me because as a student, if the teacher doesn't care, it's frustrating because after a point you

don't care either and then it's just kind of downhill from there so that was probably my least favorite thing.

Occasionally students stated that there was little to no teaching going on, that often certain teachers would simply let the students do what they wanted. There was not only no structure in the class or a lesson plan, but the teacher also didn't teach them anything. In Sandy's PE class, she said "they just figured you knew how to do it because in middle school they taught you all that stuff so they just figured you know how to do it". Sylvia experienced very little teaching, the teacher often provided the bucket of balls and "they (the teacher) kind of just stood there not really helping out much", and "sometimes I think the teachers wouldn't even be in the gym, they'd be doing something else". In Amber's class, her teacher didn't teach anything, she stated "He was like a paid babysitter or something and ... I don't know. We didn't learn anything...He just kind of sat there...He didn't really teach you it. He was just like 'Okay, here's some organized games, you do that'". Jamie too experienced limited teaching, he said:

And the running, he didn't really teach us, he just kind of said, run a mile and I will time you. And the weight lifting, if I'm honest, we weren't given any instruction on how to lift weights correctly, he just kind of said go and do. He gave us sheets of what we were supposed to do but honestly 90% of the time we made it up and just kind of sat around and talked...But yeah, I mean it was just -- it wasn't very engaging, it was just -- I mean it was a joke, it was an hour and a half of freedom, an hour of freedom. But yeah, it wasn't the best.

Zane said that:

There wasn't a whole lot of teacher involvement...the teachers would kind of just sit around. I mean they would come out there maybe every now and then and play some



basketball or something but just -- that's the one thing that didn't really happen much was teacher involvement... It was kind of just do what you want...Umm, I kind of wished there would have been more involvement with the coaches and like teaching people more because I feel like some of the kids, even in the PE class, they didn't know what they were doing...So that's one thing I wish there was more of is teacher involvement in the class.

Callie had an experience where she could do what she wanted after stretching and no teaching occurred, it became a free period and she and her classmates could do what they wanted, she said:

We didn't really do that many organized things. They let us loose in the gym, basically every day. I don't know. We would stretch, and then we could just play games. We could play with the volleyball or another game, you know, just anything that we wanted to do, really...So I mean in some ways he wasn't the best gym teacher because we didn't learn that much about physical education.

***Competitive environment.*** Competition often dominates PE classes due to points, scoring, winning and losing; it is the inherent nature of sport. Since most PE classes involve sports, PE classes involve competition. Competition can be viewed positively by students as it sets the stakes. Chris said:

It's more fun when you are playing for something or against someone that ups the incentive of it and you play harder than you would if it was just a singles games, so just kind of stuff like that...I think basically everything is competition driven, not in a bad way. Sometimes things get a little out of hand, but I think she knew that that would

encourage us to actually want to win and want to know how to play correctly and everything.

Competition can be viewed negatively by certain students who are not good at sports, because other students rely on them and their skills are put on display for others to view and perhaps ridicule. Juliet also wished for less competitive games and wished her teacher had focused on more drills because in drills, no one relied on her like they do in games. Because she wasn't very good, she didn't want to compete.

***Student learning and teacher feedback.*** Teacher feedback is very important in PE and is an important way for a teacher to let a student know how to improve. Sally stated her teacher was really good at giving feedback, "I liked how he gave us a lot of feedback when we were doing like weight lifting of you know, exercising in general". Chris' teacher was great at giving feedback, as Chris stated: "We had 20 people, so yes definitely, if you did it wrong. But, she wouldn't do it in a condescending way. It was just very like, 'hey next time whenever you do that, it's easier if you do it this way'". John's teacher also provided feedback, he would "say like okay, you're making this like a little bit too easy, try to add some weight, he would give you those little feedback things or he'd say your form is perfect but one extra thing you can do".

Juliet had two PE teachers and when asked if her teachers provided feedback, she said she had different experiences. For one teacher, she said "not, really, no. If you were doing something drastically wrong like a push-up wrong where it's obvious, but if you're playing a sport and you're not good at it, they were basically just like, okay, you're bad, but they didn't do really anything". Her other teacher "she was really good at telling you how to fix things...she was good at being like, oh, you can improve it by doing this and she gave me a lot of help outside of class for stretching and preventing being sore". Jamie's teacher would provide

feedback in the weight room and correct students if they were doing a lift wrong. Hannah's teacher provided feedback for weight training as well, but offered no feedback when it came to sports. Emily's teacher would demonstrate a skill but stated "I don't think she ever corrected us if we were doing anything wrong or provide feedback or criticism. It was more like you just play with your peers and that's how you learned it I guess".

***Inequity in curriculum implementation.*** In some PE programs, the teachers were inequitable towards their students in regards to athleticism and gender. In certain PE programs, the PE teacher favored athletes over non-athletic students and would give them more leniencies, let them do what they wanted more frequently, and were more friendly with them. Sandy experienced her teachers showing favoritism toward athletes in her PE class and stated:

They would focus more on -- mainly guys especially because of the sport, our school was very football, basketball, baseball oriented so if you didn't play those sports you were kind of -- not forgotten about but you weren't as important as they were to get them through that class. They would, I guess, show favoritism toward the guys, they would give them extra time to turn in stuff, they would help them out more on tests or on quizzes or worksheets. When we went to the track they would kind of let them do their own thing, they didn't really have to do the laps, they could throw the football around and everyone else had to do it or they could just sit there and not do anything. So if it was kind of like if you weren't them then you weren't important in the class.

Jamie's teacher was friendly and nice with the baseball players and athletes, but was impersonal with other students. Sandy wished her teacher didn't show favoritism toward athletes "they would focus more on people that played their sport...and everyone else would just kind of have to do whatever in the class".

Amber experienced sexism from her teacher. She said that he said “Oh, girls can’t play football. Why are you on the football team?” and her teacher thought males were better than females in sports. He would make comments like: “Oh, this guy is going to be so much better than this girl” and “Why is she good at sports if she’s so little?”. He also had different rules for man and women “Like for working out, girls would have certain exercises as opposed to guys who probably had more difficult exercises” and he would divide up teams based on gender only, even though women were better at certain sports than some men. John also experienced sexism from his teacher, he stated:

She was very sexist. Well obviously men have more of a physical advantage over women but it came to a point where she said every single guy in the class was not performing the way they should, she expected us to go way above and beyond and the girls could just sort of relax and do whatever they want. There was one day where literally she made all the guys go upstairs and run miles around the track while all the other girls could go downstairs and start playing basketball and so I don't know, maybe just a sexist sort of thing...other than that you could definitely tell that she favored the girls when it came to talking to them, letting them ease off the intensity of the workouts.

***Coach/Teacher role conflict and impact on teaching and student learning.*** In some schools, the PE teachers were also coaches for sports and the role of coach was more important to than the role of teacher, so the students suffered as the teachers focused on their coaching duties while they were supposed to be teaching. Sandy stated:

Umm, I feel like they didn’t really want to do it but because they were coaches they had to teach something and I think that was why they were in there and they were more

focused on what they had to do after school for their sport or what their sport needed rather than what the class offered like needed.

Jamie stated:

It was always taught by coaches from the school and there wasn't anybody who really knew exactly what they were doing, if that makes sense, it was just kind of periphery of their coaching job so it wasn't like we had somebody who specifically they graduated in PE it was just kind of like they were a coach so the high school hired them to do this PE class.

At Zane's school, the PE teachers were coaches and would use the PE class time to go to their office and work on practice and game plans for their sports. He said:

They would kind of like -- they all had their offices and stuff, they would either be meeting with players or stuff that kind of revolved around their sport, making sure that their players were in class and stuff like that. So it was kind of -- I'm not saying it was a negative, I mean it was negative that they weren't there but they weren't like sleeping in their office, they were doing stuff that needed to be done but it's almost like you need two teachers per class, one that does the sport and one that doesn't.

Hannah went to a private school where athletics was very important and they hired their coaches to coach and as a side job, had them teach PE, but coaching was their priority. The coaches would often disappear from class and leave the students to their own devices. She stated:

I didn't like it when the coaches were preoccupied with their sports, but I understood it because our head coach is hired to be a head coach to the football team and not to be preoccupied with me. It was frustrating sometimes because you wanted their attention

and they were busy with ... On Fridays, coach Phil was gone. They had a game that night and I understood it but it was still kind of frustrating... Then Coach Phil just really had his own office and sometimes would just ... He would always be there at the beginning and would give us write-up on the white board the workout and then go and sit in his office and do whatever he did.

