

**GENDER EQUITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN BC:
Re-Thinking Feminist Debates
on Co-educational versus Single-sex Classes**

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2000

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

May 2004

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine liberal and radical feminist debates about the merits of using co-educational or single-sex PE as a means to eliminate gender inequity. Drawing on post-structural feminist insights and my own discussions with secondary PE students in BC, I argue that neither setting is inherently gender equitable. Because PE in Western societies is framed in a scientific discourse that naturalizes gender difference and in the ideals of 'hegemonic masculinity' and sport, both classroom strategies result in gender inequity. Instead of focusing on the delivery of PE – whether it is co-education or single-sex – those who are seeking to eliminate gender inequity in PE need to challenge the Western definition of sport and gender.

By examining the history of PE in Canada and BC, the PE curriculum in BC, and the experiences of some secondary students in PE, this thesis challenges the use of gender as a binary category that underlies gender inequity and the debate about co-educational versus single-sex PE. In particular, in this thesis, I examine how the maintenance of 'hegemonic masculinity' in PE, particularly through its reliance on sport in the curriculum, affects girls who are attempting to maintain an image of 'emphasized femininity' in opposition to physical activity and other girls who are attempting to resist idealized femininity in Western society. As well, I am interested in how PE's reliance on 'hegemonic masculinity' affects those boys who do not adhere to its ideals of competition, physical strength and aggression. In my research, I gave students – who are the primary people affected by the educational process – space to have their voices heard and to share their experiences in PE. I examined their insights about gender and equity as an essential component for understanding how we can make changes that will allow us to work towards a gender equitable PE.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee for all their time and energy in this thesis, Dr. Arlene McLaren and Dr. Ann Travers. I also wish to thank the school district for allowing me to enter their schools and talk with their students. Further, thank you to the teachers and principals that discussed this research with me and gave me access to their students. I especially want to thank the seven student participants who gave their time and words to this project. Thank you also to my colleagues, Darcie and Tanya, who gave their time to read drafts and offer advice, in order to make this thesis stronger. A special thank you to Dr. John Bogardus for his ear and advice throughout this process, especially when things were looking dismal. You are a wonderful teacher and listener.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Body- the biologically and socially constructed physical self through the process of being part of a society (Shilling in Penny and Evans, 2002).

Co-educational- a classroom that is comprised of students of differing sexes and a teacher of either sex.

Femininity- the description of socially constructed norms, values, and behaviours that are associated with the female sex, but that does not necessarily apply only to females.

Gender- a socially and historically constructed set of power relations whereby men have more power over women than women over men and which are amenable to change (Hall, 1990).

Gender equity- going beyond access to experiences, equity involves equality of opportunity to express and develop attitudes and behaviours relating to sexuality, shape, and physical cultures. Equity is also about embracing and valuing difference as a resource in a way that negates prejudice (Penny and Evans, 2002).

Hegemonic masculinity- the idealized form of masculinity in a given society, and which is not static (Connell, 1995).

Masculinity- the description of socially constructed norms, values, and behaviours associated with the male sex, but which does not necessarily apply only to males.

Physical education- an educational class that teaches through the body, is part of school course offerings, and is graded. PE can be either compulsory or an elective.

Single-sex- a classroom that is comprised of students who share the same biological sex only; this does not necessarily include the sex of the teacher.

Sport – “a physical activity which (1) must contain elements of physical prowess and skills, and is vigorous; (2) must include an element of competition or challenge whether that be abstract or concrete in form; (3) is institutionalized, in that it has predeveloped rules, regulations, and strategies of play; and (4) is involved in a socialization process” (Anderson *et al.* 1989, p 27).

Chapter One: Introduction

Physical education (PE) is an important site for examining the social construction of gender in 'Western'¹ society because of its central role in education as the primary subject teaching students about and through the body. In British Columbia (BC) public schools, PE is a mandatory course that all students must take in grades kindergarten through ten². BC schools provide PE classes in varying degrees of co-educational and single-sex settings. These two strategies for delivering PE rely on specific understandings of gender and gender equity. In this thesis, I will examine how some strands of feminist theory have been used to address the debate between co-educational and single-sex PE as a means to make PE gender equitable. While feminist theories in general explore gender inequity within society, they differ in their definitions of this term. As a result, the debate between the two strategies for PE is not easily resolved. In particular, debates about gender equity focus on whether or not females and males are the 'same' and therefore require co-educational classes or are 'different' and therefore require single-sex classes. Recent theoretical challenges, such as Connell's (1987), to Western cultural assumptions of gender as a binary, difference as biologically based, and to the assumption that the mind

¹ When I refer to 'Western' Society, I am referring generally to those societies that are capitalist in nature, democratic, and usually Judai/Christian, including but not limited to Canada, Britain, Australia, and the United States.