**Conclusion.** The teachers had control over organization of instruction, content delivery, and assessment of student learning. While some teachers structured their classes, set rules and developed class routines, other did not have structure and usually had limited teaching. The PE program typically involved attendance, warm-ups, and then a focus for the day (which usually was playing a sport). Often the teachers did not really teach and the students felt they learned little. When the students had free periods, they sat and talked. Many PE teachers “rolled out the balls” and were like “glorified babysitters”, while others were organized and had structured lessons with lesson plans and a developed focus for the day. Many of the teachers were thought of as being apathetic and not caring while teaching the same monotonous activities over and over that the students had seen numerous times before. Some students received great positive and corrective feedback that helped them get better at sports, while other teachers provided little to no feedback. Many teachers showed favoritism towards athletes and males or athletic students, while other teachers were too pre-occupied with being a head coach, and consequently, their teaching duties suffered. Often students felt short changed and wished their teacher to be engaged and caring.

### **Section III: Beyond High School: Students’ Choices of Physical Activity**

Students’ spend a significant time pursuing higher education and in due course accrue varied experiences. In this dissertation study, students attended urban high schools and derived

many experiences from taking the subject of physical education. This section focuses on student experiences in physical education and the impact on choice of physical activities in college. The themes that emerge center on research question three and are as follows: 1) the influence high school urban PE had on college physical activity involvement and 2) the influence high school urban PE had on selection of college physical education courses.

### **High School PE's Influence on College Physical Activity Involvement**

Participants were asked about their college physical activity involvement outside of college their college PE class and about their experiences in high school PE. There were three main subthemes that developed: 1) active in high school and college regardless of PE experience, 2) not active but enjoyed PE in high school and became active in college, and 3) not active and did not enjoy PE in high school resulted in no change in college.

**Active regardless of level of schooling.** Individuals who were active in high school outside of their high school PE class were still active in college, regardless of their experiences in high school PE. Apparently prior involvement in physical activity may have positively led to continued physical activity in college. In this study, 14 of the 16 interview participants were active in physical activity outside of high school PE and the same individuals had both positive and negative experiences in high school PE, yet all of them continued participation in physical activity in college. Two of the 14 participants who continued to be involved in physical activity in college but had differing experiences in physical education in high school are described below.

**Amber.** Amber enjoyed playing sports and being active. She played tennis for the high school team and was a junior ranked tennis player outside of school sports. She practiced every day and also participated in games and tournaments on the weekends. She worked out and went

to the gym three days a week, doing running, the treadmill, and weight exercises. She also walked her dog and on vacations she would go on hikes with her family. In regards to her PE class, Amber had negative experiences. Her teacher was overtly sexist (as seen in the previous section), her teacher “did not care”, “we didn’t learn anything”, and “he was like a paid babysitter”. When asked to evaluate her high school program, Amber said:

I don’t think it was very good, especially now in college, where I’m in a really good class for a specific sport and stuff. It was just a graduation requirement. It was just something to do. No one took it seriously, and I don’t think anyone necessarily looked forward to it.

When asked about the influence her high school PE program had on her, Amber stated “I like sports in general, so it was always fun for me to play...I don’t think any of the students or the teachers made an impact on that. It’s just kind of fun to get out there and play”. Apparently the physical education teachers and the PE program did not influence Amber’s outlook on physical activity. Amber continued her involvement in physical activity in college; she plays tennis on the weekends with friends, joined the club tennis team, walks to all of her classes, and ran a 5K in addition to working out three days a week. Amber also participated in college physical activities that were similar to what she did in high school. She stated: “I go to the gym every week, same as I did before I came to college”. The negative experiences in high school PE did not seem to affect her physical activity involvement in college.

*Chris.* Chris enjoyed playing sports and being active. She played volleyball for her school and for a club team, which entailed practice every day and also games and tournaments on the weekends. She would walk her dogs, bike and run on the beach, and walk the neighborhood with her mom. In regards to her PE class, Chris had positive experiences. She liked her teacher and “she was really cool,” her classes were structured, and she received



constant feedback from her teacher. When asked to evaluate her high school program, Chris said “I would evaluate it, during my time, as very good...like I remembered wanting to go and having fun”. Chris continued her physical activity from high school into college and walks to all of her classes, and three to four days a week she runs two miles. She also stated that: “I do more kind of like a circuit, the elliptical for 10 minutes, some squats, weights and everything. I try to do that at least three days of the week”. While Chris was not on an intramural team at the time of the interview, she did state that she wanted to join an intramural team next year. Chris also continued some of the exact same physical activities she did in high school while in college, she said: “When I go home, walks on the beach, couple of miles, ride the bikes, general things”. It is seen that for students who were already active in high school, having a positive PE experience may not necessarily impact physical activity involvement in college. What happened in both situations above is that students did not stop being physically active in college, regardless of whether the students had positive or negative experiences in high school PE.

**Enjoyed PE in high school and active in college environment.** Stacy was not involved in physical activity outside of PE in high school at all. When asked about sports outside of PE she did not play any. When asked about her physical activity outside of PE in high school she said she did “very little”. When asked about her doing activities like walking, jogging or organized workouts, she replied “sometimes...if I had time on the weekends, I would do so with my parents”. In regards to her PE class, Stacy had positive experiences. She liked her class and her teacher and “enjoyed PE”, she stated:

Well the high points would definitely be how fun it was and we were all required to participate and that made it more enjoyable because of our coach. The low points would be -- well it wasn't always so fun, especially when the tests came around. There was

really no low point -- there was nothing that really stood out as boring because in a way it all became fun.

When asked what she thought of her physical education program while in high school, Stacy said: "It was, yeah, a good experience, definitely". When asked about her physical activity outside of her college PE class, Stacy became more involved in physical activity in college. She goes "walking with my friends a lot". She goes walking seven days a week and walks to and from her classes. She expressed that:

Well, we're kind of focusing too much on school, we put too much stress on us so we decided that instead of watching TV let's just -- it's just so much better to walk, I don't know it's just so much better. So we just came up -- we didn't exactly say let's walk, it just happened in a way, it's become a schedule for us now.

Stacy plans on continuing to walk in later semesters. Stacy also was considering joining intramurals and even club sports in college. Stacy was asked about the impact her PE class had on her and she said: "I guess the fact that it made me more physically active because I wasn't that active before PE". It is seen from this one example that a positive PE experience helps students to continue being involved in physical activity in college; hence having a positive PE experience could play a pivotal role in students' engagement in physical activity.

**Inactive in high school and college environments.** Diamond was not involved in physical activity outside of high school PE. When asked about sports outside of PE she did not play any. When asked about her physical activity outside of PE in high school she said she did "some dance". She participated in cultural programs at her temple. She would "dance and show the little kids in the family some of them". When asked about the frequency of dancing, she said about one in the fall and two in the spring, or three times a year. When asked about her doing

activities like walking, jogging or organized workouts, she replied that she did not do any. In regards to her PE class, Diamond had negative experiences. She stated that: “I’m not really athletic” and that high school was focused on fitness and “it was really tough for me because I couldn’t do it”. When asked about fitness, she said she had a hard time with the running, and the crunches and sit-ups. It was simply not enjoyable for her. When asked about her high school PE, Diamond said:

Yeah. I never hated it. I never complained. I just kind of accepted it as part of my class. I, personally, don't enjoy stuff like that. I should, so I could get healthier, but I don't. It was never like, you know, hard or bad. I don't know if I would say it's fun, but I wouldn't have a problem with it.

Diamond was asked if she enjoyed her high school program, and she said: “Not really. Not in the actual class. I wouldn't say I loved it, but I like umm, just did it. I accepted that it was part of my class and I did it. I didn't dislike anything in the class”. When asked about physical activity in college outside of her college PE class, Diamond said she wasn't involved in any. She said she was going to join a dance team, but missed the tryouts. She did state that she was still involved with dance at her temple and she had to attend a total of five practices. She also helped teach younger kids to dance, like she did in high school. It is seen from this example that, like the students who had a bad experience with high school PE but who were active in high school, a bad experience in high school PE may not have a negative impact on physical activity involvement in college. In this case, a bad experience in high school PE did not decrease the amount of physical activity from high school to college; it stayed about the same. However, a negative PE experience in high school did not help to increase physical activity like in Stacy's case. Therefore, having a positive experience in PE can help students to pursue physical activity

in college, which can help improve their health and well-being because it decreases obesity and lowers their chances of getting certain diseases.

### **Relationship between High School PE and Choices of College Physical Education Courses**

Participants in this study all chose to enroll as Freshman in a college PE class during the Fall 2013 semester and they could choose from many different options. During the interviews, participants were asked about their college physical education class choice and the reason they chose the class they chose and about their future plans for taking PE classes. Two main subthemes emerged: 1) students enrolled in PE classes for a variety of reasons, and 2) the factors that influenced a student to take or avoid PE courses in college in the future.