² While PE is a mandatory subject, schools may give students in special circumstances (such as for competitive athletes) permission to not participate in PE, but it is assumed that all students will attempt to participate.

is superior to the body provide a framework that can address the impasse of the debate between gender similarity and difference and its implications for PE classroom delivery. Connell's (1987) concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' suggests that gender is not a binary, but rather a complex organization of diverse manifestations of masculinity and femininity. As well, Connell (1987) demonstrates how in Western society, idealized forms of masculinity include many of the characteristics associated with predominantly male competitive 'sports'. I argue, that in relying on these sports for much of its curriculum, PE maintains a masculinized notion of the superior and fit body. This notion reinforces the belief that female bodies are inferior to males' and ultimately justifies male power over women and gender inequity. By examining the history of PE in Canada and BC, the PE curriculum in BC, and the experiences of secondary students in BC with PE, I challenge the use of the binary of gendered categories that underlie gender inequity and address, specifically, the ongoing debate of co-educational versus single-sex PE.

In this thesis I focus, in particular, on students' experiences in secondary school PE in BC in relation to co-education, single-sex, 'hegemonic masculinity' and sport. Through discussions with students about their experiences in and perspectives of PE, it is possible to gain an understanding of how PE and its reliance on sport over 'recreational' activities is involved in the construction of gendered bodies in a way that maintains difference and inequity as natural. I chose to discuss PE with students who were in secondary school because it is at this level that many have had the experience of both co-educational and single-

sex PE. This mixed experience is due to the use of co-educational PE classes in elementary schools and single-sex PE classes in many BC secondary schools. All the participants in this study had experienced co-educational PE in elementary school and single-sex PE in their secondary years.

Importance of the Research

Gender inequity is an important issue in PE in BC and is formally recognized as an area of concern by the BC Ministry of Education. Strategies for creating a gender equitable PE are part of the curriculum guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1995). However, while the Ministry acknowledges that gender equity is a goal, thus far it has done little to ensure changes that would eliminate gender inequity. The BC Ministry of Education has made suggestions to help move PE in a direction that may make it more equitable such as offering a variety of activities that are new to both sexes and using the same rules in activities for boys and girls. However, my research indicates that these changes are not necessarily implemented in the daily practice of PE and that more changes are needed to make PE gender equitable.

Thus far, much of the focus on gender equity in PE by the BC Ministry of Education and some feminists has centered on participation rates, specifically girls lack thereof, when PE becomes an elective subject in grades eleven and twelve. A study carried out by The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) shows that only ten percent of female students in BC enroll in PE as an elective (Fenton *et al.*, 2000). The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (CAHPER)

(1993) also notes this lack of participation and sees it as very problematic in the development of healthy women. Although the tendency for both boys and girls is to not enroll in PE as an elective, enrollment for girls is lower than boys³.

Participation is an important indicator of a problem with gender equity in PE.

However, my aim in this thesis is to go beyond the issue of participation when PE is merely an elective and looks at factors involved with gender inequity in the mandatory grades of PE in BC, kindergarten through grade ten.

My research suggests that the issue of whether or not to organize PE in BC as a co-educational or single-sex class has not been critically addressed or answered in BC. Currently, schools in BC have the autonomy to make the choice themselves with little or no explanation as to why. As well, I argue that there is not one definitive answer in regards to how to offer PE classes. In the 1980s, feminists raised the issue of PE class settings and called for co-education in PE to attempt to address gender inequality (Martens, 1990). These feminists were working within a liberal feminist framework that argues for equality; a desire for equal opportunities or access for all. Implicit in the notion of equality is the assumption that essentially we are all the 'same' (Penny, 2002). In contrast, radical feminists such as Vertinsky (1995), called for single-sex PE in order to nurture girls' values. However, offering PE as a single-sex subject within a co-educational school raises questions about the message being sent to students about gender differences and girls' abilities. While educators need to justify why

³ The organizations that have reported the statistics for girls' lack of participation in PE as an elective have not included similar statistics for boys.

they offer PE as single-sex in primarily co-educational schools, any move towards co-educational PE also needs to be critically examined.

I envision this thesis as a tool for teachers, administrators, and policy makers to use when considering the issues surrounding gender equitable PE, a current mandate for the BC Ministry of Education. By bringing in student voices, this research allows the reader a chance to consider the ways that students conceptualize PE, their ideas about what it should be, as well as their understanding of the gendered body in the context of PE. I seek to clarify the debates about gender equity and PE and examine the debate of how schools in BC should deliver PE -- in co-educational or single-sex classes -- and the flaws in this debate.

Considerably more research is needed to gain a critical understanding of the role of PE in constructing gendered bodies as binary⁴, as well as for discovering how PE could be reworked to attain a more equitable learning environment for all students. In recognizing that gender is not immutable, but rather has changed in definition over time, I and others (see Wright, 1998; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002; Penny, 2002) argue that PE has the potential to be a site that questions taken-for-granted beliefs that normalize gender difference and male superiority. Because PE is a site that directly influences the shaping of the human body including what it is to be feminine or masculine, it is an ideal locale to restructure the current definitions of feminine and masculine to encompass diversity and work towards equity.