**Students enrolled in PE classes for a variety of reasons.** There were plenty of courses for students to select in college at the southeastern university, with each student choosing a class for their own reasons. The reasons that emerged were: 1) fulfills credit requirement, 2) timely and enjoyable, 3) to maintain or improve performance, and 4) prior experience with high school sport or to learn a new sport.

***Fulfill credit requirement.*** Students selected the PE course to meet credit requirements during their first semester. Many Freshman took PE courses to meet the number of hours needed to receive financial aid, to meet honors requirements, or for full-time status. Often, when students needed a one credit hour class to fill their schedule, they chose PE. Because students at the southeastern university have to take and pass a PE in order to graduate at some time in their college career, many Freshman said they wanted to get the requirement out of the way, so they could focus on their major classes. Chris and Amber said they wanted to take PE to get it out of the way. Juliet wanted to get her PE class out of the way so later, when she was in her major classes, she didn't have to take PE then. Emily said: "Honestly, I was at 11 hours and I didn't

want to take another like three hour class so I just chose the PE". Johann was at 14 hours and had time, so he enrolled in PE. Chris stated "I wanted 15 credits instead of 14, to have a technically full schedule". Amber, Sylvia, Zane, Sally, and John needed one more credit for honors purposes with Amber stating: "I wanted exactly 15 hours, and then the hour that you get with PE, it would go exactly to 15 hours". Two other examples were that John said: "I'm trying to apply to honors and I needed 15 credit hours in order to apply to honors" and Sylvia said: "Well I'm trying to apply to honors for next semester and you need 15 hours your first semester. I had 14 so I needed one hour so I decided to take a PE class".

***Timely and enjoyable.*** Students took a PE course because it fit their schedule and they thought it would be a lot of fun. In some instances, students signed up or changed their schedule late and the only PE class that was available was the one they enrolled in. As Diamond stated, "I was really late in picking my classes. That was like one of the only P.E. classes left that worked with my schedule. I would have rather picked swimming because I enjoy swimming more than jogging, but that's the reason I took it. Just to fill in my schedule". Chris pointed out that: "It was the only one that fit my schedule... but it just fit into my schedule the way that I needed to, perfect time, perfect days, everything". Callie and Emily also said they took their class because it fit their schedule. For some students they enjoy the sport or activity, for the inherent fun. Chris expressed that: "I love volleyball; I got really excited when I saw that" and John said "I've always loved basketball" and Callie said she liked volleyball and thought it would be fun.

***Maintain or improve performance.*** Some students took the class because they wanted to: improve their health, get or stay in shape, lose weight, or get better in their participation in their PE course. Diamond said:

One of like my goals when I came to high school was to lose weight because I gained a lot of weight this summer. I thought if I started jogging in like a class environment, maybe, I would get motivated enough and I would build my endurance up enough to do it outside of class.

Hannah was going to a military academy after her Freshman year, and needed to be in shape, so she chose a jogging class to motivate her to run every day. Johann decided he wanted to get physical activity so he enrolled in weight training, he said “it makes me get up and do something” and Dale took swimming because “I thought it would benefit me more a physical activity way like I get more physical activity out of it than I would throwing a bowling ball or just walking... I don’t know, wherever they walk, so that’s why I chose it”. Students also enrolled in specific courses in PE to get better at the sport or skill. Callie wanted to get better at volleyball because “We have a volleyball court outside my dorm, so it would be cool to get better at it, so I can play and not be the worst on spring break”. Juliet did not play volleyball as a sport in high school, but she did have experience with it in high school PE. She stated she took volleyball in college because “it’s something I want to get better at”.

***Prior experience with high school sport or learn new courses.*** Students had experiences with participation in high school sports or wanted to experience a variety of physical activity courses. Often students took a PE class because it was familiar to them; they had either played the sport in high school or they had experienced the sport during high school PE. Diamond did a lot of fitness based running in her high school PE class, and in college she enrolled in a jogging class. When asked if she chose jogging because of her previous high school experiences, she said “maybe subconsciously. I don’t know, maybe”.

Many students signed up for PE classes that were sports they had done in high school. For example, John played basketball during high school and signed up for basketball in college, and Chris and Emily played volleyball in high school and took volleyball in college. Johann took weight training in college because “I did weight training in high school and on my own” and Zane and Sandy played tennis in high school, and continued to take tennis courses in college. However, Callie took volleyball in college because she had played “recreationally”. Sylvia eventually ended up taking a volleyball class that was new to her, but when asking about her process of enrolling, she stated she enrolled in certain PE classes because she had experience playing the sport before. She explained that:

I saw that basketball fit and I liked playing basketball but then I kept checking frequently to see if other ones were open in other classes. And then I used to play tennis when I was younger too so I thought oh tennis might be fun, and I was thinking that basketball might be kind of intense but then I think I changed one of my classes around which then eventually opened up a spot for the volleyball class.

Some students charted unfamiliar territory; they wanted to learn a new sport or skill. For example, Stacy stated: “well honestly I didn’t want to do walking because I do that every day and I wanted to try something new because volleyball would kind of be the same thing I’ve done before, badminton is something I’ve never really done”. Another example is Amber, who “wanted to learn a new sport”. She explained:

I picked a sport...that I had never tried before, and I thought that ...Well, I’d played racquetball a few times with my dad before, but never like seriously, so I thought that would be something fun to do...Like racquetball is just such a different, cool sport. It’s not ever offered, so I thought it would be cool to try it out.

Sylvia never got to play volleyball in high school, due to cross-country, so she was excited to take a volleyball class. This was because she hadn't had a chance to experience playing volleyball before, so she enrolled in volleyball in college. Another example of a student trying something new was Jamie, who took racquetball in college and said:

Racquetball has always seemed interesting to me because whenever I've visited colleges they're always like we have racquetball courts, look at them. And I saw people playing and I was kind of like I don't understand what they're doing and it looks terrifying and fun so when I saw it was an option I signed up for it.

Sally had never played tennis before, so she wanted to learn a new sport, especially because, as she said, it is a sport you can pursue when you're old and Dale wanted to try swimming because she never got to take swimming in high school.

**Factors that influenced student decisions to take or avoid PE courses.** Several factors emerged that influenced a students' decision to take or not to take another PE class in college. At the southeastern university, students have the choice of taking more PE's if they wish. All participants in this study were first semester and first year Freshman and were enrolled in their first college PE course, none of them had yet taken a second PE course in college. Participants were asked if they would take another PE based off of their experience in high school PE and their experience in college PE so far, and students had differing reasons: 1) schedule conflict, 2) interest in course or to have fun, and 3) a positive college PE experience.

***Schedule conflict.*** College students have to take core or required courses and have designated major, minor, and have allowed free elective courses, all to fulfill graduation requirements. Often many students want to finish in four years due to financial reasons like scholarships, and in the context of this study, many students were not sure if they would have



time to take more PE classes in their college career. In Diamond's situation she said she would be interested in taking another PE class in college if she had time. Chris was pressed for time and said:

I would if I had the opportunity, but the way that my major is set up, I don't have the space because it's a very science major, so there is the labs as well as classes. But if I had an open space and I needed one, then I definitely would. But, I wouldn't actively put this class over another class. I feel bad about that... For certain majors, it's going to be impossible to actually have space for it (another PE class). Even one credit, my class is only two days out of the week, even that still puts stress or strain like that could be for studying or writing that essay or anything.

Amber and Hannah would enroll in another college PE if they needed the hours and Sylvia and Sally said they would if they had time or their schedule permitted. Emily said she would not take another PE in college because there were "so many other things to do and stay active and then like other classes that I'm going to have to be taking next semester". John said he would likely not enroll in another PE because he wanted to focus on his classes. When asked if he would take another PE class in college, he further explained:

Probably not because ever since like I said junior/senior year of high school I've focused more on academics, I've wanted to be a straight A student so considering I already have a job, I'm writing for the school paper and I already have plenty of classes to focus on, studying and things like that, I don't think I'll have too much time to be taking another PE class, I might as well focus on my major and getting those academics out of the way.

***Interest and enjoyment.*** Another determining factor in a student choosing to enroll in another college PE class was whether there were classes that were offered that met their interests.

They needed to have a class that they wanted to take, or that met their desires or interests.