⁴ By binary, I mean a relational hierarchy based on two opposing categories such as male/female where the second term is seen as inferior to the first (Hughes, 2002).

The Social and Historical Context of PE in Canada and BC

Formal schooling in Western societies generally treats PE as a subject with secondary status in relation to 'academic' subjects such as math and science. PE's lower status is based on an intellectualist tradition in Western societies that views the mind and body as a binary with the mind being superior (Armour in Kirk, 1997). Yet the BC Ministry of Education does recognize that PE is an important part of education, as demonstrated by PE's mandatory status within education for grades kindergarten through ten. Being the primary subject in public education that is concerned with the body, PE is a site of construction and maintenance of gender norms in determining, particularly, what the gendered body can and should do (Wright, 1998)⁵.

Historically, PE in Canada has its origins in the military training of young men. As teachers-in-training began university training specifically for PE in the 1940s, the curriculum was broadened to include games, sport and physical health, taking on the scientific argument of good health for citizens. In the 1970s the curriculum focused on fitness and health-based PE, instilling a sense of lifelong participation in physical activity, endorsed by government and medical associations (Masurier and Corbin, 2002). Today, PE focuses much of its time on team sports within the context of promoting lifelong healthy/active living. In BC the current rationale for PE is to prevent health problems and obesity through

⁵ Sex education also is an important site in BC public education that addresses issues that surround the body but in a very different manner and is offered as part of other courses, not as a course in and of itself. As well, other courses such as sewing and woodworking, that involve the use of the body and have a very gendered history, (Paechter, 1998; 2000) are not mandatory for much of students' education in BC. These courses are offered as an introduction in the middle years of education and then as an elective throughout secondary school.

lifelong healthy/active living (The Vancouver Sun, 2003; The Tri-City News, 2001(b)).

In PE, 'sport' is generally defined as an activity that is physical, competitive, and institutionalized (rule and strategy oriented) (Anderson *et al.*, 1989). This definition would include team sports such as basketball, volleyball, football, and soccer as well as individual or dual activities such as badminton and wrestling, all of which maintain the qualities of masculinity (Pronger, 1990) or what this thesis refers to as 'hegemonic masculinity'. In this research, sport in PE was primarily team sports, with a lesser amount of time spent on other activities such as individual sport or general fitness activities like running, sit-ups, and push-ups.

PE developed in a tradition of biological understandings of difference between two sexes, with different traditions for male and female curriculum. The differences in curriculum included the use of traditional contact 'sports' such as football for boys' programming and more 'recreational' activities for girls such as dance and 'sports' that had modified rules including no contact. In Canada in the 1980s, with pressure from the women's rights movement in the 60s and 70s, the government promoted co-educational PE (Martens, 1990). However, today schools often teach PE in single-sex settings at the secondary level, despite government policy that recommends that PE be offered in a co-educational setting. The BC Ministry of Education prescribes the learning outcomes for all students participating in PE (as in all subjects taught in public school), while the local school boards control their schools and PE teachers themselves are

responsible for organizing the actual content and activities used to fulfill the prescribed learning outcomes (Anderson *et al.*, 1989). Recently the BC Ministry of Education has reviewed the education system, including the role of PE. As of September 2003, students entering secondary school in BC became part of a new graduation system, that among other changes, is encouraging students to be more active, including 80 hours of mandatory physical activity in grades eleven and twelve as part of the new graduation requirements. PE is still only mandatory until grade 10; however as part of the graduation portfolio students must demonstrate participation in physical activity outside of schools if they choose not to take PE in the final grades (Ministry of Education, 2003).

The Research Literature

Paechter & Head (1996) suggest that while much has been done to tackle gender bias in higher status subjects such as science, educational research has paid little attention to marginal subjects such as PE. Although calls for more research on PE and gender were heard in the 1980's (Evans, 1984), in the late 1990's the need for research had not yet been met (Shilling, 1998). However, since then, there has been a surge in the literature, particularly in Britain and Australia. As well, research in sport sociology is helpful for educational research pertaining to PE due to the school subject's considerable reliance on sport for curriculum. Feminists such as Hall (1982; 1995; 1996; 2002) have explored gender and sport in Canada, looking at societies' devaluing of female athletes and the use of sport to promote male hegemony.

With the scarcity of critical discussion in regards to the relationship between PE and gender in Canada, the research done in other Western countries with similar PE histories can aid in this analysis. Taking the lead from critical work done in Australia and Britain, this thesis will bring the discussion of PE and gender into the context of BC. Several key researchers who have worked in the area of PE and gender are particularly important to the analysis in this thesis: Wright, Scraton, Humberstone, Penny, Paechter, Vertinsky, and Dewar.