Diamond was also interested in taking another PE course if self-defense was offered, because her dad taught martial arts, although she never participated in martial arts. Amber also needed to have a class fulfill an interest, she said “It depends what’s available. If I wanted to like learn a new sport or something”. Jamie said he would likely take another college PE, but it has to be a sport he is interested in. He likes that the PE classes teach him a new sport and also gets him experience playing that sport. For those reasons, he said he would likely enroll again. Sally, Amber, and Sylvia said if rock climbing was offered as a PE, they would take it because it interested them and sounded like a lot of fun. Some students wanted to take another PE class to relieve stress and have fun. Johann said he wanted to take more PE classes in college to have fun and relieve some stress. He said, “A lot of interesting classes would be fun to take, maybe be some stress relief during classes and stuff”. This shows that some students see PE as a stress reliever or perhaps as an escape from the tough academic classes of college.

*A positive college PE experience.* Although students were in the middle of their participation in basic physical education classes in college, many of them had positive experiences and enjoyed their college PE class. This revealed their reasons on why they might enroll in second PE class later in college, even though they had met their graduation requirement. In Stacy’s situation, she really enjoyed her college PE class and stated the following: “My experience in this class already makes me want to enroll in more PE later”. Zane had a positive experience in his college PE class and decided he wanted to enroll in another college tennis PE class. He said: “I really enjoyed my PE class (in college) which is why I’m going to enroll again”. Juliet said that she may want to enroll in basketball as another college PE class because she wants to get better at basketball, and because she got better in volleyball, which was the class

she had as her college PE. In this example, Juliet wants to enroll in another PE because of her previous positive experience in volleyball class in college. Dale said that she was considering taking another college swimming PE because of her first college swimming PE class, she said:

Just because I enjoyed it like it was different from being in a class. I think it kind of gave me something else to just enjoy and not hate chemistry so kind of just lets you just work out and like have fun. I was thinking about swimming again, the same one if I can or maybe try something else that's out on a field since spring will be coming.

### **Summary of Results**

In summary, most students who participated in the study were fairly active in high school and continued that trend into college. Students were involved in school sports, club teams, walking and pick-up games in high school. For most students, as they continued in college their patterns of physical activity involvement remained similar. Most students, whether they had a positive or negative high school PE experience maintained involvement in physical activity from high school to college, indicating prior physical activity to be critical in continued participation in physical activity. However, one individual, Stacy, actually increased her physical activity involvement from high school to college. One of the factors that caused this change was her positive experience in high school PE. Other students desired participation in physical activity in college because they had improved sports skills in physical education classes while in high school; yet some students had negative experiences in high school, but their interest in physical activity remained about the same.

While PE in high school was typically required only once, and students had to take a health and PE combination, PE was rarely offered past Freshman year in high school; counselors discouraged this from happening. PE classes heavily revolve around traditional sports like

basketball and volleyball and running and limited time for students' participation. Problems of overcrowding, scarce equipment, and lack of space due to limited funding impacted student course availability and participation. Students in this study wanted: more non-traditional sports like badminton, swimming, and dance; more in-depth coverage of sports; and more courses that interested them in high school. PE courses of instruction were very structured and organized while others occurred during a free period with limited teaching. Some teachers cared while others did not, with some teachers being great about giving feedback; yet other teachers rolled out the balls and disappeared into their office to work on coaching plans for practice or the big game. The coach/teacher dichotomy is a big issue and students notice it as being a concern and often feel slighted in their PE class because their teacher is not giving them their full attention. Some teachers favored the athletes in classes and others ignored the non-athletic students and in some cases students' responses suggested that sexism exists in PE classes.

In regards to college PE, students enrolled in PE as a Freshman to meet a graduation requirement and chose their specific classes for different reasons: because it fit their schedule, to get in shape, because they were familiar with the sport because they played it in high school, because they wanted to learn something new, for enjoyment, and to get better in the sport in college. Many students' experiences in high school PE factored into their college PE class choice as students planned to take more PE courses beyond the one requirement for graduation.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### **Discussion**

The researcher would first like to contextualize the limitations of the study in regards to defining urban students. The participants in this study self-reported themselves as having attended an urban high school on the initial survey. Then during the interview phase, the researcher asked questions regarding the urban context of the high school, information about specific school location, and demographics of the school student body. Because the students in this study were all attending a major research I university, it is likely that the participants may not necessarily represent other urban high school students or a typical inner-city school.

The purpose of the study was to understand first-year college students' experiences of physical education in urban high school settings and to ascertain how the experiences influenced student decisions to enroll in basic physical education activity courses and to participate in physical activities. Since students are the consumers of education, understanding their perspectives and perceptions could yield valuable insights and information about their attitudes toward involvement in physical education (Prusak, Davis, Pennington & Wilkinson, 2014). Understanding students' perspectives on their learning and involvement in PE programs could indicate ways to improve education that students receive, necessitating the focus on student voice in research. However, student voice research is rare in education and students are rarely consulted when decisions are made about curricula or when program evaluation and implementation are under consideration (Dyson, 1995); thus scholars are now recommended to consider student voice research as a valuable source of information to teachers and administrators (Dyson, 2006; Erikson & Schultz, 1992; Graham, 1995).

Limited research has been conducted on student experiences in physical education in urban physical education environments. Even less research has been conducted on how urban physical education experiences can influence future college physical activity involvement including enrolling and participating in college PE courses. Although the context is different, many of the findings in the current study support previous research studies; however, there are some new insights provided which have not been found in previous research. This dissertation study adds to the existing literature on student experiences in urban physical education.

In this study, all participants were required to take at least one PE class in order to graduate from high school, and most of the PE courses taken were during Freshman year. Specifically, most PE classes were either taken in combination with a health class during the same semester, or were offered as separate classes in different semesters. Some students were given options and could choose different PE classes as their required PE credit, while others were only allowed to take the one required PE class that the school offered. Most students were told that they were not allowed to take another PE class after their one required class because they didn't have space, enough teachers, had to have all Freshman do it, or the academic counselors simply placed students in other subjects. School districts should provide more resources such as hiring more PE teachers to allow students to enroll in more PE in high school if they wish. States and the federal government need to consider enacting more rigorous standards for the number of required PE credit hours for graduation and could increase the number of contact hours for PE in a week.

Most students also experienced schools with limited space, equipment, and overcrowding, which corroborates other findings by Montalvo (2007), Ennis et al. (1997), Cothran and Ennis (1999), and Dyson et al. (2009). Cothran and Ennis (1999) found that large,

overcrowded PE classes impeded students' ability to interact with others and students remained disconnected from classmates. These issues of overcrowding and lack of space and sparse equipment could contribute to students having negative thoughts and experiences in their high school physical education as discovered in this study. School districts and administrators need to consider hiring more PE teachers in urban schools to counteract issues of overcrowding and to help combat the long wait times and lines that many urban students experience. Rather than cutting physical education programs in schools, administrators need to increase funding to aid students' learning experiences (AAHPERD, 2012). This study can inform conversations about educational reform and legislation so students can receive the PE instruction they need and deserve.

This study showed that students got tired of the same repetitive courses and subjects and desired diversity. The participants enjoyed activities and sports that were new and different from the same old courses they were accustomed to in physical education, corroborating Carlson's (1995) and Subramaniam and Silverman's (2007) studies. Carlson (1995) found students were often bored when presented with the same activities and sports year after year. Students in this dissertation study also asked for new activities in their PE programs, supporting previous research by Chen, Darst and Pangrazi (1999), Hohepa et al., (2006), Rikard and Banville, (2006), and Prusak et al., (2014), which stated that novel activities are a reason for kids to enjoy PE. Students in the current study preferred to participate in PE if the content was relevant to their lives. This supports Carlson's (1995) study that found students to be unlikely to participate in physical education if the curriculum was irrelevant to their lives. Students do not like to participate in activities that are irrelevant to them. This is consistent with Brooker and MacDonald's (1999) study that found that student input into what activities are most useful to

them could help guide curricular changes, which could positively influence children's out-of-class activity behaviors. This means that if students are allowed to be a part of the conversation on curricular changes, their outside-of-class physical activity may change for the better.

Two findings mostly uncorroborated with previous research concerned the view that students wanted a more in-depth knowledge of specific sports instead of a survey of many sports and activities. Students expressed that they did not like the two-week overview of one sport followed by another sport. The participants said they would have preferred to have a longer and more in-depth overview of one sport and learn it right, and then play it for an extended period of time before moving on to the next activity. The second finding concerned students' desire for more time in physical education. Research done by Prusak et al., (2014) found that students in elementary PE suggested adding a greater variety of new activities like skating, golf, and lacrosse and students suggested lengthening PE and holding it more frequently. In this study, students not only expressed that they wanted more than the one required PE course, but also wanted more diverse course offerings, and furthermore they wanted PE to be offered more times a week and at least once every two years, or annually.