Central to this thesis is an examination of PE's role in the maintenance of 'hegemonic masculinity' and gender inequity through the use of sport in PE. Of particular relevance is Jan Wright (1995; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2000), who has used post-structural analysis to examine students' perspectives and experiences in regards to gender and PE in Australia. Similar to my study, Wright (1997) interviewed students to address how gender is constructed as a binary category in PE that aids in maintaining male superiority. Wright also draws on Connell's (1987) concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' to demonstrate how PE, through the use of sport, promotes masculine ideals (such as being strong, tough, physically skilled and heterosexual) that are damaging for boys and girls. She found that boys who do not meet these ideals risked having their sexuality questioned by other students. Wright also found that due to the masculine nature of the school subject, girls who attempt to conform to the ideals of 'emphasized femininity' are compelled not to succeed in PE. However, those girls in her research that attempted to meet the masculine ideals valued in PE were viewed by other

students as pseudo boys, which also raised questions about their sexuality (Wright, 1997). In Australia, as in Canada, sport has dominated in PE curriculum since WWII (Wright, 1998). In her research, Wright found that there was a pervasive construction of boys' and girls' bodies as very different and that teachers and male students constructed girls as the problem, not PE itself. Wright (1997) also examined the debate between co-educational and single-sex PE, concluding that both have the tendency to promote biological arguments that naturalize inequity and difference based on the historical and cultural conditions that have produced the current PE structure.

Like Wright, Sheila Scraton (1987; 1993) examined the social construction of gendered difference in PE, however, her research was located in Britain. In her research, Scraton interviewed people in positions of control in PE such as teachers and policy makers in 19 secondary schools, rather than students as did this research and Wright's (1997). Of particular interest to my research is Scraton's examination of the move in the 1990s to co-educational PE in Britain as an attempt to make PE more gender equitable. Scraton argued that this move, in the context of Britain's tradition of sex-segregated PE, has failed thus far at offering gender equitable PE classes for girls. In Britain, Scraton argued, co-educational PE has meant that girls were added to boys' PE. By this she meant that the curriculum in co-educational PE classes had maintained the traditions of boys' PE and ignored the traditions of girls' PE. However, Scraton recognized that maintaining PE as single-sex was also problematic as it too would reproduce gender inequity. Another area of interest to this study is

Scraton's examination of strategies aimed at increasing girls' participation (such as focusing on health and beauty), which she found often reinforced 'emphasized femininity'. In doing so, Scraton discussed the naturalization of gendered difference, including gendered bodies: male bodies active and strong and girls' inactive and weak. Writing with Flintoff, Scraton (2002) has also explored the use of various feminist theories to examine the construction of gender in PE, demonstrating how liberal and radical feminist theories have been unable to find solutions for creating gender equitable PE. Scraton and Flintoff argue for the use of post-structural feminist theory, which examines the constraints of gender categories, to further address the issue of gender inequity in PE.

Another key researcher in the area of the debate of co-education versus single-sex PE is Barbara Humberstone (2002). While she finds that all-male environments may be problematic for some boys who will be pressured to conform to 'hegemonic masculinity', she believes that all-girl environments are a safer organization of PE for girls than co-educational classes. Humberstone argues that mixed classes can serve to intensify misconceptions between the sexes and reinforce 'hegemonic masculinity'. Like Wright, Humberstone looks at how the reliance on sport in PE curriculum tends to reinforce and legitimize 'hegemonic masculinity' and inferiorize femininity. Humberstone sees sport as "... a central agency through which gender identities and relations are constituted and tested" (2002, p. 202). Humberstone argues that sport maintains gendered stereotypes of what is appropriate for the male and female body. Her findings about gendered bodies are similar to Scraton's in terms of how each sex is

supposed to use their body, the male as powerful and the female as powerless. Important to the discussion of plausible changes to make PE more gender equitable is Humberstone's (1990) research into the use of alternative activities at an outdoor adventure setting in a co-educational PE class in Britain. She found that in these non-traditional activities gender stereotypes were not set and students, both female and male, were able to move past some of the gendering practices of PE and sport to see value in each other's contributions to the group activities. This work is important in demonstrating that we need to look at the activities in PE as well as the issue of co-educational versus single-sex to work towards changes that make PE more gender equitable.

Dawn Penny (2002) examined the possibility for gender equitable PE and broadened the scope of definition of gender equity that has at times been critiqued by some feminists as not a plausible or worthwhile goal (see Wright, 1995). Penny (2002) makes the distinction between gender equality and gender equity. She defines gender equality as seeking equal opportunities for all and working within the framework of girls as deficit, while for her gender equity is defined as embracing individual and cultural differences as a resource and ensuring that no one set of values are deemed better than others. This thesis is informed by Penny's definition of gender equity and argues that it can be usefully applied to BC PE classes as a way to fulfill the Ministry's stated goal of gender equity. Like this study and others (see Wright, 2000; 1998; 1997; Scraton, 1993; 1987; Brown, 1999), Penny utilizes Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' to demonstrate how it plays a role in maintaining gender inequity in PE. She

argues against the conceptualization of gender as two distinct categories, arguing that binary conceptions of gender deny the complexities of gender and ignore the commonalities across groups and diversity within groups.

Carrie Paechter (1998; 2000) offers an examination of the status of PE within education that aids in contextualizing the discussion of gender inequity in PE. She examines how PE has used scientific discourse as a means of legitimizing itself in a system where the mind has been valued over the body. With attempts at legitimization, the PE curriculum has also placed value on masculine traits, especially as demonstrated through sport. As well, Paechter (2000) has examined the debate between co-education and single-sex PE finding that girls are disadvantaged within co-educational PE because in Britain, co-educational PE has meant adding girls to traditional boys' curriculum.

Like Paechter, Patricia Vertinsky (1990) examined the role of medicalization and professionalization in attempts to legitimize PE and how this history has created the current understandings of gender in PE. As is the case with Wright and Humberstone's research, Vertinsky is concerned with the use of sport in PE to encourage boys to use their bodies in forceful ways and to reinforce ideologies of the inferior female body. As well, she is troubled with the significance placed on certain fitness activities by girls, in order to control and shape their bodies. Her research into this phenomenon is helpful in understanding the current context of PE, which relies on biological understandings of difference. In discussing co-education, similar to Scraton, Vertinsky raises concerns about the tendency of it to masculinize the subject.

However, Vertinsky (1995), arguing from a radical feminist perspective, discussed the possibility for a gender sensitive PE in Canada, one that would value traits associated with femininity, which is not the case in the current organization of co-educational PE.

Allison Dewar's (1987) earlier research in Canada focused on PE teacher training programs in BC, particularly in their reliance on scientific discourse for explaining difference. Dewar interviewed teachers in training and reviewed the curriculum for the course work in one university training program for PE. Her research on teacher training brings an understanding of the context in which the students are taught about gender in PE through their teachers' understandings of gender, which is reflected in the curriculum they develop and their attitudes. As well, Dewar (1997), with Wright, has examined how the biological discourse of difference has maintained gendered bodies that aid in the continuance in gender inequity in PE and sport.

All of these researchers aid in the analysis of the current construction of gender in BC's PE and in understanding how 'hegemonic masculinity' works to maintain gender inequity and gender difference through the reliance on sport in PE. Scraton and Wright's discussion of single-sex versus co-educational PE classes add to the discussion of the complexities involved in the debate and helps to explain why this debate has not been answered in a Canadian context. These two researchers have examined attempts to move traditionally single-sex PE towards co-education in both Britain and Australia and shown how in both settings gender inequity exists. Many of these researchers aid in the

understanding of the role of competitive sport, prevalent in PE curriculum in BC (particularly in boys-only programming), in maintaining 'hegemonic masculinity' and gender inequity. Vertinsky and Dewar demonstrate the historical context in Canadian education that has led to the current PE curriculum, which is heavily dependent on scientific understandings of difference that promote gender inequity. Penny's discussion about gender equity opens up a broader definition that allows this research to explore the possibility of changing PE in BC to make it more equitable and in understanding where the policy still fails to address the issue of equity. All these researchers aid in the analysis of PE in BC and the data in this thesis, which looks at students' experiences of gender and gender inequity in co-educational and single-sex PE.

Theoretical Framework

A feminist framework offers a sound theoretical tool for addressing issues of gender relations and gender inequity. Feminist theory has many varying and opposing perspectives. In this thesis I will examine the tensions between feminist frameworks that have prevailed in debates about co-education and single-sex PE, and that are generally referred to as liberal, radical, and post-structural. While socialist feminist theory is significant in examining the role of the state, most feminists who focus on PE have not explored this set of relations in depth. As a result, I have not included this perspective in my analysis. Although liberal, radical, and post-structural feminist theories contain many different strands within them, it is helpful to highlight their broad differences in understanding gender and gender equity. I will explore, in particular, how these

debates illuminate the difficulties in attempting to create a PE that is gender equitable. Each of these feminist theories defines equity differently due to their understandings of gender. Liberal feminism views women and men as similar, with differences stemming mainly from inequalities of treatment (Hughes, 2002). Equality for liberal feminists has centered on issues of equality of access. Equal access is important; however focusing on this aspect of equality has the danger of overlooking the content of schooling and such issues as gender inequity in the hierarchy of school knowledge, the social construction of the body, and the significance of 'hegemonic masculinity'. Radical feminism recognizes the importance of 'hegemonic masculinity' in the system of male power in society, as well as in the hierarchy of knowledge in schools that privileges male knowledge. However, radical feminism generally maintains a biological understanding of difference that essentializes the category of woman as naturally distinct from man with different values and desires (Hall, 1995; Vertinsky, 1995). Post-structural feminism, like radical feminism, recognizes the significance of 'hegemonic masculinity', which works to maintain gender inequity in schools and masculinizes school subjects. However, unlike radical feminism, post-structural feminism views the categories of man and woman as restrictive, recognizing the diversity found within these categories and the socially constructed nature of the categories themselves. Post-structural feminism is concerned with the deconstruction of dualisms, in particular the dualism of male/female (Butler, in Hughes, 2002). While the social construction of difference based on 'sex' has been naturalized, post-structural feminism "...seeks to avoid the biologically

deterministic meanings of the term sex and to develop an account of sex and the body as historically located" (Hughes 2002, p.12).