In this study, students' experiences varied. In line with self-determination theory, most students did not necessarily realize the impact of their high school PE programs until they were faced with different physical education-based experiences. Having a new experience in a different PE program with lots of choices and equipment, like the one at the southeastern university, may have had an influence on the student's thoughts about their previous urban PE program. Therefore, the student reflecting back on their high school PE program while in college allowed them to be retrospective and realize how good or bad their high school PE program was. Studies from student perspectives in PE indicate some children view PE



negatively while others view PE positively (Dyson, 2006; Graham, 1995; Solmon & Carter, 1995). Often teachers influenced the students' views on PE in positive or negative ways, which supports previous research (Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Solmon & Carter, 1995). In this study, students had teachers who did not care and did not provide feedback and some teachers played favorites. Students also had teachers who were hardly present, too focused on their coaching duties, did not teach or when in instructional roles, they used sexist behavior and promoted inequality in favoring athletes or athletic students over non-athletes. Other teachers just "rolled out the balls" or disappeared into their office. In addition, many classes lacked structure, leading students to feel they learned little in their PE classes; they sat and talked, which did not help them learn anything, making teachers to be "glorified babysitters", as one participant indicated. Changes to urban PE curriculum need to be made in regards to teacher training and preparation to make sure teachers are better prepared to teach. Teachers need to develop organizational and managerial skills, need to be focused on student learning, provide positive and corrective feedback, and care about their students. They need to focus on their teaching over their coaching as they were hired to teach, and put more emphasis on student-centered learning by asking students what they want, desire, and need. Teachers need to treat everyone equally and be fair in assessing students.

This study showed students to enroll in PE classes in college for purposes of enjoyment or fun and this supports previous studies by Carlson (1995), Subramaniam and Silverman (2000), Tannehill and Zakrajsek (1993), McKenzie (2001), and Solmon and Carter (1995). Students chose to enroll in college PE as Freshman to meet the graduation requirement and because it fit the students' schedules or students needed the credit. Students chose their specific PE classes for many reasons: scheduling, it was familiar because it was similar to the courses taken while in

high school, to try something new, to have fun, and to get better at the sport or activity, or to stay in shape. These findings are similar to previous research (Blankenship, 2008; Ciucci, 2010; Hildebrand & Johnson, 2001; Leenders, et al., 2003; Mears, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Weinfeldt & Visek, 2009). Many Freshman students would take an additional course in physical education beyond their graduation requirement, depending on scheduling, course load for their major, and interest in the course or fun, corroborating previous findings (Hildebrand & Johnson, 2001; Leenders, et al., 2003; Mears, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Weinfeldt & Visek, 2009). Students who had positive college PE experiences during their first PE class in college were more likely to state that they would take further college PE courses. These findings suggest that quality basic physical education programs in college are needed to meet the diverse needs and interests of students. If this can be done, and students enjoy their college PE experience, they may continue to enroll in college throughout their academic career, thereby increasing their physical activity involvement and helping to reduce their risk for obesity and hypokinetic diseases.

Despite previous research stating that students in high school and between high school and college are inactive (Dyson et al., 2009; Nader et al., 2008; Stephens, Jacobs, & White, 1985; USDHHS, 1996; Calfas, Sallis, Lovato, & Campbell, 1994; Malina, 2001; McKenzie, 2001; Sallis, 2000; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000; Stone et al., 1998), in this study, most participants stated they were fairly active outside of their urban high school PE program and were involved in structured and unstructured activities and sports including school sports, community sports, club sports, pick-up games, outdoor activities, and working out. The difference in findings may be explained by the fact that in this study, the students self-labeled themselves as fairly active: there were no objective measures used to compare their physical

activity involvement to other students or their past activity, therefore their statements were subjective. All the sports activities were inherently social in nature, as teamwork and competition were integral parts of most games in which participants partook. The social nature of sports was also a determining factor in physical activity participation, especially walking, as many participants walked around their neighborhood or to school with their friends and parents. As has been seen in previous literature, urban students often walk to school more than suburban students (Johnson, Brusseau, Darst, Kulinna & White-Taylor, 2010; Lindsey, Yuling, Wilson & Jihui, 2006; Rossen et al., 2011; Springer, Hoelscher & Kelder, 2006). Urban students often do not have access to cars or rides to school as many city dwellers do not own cars, can't afford them, or parents work multiple jobs, therefore they have limited time to drop off their children at school. Suburban students often do not walk to school as they are picked up at their house and dropped at school by the bus or their parents. A few participants had limited engagement in physical activity outside of high school PE, and it was mainly due to them pursuing their academics. Specifically, these participants did not do a lot of physical activity outside of PE as they were in honors or taking AP classes; they were focused on doing well in their classes, indicating the conscious choice of focusing on academics rather than involvement in physical activity.

### **Contextual Experiences of Students Involved in School Curricular Activities**

This study revealed aspects of teaching beyond the confines of the teacher's control such as curriculum policy. Participants' comments revealed that urban PE programs are mandatory for purposes of meeting graduation requirements, which is to be taken once during the four years in high school; a physical education class typically meets once a week for about 50 minutes. Participants also mentioned that they were usually not allowed to take more PE courses after

they met their graduation requirement; advisors normally put them in other classes, pointing out that no Freshman needed to take more PE courses beyond meeting the PE requirement.

Furthermore, due to the lack of material and human resources, many students were not allowed to take PE after their Freshman year, despite student interest in enrolling in more physical education courses. Students taking physical education were graded on a pass/fail basis, and the grade was based on attendance or participation. When a letter grade was assigned, it did not affect the student's grade point average (GPA). Few students received a letter grade that affected their GPA in physical education, with their grade being based on improvement and performance in class activities.

In reference to the school policy that had physical education as mandatory in high school, the participants suggested the need for change in order for high school physical education to be a rewarding experience. Participants in this study wanted to enroll in more than the one required PE in high school and to have physical education to be offered for longer time and more often during the school week, and they generally desired more physical education courses, a finding that corroborates findings by Hohepa, Schofield and Kolt (2006), who found that students had limited opportunities in PE during school hours. The participants also wanted diverse curricular offerings, wanted classes that they could relate to, and wanted a more in-depth teaching on sports instead of surveys of many sports. This is corroborated by research that states that children often perceive barriers to participation in PE, such as a lack of meaning and variety (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Strand & Scantling, 1994) and limited choices during PE classes (Hohepa, Schofield & Kolt, 2006).

The state and school district policies on curriculum often were driving forces that impacted the structure for PE course offerings and time requirements, making teacher's control

limited to instruction and assessment. It was found that teachers had inequitable treatment towards athletic students and women, and had monotonous curricula that offered no choice for students. Urban schools also had teachers with low enthusiasm, who didn't seem to care, who had limited structure and often did not teach. Students felt like their teachers "rolled out the balls" and were "glorified babysitters" and often the teachers were too pre-occupied with their dual role of a coach and teacher, impacting negatively the teaching of physical education. Students suggested changes to improve the teaching styles of urban high school teachers and they included: more structure, variety in activities and ways of teaching, enthusiastic teachers who cared about them and teaching, teachers who would actually provide instruction, more positive feedback, and that teachers should not play favorites towards certain genders or athletic ability, and to have limited duties in coaching. Prusak et al., (2014) corroborated the importance of teachers in creating favorable attitudes in students towards physical education. A better understanding of students' attitudes and beliefs about the subject of physical education could greatly influence teacher effectiveness and could alter the design of programs to address the needs of their students (Fox, 1991; Steinhardt, 1992).

### **Students' Choices of Physical Activity in College**

The results of this study are consistent with implications of the social cognitive and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1989 and Deci and Ryan, 1985). According to the social cognitive and self-efficacy theories, if students do not develop sport skills in school or feel successful using them, they would not feel as competent to perform sports activities (Troost et al., 1996). In addition, if people had negative experiences in school sports situations, they would avoid similar situations in the future. In this study it was found that previous physical activity involvement seemed to have a stronger relation to continued involvement in physical activity as compared to

participation in physical education courses. For instance, the individuals who were fairly active in high school outside of PE and who either had positive or negative experiences in PE still continued their physical activity involvement in college. Individuals who had limited involvement in physical activity outside of high school but who enjoyed PE in high school actually increased their physical activity involvement in college. In contrast, the individuals who scarcely participated in physical activity outside of high school PE but who had negative experiences in high school PE neither increased or decreased in their physical activity involvement in college. This shows that a positive PE experience in high school can have positive effects on physical activity participation in college, while a negative high school PE experience may not necessarily result in limited involvement in physical activity in college. In addition, individuals who were active outside of PE in high school seemed to enjoy being active, getting involved in sports participation or in other physical activities, and continued participation in physical activities in college, giving credence to the social cognitive and self-efficacy theories. Other researchers have corroborated the aforementioned findings that indicate that the value placed in or fun derived from PE can influence later motivations for physical activity involvement (Fox, 1991; Graham, 2008). Silverman (2005) stated that the teacher and the curriculum can influence student's perceptions of PE and can affect student's attitudes. Silverman (2005) also stated that when teachers help promote positive attitudes towards PE, then students tend to enjoy involvement in physical activities and this helps continuation of participation in lifetime physical activities. The research that Prusak et al. (2014) conducted found that elementary students felt their PE experience had an effect on their current out-of-class behaviors, indicating they enjoyed doing the activities they learned in class during recess or after school. Another research study revealed that early positive experiences with PE may lead to

participation in physical activities later in life (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007; Trudeau, Laurencelle, Trembly, Rajic and Shephard, 1999). It is apparent that PE impacts students' physical activity involvement, and finding ways to improve PE so more students may increase their physical activity involvement is paramount.