Of particular interest to this research is the work of Connell (1987; 1996; 2001; 2002), specifically, his concepts of 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasized femininity'. While trying to understand gender and how it is represented in society, Connell (2002) explores the hierarchy within gender and the multiplicities of masculinity and femininity found in societies. According to Connell (1987), 'hegemonic masculinity' is the desired form of masculinity in society, which most males do not achieve, but is the ideal that most males feel compelled to strive for. Further, he argues that, traditionally, sport in Western societies promotes the ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). Characteristics such as strength, toughness, competitiveness and commitment are all part of current ideals for masculinity and are taught and maintained through involvement with sport. Sport promotes and reinforces these ideals, particularly the ideal that male bodies should be fit and in control, should engage in competition, and should be willing to accept pain and injury. 'Emphasized femininity' is also an important concept when examining gender inequity in PE. Connell (1987) explains that 'emphasized femininity' is the idealized form of femininity in patriarchal society and that it aids in constructing females as less than males by containing traits that are the opposite of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. In Western societies, the characteristics of 'emphasized femininity' include being passive, weak, and non-competitive. The ideals of emphasized

femininity are not valued in the traditional definition of sport and therefore make it difficult for girls to succeed in PE and sport.

As gender is not isolated from other facets of one's identity, multiple masculinities and femininities exist (Penny and Evans, 2002). Connell's (1996) examination of hierarchical and multiple genders recognizes that other forms of masculinity and femininity do exist as influenced by one's class, ethnicity and sexuality. In particular, he labels three other forms of masculinity: subordinated, marginalized, and complicit masculinities. As with masculinity, femininity takes on forms other than emphasized femininity, including resistance and a combination of resistance and co-operation.

Prominent within the issue of gender equity in PE is the debate between single-sex versus co-education for PE class organization. Liberal feminist arguments for equality, framed by their understanding of sameness, suggest that gender equality be sought in co-educational settings. However, radical feminist arguments based primarily on biological understandings of difference place an importance on single-sex PE, which arguably can offer equal but different PE for boys and girls who 'naturally' enjoy different physical activities. In this thesis I examine both of these arguments and suggest that neither adequately addresses the construction of gender in PE and that both single-sex and co-education are unable to fully address the issue of gender inequity within PE itself. Taking a post-structural feminist stance, I argue against the use of the binary of male/female as a means to explain difference as natural. Instead, I emphasize that there is considerable diversity within the categories of male and female and

that gender and sex are socially constructed. This diversity makes the debate of co-education versus single-sex PE difficult to answer definitively as there is no single solution that will be able to address the diversity within gender. I conclude that it is the way PE has been developed within a biological discourse that maintains gendered difference and that places values on those traits held in hegemonic masculinity as taught particularly through sport. Therefore, what needs to be addressed is the Western definition of sport and of gender as a dualism, not how PE is delivered -- co-educationally or single-sex -- if we are to truly address issues of gender inequity in PE in BC.

Methods

The primary source of data for this thesis were semi-structured individual interviews with BC secondary students. I chose interviews as my primary data source because interviews allow for richness in the discussion of gender and gender relations that other methods do not allow for. Students were chosen as the main participants in this thesis because they are the most directly affected by the education process (Tierney and Dilley, 2002). Semi-structured interviews, which focused on themes or topics rather than a list of prescribed questions, allowed for a diversity of experiences to be explored. In total there were seven students, three girls and four boys, interviewed for this study. In addition, I reviewed BC governmental documents and suggested readings for teachers about gender and PE. The review of government documents pertaining to PE in BC allowed the analysis to be supplemented by official policy views that are meant to aid teachers and administrators in addressing gender inequity in PE.

Included in these documents are strategies to make PE more gender equitable including but not limited to relying less on sport for PE curriculum, using gender inclusive language and avoiding making special rules for girls. Finally, the review of teachers' resources that pertain to gender equitable PE allowed for a more complete analysis, enabling the research to be informed of the definition of equity that has thus far been offered to teachers attempting to make changes to PE in BC to make it more equitable.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of this study is the small number of interview participants. A more complete study would have seen more interviews with students who had varying experiences in PE. For example, interviews with students who have participated in co-educational PE at the secondary level would have given me a chance to compare and contrast their experiences with students who had experienced single-sex PE. As well, two of the interviews with boys were very short, which also limits the amount of data available for analysis. Another limitation in this research was that I was not able to observe the participants in the PE class setting. Watching the students participate in PE, their interactions with each other, the curriculum, and the teachers, would have added to the information the students shared with me in the interviews. Seeing students participate in PE would have both verified the information students were sharing with me and given me more insight into the more subtle inequities to be found in day-to-day practice in PE. Observation also might have allowed me to

examine in more depth how some students use PE as a site to resist hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity.