Student involvement in urban high school PE influenced their choices of physical activity in college; many participants chose a PE class in college because they had experience with it in high school or they wanted to try something new. While some participants wanted to have fun, others wanted to get better at the sport or activity. The factors that influenced future enrolment in more PE classes in college were time, interest in the course, a need to have fun or relieve stress, and because the participants had positive experiences in their first college PE class; hence they wanted to continue taking more basic physical education activity courses. This finding supports the social cognitive and self-efficacy theories because students who had a positive experience in college PE wanted to continue to enroll in more PE in college. Participants also stated that having fun was a major determining factor in participating or choosing to enroll in PE, which corroborates Corbin's (2002) view that when students have fun with physical activity, it increases the likelihood of continued physical activity, leading to positive attitudes towards lifelong physical activity. Thus researchers need to continue studying what makes PE enjoyable for students in high school and to try and implement changes to the PE program to include attractive, purposeful, inclusive, and invitational curricula. Promoting confidence through student enjoyment of physical activity and physical education programs should be a major goal of educators. As was seen in this dissertation study, students may choose to enroll in another PE class in college if they enjoyed and had positive experiences in their first college PE class. Therefore it is important for PE programs in college to meet the needs and interests of students

and to provide quality instructional programs that meet the needs of all students. It is also important for colleges that do not have a PE program to develop one and continue to expand it and offer different physical activities for students.

### **Conclusion**

The participants of this study expressed that the teachers did not care about them and further that there was non-teaching or minimal teaching in their urban PE programs. Many urban youth participants had limited resources made available to them (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2000) and had limited access to resources and opportunities for physical activity. Often physical education is one of the few opportunities for physical activity in existence for these students (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2000; Springer et al., 2009). Therefore, “rolling out the balls” and not teaching are doing a major disservice to urban youth. Another conclusion concerns the repetitious offering of courses. The repetitive curriculum was stated to be boring for the participants. In fact, many participants felt that they were not receiving quality instruction and that the teacher was just doing the same old boring and repetitive activity. This is not a new finding, as previous research has shown this to be a major issue in urban schools (Carlson, 1995; Cothran & Ennis, 1999, 2001; Ennis et al., 1997; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). The participants stated that the teachers could improve the curriculum by surveying students about their interests, providing a choice of activities, and teaching a variety of activities. This parallels other research that shows that students have more favorable attitudes towards PE when they have a choice in the curriculum (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Oliver et al., 2009).

High school physical education has tremendous potential to increase physical activity participation among young adults. Changes need to be made to the urban PE programs if they are to improve the quality of life of students. Due to the decline in activity levels from high



school to college and obesity concerns, PE needs the interest and support of researchers, educators, the community, and administrators. Schools should not continue to cut PE when the budget becomes an issue. States need to increase the physical education requirement to meet the needs of students (Mears, 2008a; AAHPERD, 2012; U.S. GAO, 2012; Perna et al., 2012). Often urban schools are faced with special circumstances that students from suburban schools do not have to deal with like overcrowding, lack of equipment, and lack of space. Administrators should not allow the overcrowding of students in PE as it limits quality physical activity and student-teacher interaction (Cothran & Ennis, 1999; McKenzie, 2001). Schools in underprivileged, low socio-economic areas need to be provided with extra funding from the local community and state and federal governments to help combat the issues of overcrowding, lack of resources and lack of space, which could in turn, improve the learning environment for the students.

Teachers, educators, researchers, and administrators can learn a great deal about teaching and learning by listening to students talk about their experiences. Student voice research in PE is crucial to understanding how to improve PE and to understand students' motivations for participating in physical activity (Corbett & Wilson, 2002; Dyson, 2006; Graham, 1995; Pissanos & Allison, 1993). Researchers should continue to study ways to improve physical education for urban students in order to improve their experiences, and need to continue to ask students about their experiences to find out their likes and dislikes in order to improve their educational experiences. Through studying students' lives, scholars can have a better understanding of students' wants or desires, which would enable them to generate ideas and institute actions that could improve learning in physical education in the future. If teachers are engaged and have appealing curriculum, students are likely to be engaged and will find PE

enjoyable and useful. This leads to positive attitudes toward physical education and physical activity, which in turn can foster more physical activity involvement outside of class, leading to a positive and healthy lifestyle.

### **Implications and Suggestions for Future Research**

Since there is a scarcity of research on urban high school student experiences in physical education, this study adds to the existing literature on student voice research in PE. This dissertation also adds to the existing literature on the effects of urban PE experiences on future college physical activity involvement, including enrolling and participating in diverse courses in basic physical education programs. A major implication of this study is that there needs to be a dire effort to improve urban physical education in such ways as diversifying curriculum, improving teaching styles and strategies, increasing funding and availability for PE, increasing facilities and equipment for teaching physical education, and expanding non-traditional and student-centered curriculum to meet the needs and interests of students. College and university basic physical education activity programs can help meet the needs of urban students by offering a wide variety of diverse courses, providing smaller class sizes in physical education, providing ample equipment in good shape, having state-of-the-art and spacious facilities, and providing caring, qualified PE teachers who enjoy their jobs.

Suggestions for future research include a replication of student research on their voices on curriculum and experiences in physical education in urban high school settings as well as college environments. Researchers or scholars need to conduct student voice research to determine what it is that children want and need from their educational experiences. This study focused on college Freshman students at a southeastern university, but it would be important to get perspectives of urban students from different areas of the United States and also from

different grade levels, and more studies need to be done on a wider variety of urban students such as those not attending college and those attending community college. Further research could also try and isolate the physical education experience and find out the extent to which a positive or negative PE experience impacts future physical activity involvement. Further research can also focus on the impact that race, gender, and socio-economic status has on physical education and participation in physical activity. By studying student motivations for participating in physical activity and learning what motivates students to be active and enroll in PE classes, researchers can develop positive experiences for students so they continue to be physically active. Researchers could also conduct research studies focused on what teachers believe and think about urban high school PE and then try and develop strategies to improve teacher preparation programs. Another interesting future study could be to find out high school and college students' motivations for enrolling in more than the one required PE class. Conducting interviews with students who had self-enrolled in multiple PE courses in high school or college could provide very interesting findings. Finding out why students develop an interest in taking more than the one required PE class could shed light onto what can be done in high school and college in regards to the curriculum and teaching strategies to improve teaching and learning in physical education. In the interview protocol, topics of conversation did not include talks about locker rooms, such as changing clothes in front of their peers, or talks about the gender or race of teachers or how diversity impacted experiences. In addition, participants did not include discussions about issues of being either overweight or underweight, or being made fun of because they lacked skills to engage in activities. Scholars could consider research studies that specifically focus on student experiences in areas not covered in this dissertation study.

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## APPENDIX A

**SCRIPT FOR SUPERVISOR**

Dear Supervisor,

I am planning to conduct a research study, which focuses on the experiences of students in K-12 PE settings. The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education (PE) to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools.

Details about the study are listed below. It is my hope that you would allow me to contact the PEDB instructors via email this Fall 2013 semester to ask them if it is possible for me to gain their permission to visit their classes and obtain participants for my study. The names of the students will be used for the survey, but will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for interviews to ensure confidentiality. Following the analysis of the study, all surveys and interview transcripts will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality. An IRB has been completed and approved by the IRB office.

My study will involve a 2-part process listed below:

- **PEDB Survey** (target participants=first year students enrolled in a PEDB activity class during the Fall 2013 semester)
  - This survey will contain questions regarding their K-12 PE experiences and their reasons for enrollment in their college PE class as well as some demographic questions. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. The survey has been submitted to IRB and has been approved for use.
- **10-16 Semi-Structured In-Depth Individual Interviews** (target participants=first year students enrolled in a PEDB activity class during the Fall 2013 semester)
  - This portion of the study will involve interviewing students individually.
  - These interviews will last between forty-five minutes to one hour.
  - The purpose of these interviews is to identify key influences related to the students' experiences in their K-12 PE classes.
  - The interview guide has been submitted and approved by IRB.