Organization of Thesis

The organization of this thesis is as follows. In Chapter two I outline the historical and social context of BC's secondary school PE. I first review the development of PE in Canada in general and then look at the current government policy in regards to PE in BC. In this chapter, I also examine the BC Ministry of Education's stance on gender equity and the available teacher resources pertaining to gender equitable PE. In Chapter two, I demonstrate that formally gender equity in PE is recognized as a goal and that policy and resources exist that help to address gender inequity within the PE curriculum. An understanding of the social and historical context of gender in PE is necessary in order to understand how gender has been structured in a way that maintains inequity. In Chapter three, I explore feminist debates in examining the relationship between PE, gendered bodies, and gender inequity. In discussing the tensions between liberal, radical and post-structural feminist theory in this chapter, I argue that post-structural feminist theory allows for new input into the liberal and radical feminist debate between co-educational and single-sex PE. I argue that post-structural feminist theory overcomes many of the weaknesses in the liberal and radical positions on gender such as sameness and natural sex difference. In particular, I suggest that Connell's (1987) concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are useful for deconstructing gender as a binary. As well, Connell's discussion of the use of sport to instill the values of hegemonic

masculinity in Western society is useful to explore the complex relationship between PE, sport, and gender. In Chapter four, I review the interview methods of this research, including some of the difficulties and benefits of research involving minors. In Chapter five, I analyze the interview data and argue that the students' views of their PE experiences have largely been shaped by biological understandings of gender and difference. I also show ways in which the reliance on sport in PE curriculum in either setting plays a key role in maintaining hegemonic masculinity and gender inequity. In Chapter six, I conclude the thesis by discussing the difficulties involved in educators' use of single-sex and co-educational PE as a means to address issues of gender equity. As this thesis and other studies demonstrate, PE itself is rooted in biological understandings that promote gender inequity. No matter what form of delivery – co-educational or single-sex – the PE curriculum in Western society generally relies on activities that reinforce the values and practices of hegemonic masculinity that Western societies label as sport. In this thesis, I argue that in order to address the issue of gender inequity, PE itself needs to be examined. Future research needs to focus on PE curriculum and the discourses that PE utilizes to understand the body and gendered difference and not simply the participation rates of girls or the form of class settings.

Chapter Two: PE In British Columbia: Historical and Social Context

When examining the relationship between physical education and gender equity in BC, it is important to understand the historical and social context in which it developed (see Wright, 1997). In this chapter, I will review the origins of PE in Canada and BC, the important shifts in PE since it began in Canada, the development of co-education, and the current context of PE, particularly in BC, including the BC Ministry of Education's integrated resource packages (IRPs) and the teacher resources for gender equitable PE. This review is necessary to aid in gaining an understanding of how PE has developed into its present state, which continues to legitimize gender inequity based on biological arguments of difference, sport as the main curriculum, and the unresolved debate concerning whether PE should be single-sex or co-educational.

Origins of PE in Canada

Physical education has been part of public education in Canada since the 1800's. The formation of PE in Canada was largely influenced by British traditions (Martens, 1986). Dr. Egerton Ryerson, the first Chief Superintendent of Education for Ontario, had a strong belief that physical training should be part of a total education, and was the first to recommend that PE be part of public education (Cosentino & Howell, 1971; Martens, 1986; Anderson *et al.*, 1989). In 1846, Ryerson started the first PE program in Canadian schools (Martens, 1986).

At this time, PE was strongly shaped by the ideas Ryerson brought home with him from tours in Europe to observe systems of instruction (Morrow *et al.*, 1989). The ideas Ryerson had for PE included military drills, calisthenics (stretching), and gymnastics. In his writings, Ryerson recommended drills for the boys and light calisthenics for girls. Military drill, Ryerson believed, was convenient, inexpensive and fostered the ideal of obedience in its teaching of proper forms of saluting, marching and formations (Morrow *et al.*, 1989). Ryerson's ideas were dispersed to other educators in the guidelines he wrote for teachers. Ryerson also started a grant program that gave fifty dollars to schools using his teaching methods of military gymnastics (Martens, 1986). The use of military drills for PE curriculum " ... reinforced the pedagogical emphasis on educating boys, with a resulting neglect of curriculum development for girls" (Morrows *et al.*, 1989, p. 75).