I would like to ask for your permission to get the email addresses of the TA's this semester so I can contact them and ask them if I can come visit their classes to gain participants. If so, please forward me their email addresses to [LACKMAN@UGA.EDU](mailto:LACKMAN@UGA.EDU). Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Jeremy Lackman  
Ph.D. candidate  
University of Georgia  
Department of Kinesiology

## APPENDIX B

**EMAIL SCRIPT FOR TA'S**

My name is Jeremy Lackman, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia in the Department of Kinesiology. I am planning to conduct a research study, which focuses on the experiences of students in K-12 PE settings. The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education (PE) to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools.

Details about the study are listed below. It is my hope that the current students in your class could participate in my study. The names of the students will be used for the survey, but will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for interviews to ensure confidentiality. By May 2014, all surveys and interview transcripts will be stripped of individually identifiable information. The interviews and surveys will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality three years after the completion of the study, or May 2017. An IRB has been completed and approved by the IRB office.

My study will involve a 2-part process listed below:

- **PEDB Survey** (target participants=first year students enrolled in a PEDB activity class during the Fall 2013 semester)
  - This survey will contain questions regarding their K-12 PE experiences and their reasons for enrollment in their college PE class as well as some demographic questions. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. The survey has been submitted to IRB and has been approved for use.
- **10-16 Semi-Structured In-Depth Individual Interviews** (target participants=first year students enrolled in a PEDB activity class during the Fall 2013 semester)
  - This portion of the study will involve interviewing students individually.
  - These interviews will last between forty-five minutes to one hour.
  - The purpose of these interviews is to identify key influences related to the students' experiences in their K-12 PE classes.
  - The interview guide has been submitted and approved by IRB.

I would like to ask for your permission to come to your class and explain my study and gain participants for both the survey and the interview aspects of my study. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. I hope to hear back from you soon in response to my request. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Jeremy Lackman  
Ph.D. candidate  
University of Georgia  
Department of Kinesiology

## APPENDIX C

**SCRIPT FOR VISITING PEDB CLASSES TO ADMINISTER SURVEY**

Hello, my name is Jeremy Lackman and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in the area of Kinesiology with a concentration in physical education (PE). I am conducting a research study which focuses on the experiences of students in K-12 PE settings. The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools. I am administering a brief survey, which asks questions about your K-12 PE experiences and your reasons for enrolling in college PE. I would appreciate your assistance in completing this survey. I am looking for freshman or first year students to participate in this study. If you would like to assist me in completing this survey, please fill out the informed consent first and then complete the survey. I anticipate this survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

After you are finished please place them in the box provided. Thank you very much for assisting me in my research endeavors.

## APPENDIX D

**CONSENT FORM-SURVEY****Students' Experiences in K-12 Physical Education: A Reflective Study****Researcher's Statement**

We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you. By completing this survey, you may be contacted for a future interview, and if asked, will be asked to fill out another informed consent form specific to the interview.

**Principal Investigator:**     *Dr. Jepkorir "Rose" Chepyator-Thomson*  
  *Kinesiology*  
  *365 Ramsey, 330 River Rd, Athens, GA 30602*  
  *Jchepyat@uga.edu*

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education (PE) to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools.

**Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- 1) Answer questions on a survey about your personal background and provide basic demographic information.
  - 2) Answer questions about your PE experiences in K-12 schools.
- This process should take approximately fifteen minutes.

**Risks and discomforts**

THERE ARE NO FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS.

**Benefits**

Personal benefits include reflecting back on your previous PE experiences. The societal benefits include: providing insight to the academic research community and society about the experiences of students in PE in the United States, and providing insight into effective measures and key strategies for improving PE programs at the K-12 and higher education levels. Findings from this study may prove useful in enhancing and creating programs that improve student experiences in PE.

**Incentives for participation**

There will be no incentive for this study.

### **Privacy/Confidentiality**

No individually identifiable information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be shared with others without your written permission, except if required by law. You will include your first name and email address on the survey, but the surveys will be locked in a filing cabinet in a locked office. Once the surveys have been used to screen for interviewees, and data has been collected and analyzed, all IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE SURVEY. THIS WILL TAKE PLACE BY MAY 2014. AFTER THE IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION IS REMOVED, THE SURVEYS WILL BE KEPT IN A LOCKED FILING CABINET IN A LOCKED OFFICE UNTIL MAY 2017, AT WHICH TIME THEY WILL BE DESTROYED BY SHREDDING.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed. YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY OR TO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY WILL NOT AFFECT YOUR GRADE IN YOUR COURSE IN ANY WAY.

### **If you have questions**

THE RESEARCHERS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY ARE JEREMY LACKMAN, A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROFESSOR CHEPYATOR-THOMSON. If you have any questions, you may email him at [Lackman@uga.edu](mailto:Lackman@uga.edu). Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson at [jchepyat@uga.edu](mailto:jchepyat@uga.edu) or at 706-542-4434. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

### **Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:**

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

<u>Jeremy Lackman</u> Name of Researcher	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature	_____ Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

## Appendix E

**PEDB SURVEY**

Your participation is voluntary. You reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study at any time. Information received from the participants will be privately reviewed and analyzed by the principal investigators. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the survey, please contact Jeremy Lackman at Lackman@uga.edu.

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

PEDB Class \_\_\_\_\_

**Please identify the reason(s) you enrolled in this Basic Physical Education Class (PEDB) by placing a check mark in the box  of the items listed below: (Check all that apply)**

1.  To learn a new activity
2.  To improve my self confidence
3.  To learn about the health benefits of physical activity
4.  To improve my fitness level ("get in shape") or ("stay in shape")
5.  To lose weight
6.  To maintain my body weight
7.  To reduce stress/anxiety levels
8.  To relax
9.  To exercise regularly
10.  To have structured exercise time
11.  To develop sport skills
12.  To develop fitness skills
13.  To have fun
14.  To meet new people
15.  To participate with a friend
16.  To earn credit
17.  To enhance my self-image
18.  To learn physical activity habits for the future
19.  To participate in a competitive activity
20.  Because it is included in my tuition
21.  Because it is required to graduate
22.  Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Please write down your top 3 reasons for enrolling in your PEDB class from the list above:

#1 Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

#2 Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

#3 Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check  which benefit(s) you think you receive from participating in this PEDB class:  
(Check all that apply)

1.  Learn new physical activity skills
2.  Improves my health
3.  Provides me with a social outlet
4.  Helps me stay active
5.  Helps control my weight
6.  Allows me to graduate
7.  Allows me to earn credit
8.  Make new friends
9.  Helps me feel better
10.  Reduces my stress
11.  Improves my aerobic fitness level
12.  Improves my strength
13.  Learn about sports
14.  Allows me to meet new people
15.  Improves my self-confidence
16.  Helps me relax
17.  Keeps me healthy
18.  Provides me with a challenge
19.  Allows me to have fun
20.  Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Please write down your top 3 benefits you think you will get from participating in this PEDB class from the list above:

#1 Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

#2 Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

#3 Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

What comes to mind when you think about your K-12 PE experiences?

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How did your participation in K-12 PE influence your college physical activity involvement?

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How did your previous K-12 PE experiences impact your decision to take this PEDB class?

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How important is it for you to participate in physical activity? (Please check only one box)

Very Important

Important

Somewhat Important

Not important

---



Outside of taking this class, do you currently engage in other physical activity like brisk walking, jogging, bicycling, or weight training, etc. long enough to work up a sweat?

Yes       No

If YES, how many days per week       0-2       3-5       5+

If YES, on most days do you do this activity for 30 minutes or more?    Yes       No

Do you participate in Intramural Sports?    Yes       No

If yes, which activities \_\_\_\_\_

Compared to others your age and gender, would you consider yourself to be:

Much less active       Somewhat less active       About the same

Somewhat more active       Much more active

Where did you attend high school?

Urban       Suburban       Rural

How many PE classes did you take in high school?

0       1       2       3       4       5       6       7+

Would you say that in PE in high school you were \_\_\_\_\_

Very Successful       Successful       Average       Unsuccessful       Very Unsuccessful

Gender:

Male  Female

---

Ethnicity:

White/Caucasian  Black/African American  Asian/Pacific  Hispanic  Other

---

Age:

18  19  20  21  22  23  24  25+

---

What is your current academic year in school?

First year  Sophomore  Junior  Senior/5<sup>th</sup> year  Graduate Student

---

Which of the following best describes the annual income of your family?

\$9,999 or below  \$10,000-\$29,999  \$30,000-\$49,999  
 \$50,000-\$69,999  \$70,000-\$89,999  \$90,000 or above

---

How much do you think that participating in a PEDB course in college will influence your future physical activity behavior?

A lot  Somewhat  Not at all

---

Do you plan on taking another PEDB class at UGA?

Yes  No

**Why or why not?**

---

---

---

**End of Survey-Thanks**

## Appendix F

**EMAIL SCRIPT TO OBTAIN PARTICIPANTS FOR INTERVIEWS**

My name is Jeremy Lackman, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia in the Department of Kinesiology. This semester I came to your PEDB class and you filled out a survey about your motivations to enroll in your PEDB class and about your K-12 physical education (PE) experiences.

As you know, I am conducting a research study, which focuses on the experiences of students in K-12 PE settings. The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools.

It is my hope that you would allow me to conduct an interview with you. Your name will not be used; pseudonyms will be used for interviews to ensure confidentiality. Following the analysis of the interviews, all interview transcripts and audio recordings will be destroyed to ensure confidentiality.

The interview will last between forty-five minutes to one hour. The purpose of the interview is to identify key influences related to your experiences in your K-12 PE classes. There will be an informed consent form for you to review and sign before the interview begins.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please respond to this email with dates and times you are available and I will respond with a confirmed date, time, and location.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. I hope to hear back from you soon in response to my request. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Jeremy Lackman  
Ph.D. candidate  
University of Georgia  
Department of Kinesiology

## Appendix G

**CONSENT FORM-INTERVIEW****Students' Experiences in K-12 Physical Education: A Reflective Study****Researcher's Statement**

We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

**Principal Investigator:** *Dr. Jepakorir "Rose" Chepyator-Thomson*  
*Kinesiology*  
*365 Ramsey, 330 River Rd, Athens, GA 30602*  
*Jchepyat@uga.edu*

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education (PE) to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools.

**Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer questions in an individual interview about your PE experiences in K-12 schools, and answer questions about your experiences in college. This process should take approximately forty-five minutes to one hour.

**Risks and discomforts**

THERE ARE NO FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS.

**Benefits**

Personal benefits include reflecting back on your previous PE experiences. The societal benefits include: providing insight to the academic research community and society about the experiences of students in PE in the United States, and providing insight into effective measures and key strategies for improving PE programs at the K-12 and higher education levels. Findings from this study may prove useful in enhancing and creating programs that improve student experiences in PE.

**Incentives for participation**

There will be no incentive for this study.

**Privacy/Confidentiality**

No individually identifiable information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be shared with others without your written permission, except if required by law. You will be assigned an identifying pseudonym at the start of the interview and this pseudonym will be used on all transcriptions, reports, and results. The individual interview will be audio taped and this recording will only be heard by a member of the research team and a third party who will be used for transcription assistance. Pseudonyms will be applied to participants prior to the third party receiving the audio-taped interviews, therefore at no point will there be any direct identifiers linked to the participants besides the voice recording. During transcription and analysis, all interview recordings and paper transcriptions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. The non-paper transcriptions will be saved on a password protected computer. In May 2017, the audio recordings will be destroyed. The non-paper transcriptions will still be saved on a password protected computer and the paper transcriptions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office until May 2017, at which time they will all be destroyed.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to stop or withdraw from the study, the information/data collected from or about you up to the point of your withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed. **YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY OR TO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY WILL NOT AFFECT YOUR GRADE IN YOUR COURSE IN ANY WAY.**

### **If you have questions**

THE RESEARCHERS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY ARE JEREMY LACKMAN, A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF PROFESSOR CHEPYATOR-THOMSON. If you have any questions, you may email him at [Lackman@uga.edu](mailto:Lackman@uga.edu). Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson at [jchepyat@uga.edu](mailto:jchepyat@uga.edu) or at 706-542-4434. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

### **Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:**

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

<u>Jeremy Lackman</u>	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

## Appendix H

**IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Hello, my name is Jeremy Lackman and I am a graduate student at the University of Georgia. I am pursuing a doctoral degree in the area of Kinesiology with a concentration in physical education (PE). I am conducting a research study on student experiences in K-12 PE. The purpose of the study is to explore and interpret students' perspectives on their experiences in K-12 physical education to inform curricular decisions and teaching practices in schools. With your permission, I would like interview you today about your experiences as a student in K-12 PE and the impact these experiences have had on your life.

Throughout the interview, I will ask you questions related to your personal background and your experiences with PE. I will also ask about your personal motivations for enrolling in PE classes in college. All information we discuss will be confidential and your identity will not be revealed on any documentation associated with this study. No identifiers will be used for this research with exception of a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and the documentation of your demographic information. Do you have questions in regards to your participation in this study?

I anticipate this interview will last forty-five minutes to one hour. You may end the interview at any point. You may decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may also feel free to take a break during any portion of the interview. Also, feel free to let me know if you need additional clarification or explanation about any of the questions. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

Please review and sign the informed consent form.

## Appendix I

**IN-DEPTH INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Ask about high school attended (location, size, student body, demographics, etc.)
2. Tell me about your physical activity involvement outside of your physical education program?
3. Tell me about your urban high school physical education program.
4. What stands out in regards to your urban high school physical education program?
5. What are the high points and the low points of your high school physical education experience?
6. What did you like and dislike about your high school PE?
7. What physical activities did you like or enjoy during your high school physical education program?
8. How would you evaluate your high school physical education program?
9. Now that you are looking back at your high school PE experience, what would you have them change to improve it for students like you? Are there changes that are needed to benefit other kinds of students? If yes, what changes and what kind of student?

Now I will ask you some questions about your current college PE experience

10. What is the name of the PE class that you are now enrolled as a college student?
11. What made you decide to take this class?
12. What stands out in regards to your college physical education class?
13. What do you like and dislike about your college PE class?
14. Tell me about your physical activity involvement outside of your college physical education class?
15. What can be done differently in PE in college to get you to enroll in more PE classes in college?



## Appendix J

**INITIAL CODEBOOK**

## Involvement in physical activity during high school (not associated with PE class)

- 101 A. Intramurals
- B. Workout Routine
- C. Walking to class
- D. Outdoor activities (hiking etc.)
- E. Pick-up games (Sports)
- F. Club Sports

## Experiences in urban high school PE

- 201 PE class
  - A. Curriculum
  - B. Course Offerings
  - C. Grading
  - D. Structure
- 202 Teacher Characteristics
  - A. Organization of class
  - B. Lesson structure
  - C. Sports taught
  - D. Teaching strategies
- 203 Gender Equity
- 204 Overcrowding
- 205 Equipment Availability

## Influence of PE in high school on PE and PA in college

- 301 Physical activities (not associated with PE class)
  - A. Intramurals
  - B. Workout Routine
  - C. Walking to class
  - D. Outdoor activities (hiking etc.)
  - E. Pick-up games (Sports)
  - F. Club Sports
- 302 College PE Choice
  - A. Reasons to enroll
  - B. Why that class
  - C. Will you take another PE in college?

## Appendix K

**CATEGORIES**

- 1A. High involvement in physical activity during high school
- 1B. Low involvement in physical activity during high school
- 2A. Common structure of urban PE programs at the high school level
- 2B. Reflected experiences of students in urban high school PE
- 3A. Influence of high school urban PE on college physical activity involvement
- 3B. Influence of high school urban PE on college physical education class choice

## Appendix L

**THEMES AND SUBTHEMES**

## Section I: Physical Activity during High School Outside of PE

1. Activities Outside of PE
  - a. Structured physical activities
  - b. Unstructured physical activities
  - c. Student involvement in physical activity due to social networks
2. Limited Physical Activity Involvement Outside of Physical Education Program
  - a. Schoolwork overrides physical activity involvement

## Section II: Contextual Experiences of Students Involved in School Curricular Activities

1. Beyond Teacher Control: Policy Directives on School Curriculum
  - a. Curricular policy and mandated curriculum
  - b. Under-resourced schools
  - c. Assessment and evaluation of student learning
2. Students' Reflections on Mandated School Curriculum in Physical Education
  - a. Variety of non-traditional sports
  - b. Superficial coverage of sports content
  - c. Curricular expansion and frequent coverage of PE courses
  - d. Student-centered curriculum

3. Teacher Methods of Content Delivery
  - a. Organizing for instruction and lesson implementation
  - b. Teaching strategies and styles

### Section III: Beyond High School: Students' Choices of Physical Activity

1. High School PE's Influence on College Physical Activity Involvement
  - a. Active regardless of level of schooling
  - b. Enjoyed PE in high school and active in college environment
  - c. Inactive in high school and college environments
2. Relationship between High School PE and Choices of College Physical Education Courses
  - a. Students enrolled in PE classes for a variety of reasons
  - b. Factors that influenced student decisions to take or avoid PE courses