PE started in Ontario, but by the early 1900's, all provinces in Canada had some schools that included physical education in their curriculum (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). Beginning in 1909, the federal government, through the Strathcona Trust Fund, encouraged PE in the form of military drill (Cosentino & Howell, 1971; Anderson *et al.*, 1989). The Strathcona Trust fund was funded by Lord Strathcona and offered grants to schools that implemented military drills as a PE program and that encouraged the formation of a Cadet Corps (Cosentino & Howell, 1971; Martens, 1986). This fund also had the effect of establishing a strong basis for military drill and exercises as central in PE to the exclusion of other activities, including sport and games (Martens, 1986). Schools often

invited military personnel into the schools to teach military drills for PE in the outdoors. Slowly, however, schools began adding gymnasiums in the 1920s and in many provinces PE started to become a mandatory component of public education. With gymnasiums being added to school buildings, schools began to include sport but only as a periphery, an extra-curricular activity, not as part of PE (Morrow *et al.*, 1989).

The First World War (WWI), the Second World War (WWII) and the Depression also influenced PE as a school subject (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). After WWI, military drill declined in popularity, perhaps due to the horrific nature of the war and gymnastics began to take over as the most prominent form of PE in many parts of Canada. The move to gymnastics led to higher costs for PE because the Military was no longer providing instruction in the schools. With schools not being able to afford to hire experts, instruction was left to the teachers already at the school. The depression also saw dramatic increases in unemployment and the government needed to find ways to keep those who were unemployed active. Part of the government's solution for keeping unemployed citizens active was the use of physical activity opportunities in gymnasiums shared by the schools and the community, legitimizing the need for gymnasiums in communities. WWII also had an effect on PE, with courses such as defense training starting up again in Ontario schools that stressed drill, civil defense and first aid, to boost the abilities of needed soldiers for the Canadian military. The need for military training saw the return of a military style PE curriculum (Cosentino & Howell, 1971).

In 1943, the federal government passed the National Physical Fitness Act, which was to provide funds for the extension of PE into all educational institutions as well as to provide assistance for the preparation of teachers in the instruction of physical education and fitness (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). This shifted the focus in PE, which had again emphasized military drill during the war, to a focus on fitness and athletics (Martens, 1986). This Act was short lived though; in 1954 the federal government repealed it. Since education was a provincial matter, the federal government concluded it was spending too much money on the endeavor (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). However, the Act did demonstrate the legitimization at a national level of PE as an important part of school curriculum (Martens, 1990).

Teacher training also affected the growth and content of PE in Canada. Between the years of 1850 and 1940, teacher training for PE consisted of short-term courses such as summer courses at the University of Alberta, or one-year certificates such as McGill University's, or by students attending schools in the United States (Cosentino & Howell, 1971; Martens, 1986). In its beginnings, training for PE teachers was separated by sex, with women starting to take programs in 1889 at the Hamilton School of Physical Culture (Martens, 1986). It was not until 1940 that this school, now named the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression, merged with the University of Toronto to integrate men's and women's programs of physical education (Martens, 1986). 1940 also marked the beginning of universities offering PE degree programs, demonstrating a more professional stance for teacher training for PE. The

University of Toronto offered a PE degree program in 1940, followed by McGill University in 1945 and the University of British Columbia in 1946 (Cosentino & Howell, 1971).

With this move to improve the training of teachers in regards to physical education, PE began to take on a more scientific status in public education, with the focus shifting to physiology and physical health (see Dewar, 1986; 1987). This move to a more scientific PE included: having the curriculum focus on activities that could be measured scientifically, scientific understandings of differentiated bodies, and making masculine bodies the ideal. Sport, as traditionally defined, works well within this scientific framework, allowing students to learn specific skills that can be broken down easily and measured (Wright, 2000). Morrow *et al.* (1989) also attribute the introduction of sport to PE curriculum to the sport programs in the universities that were now responsible for training PE teachers such as at the University of Toronto and McGill. The universities in Canada were heavily involved in Canadian competitive sport development with students participating in intramural team sports such as football, basketball, ice hockey, and volley ball and individual sports such as boxing and wrestling (Morrow *et al.*, 1989). These teachers in training then took their interest in sport with them to the schools in which they were to teach PE. Although women, such as Ethel Mary Cartwright, the first Physical Director for Women in Canada in 1906, have been prominent in the history of PE, men were dominant in the career of physical education teacher in public schools (Martens, 1986). Men have predominated as PE teachers (including teaching girls-only

PE), as department heads at public schools and universities, and as coaches (a major part of school athletic programs) throughout the development of PE (Hall, 1995; Martens, 1990; Morrow *et al.*, 1989).

In 1961, BC's Ministry of Education produced the first curriculum document for secondary PE. This curriculum document reflected the role of women in society and sport. The curriculum had girls and boys segregated, with each program emphasizing sex differentiated activities (Klaver, 1992). This difference in curriculum included the girls' program focusing more time on dance and the boys' program focusing more time on games, or more specifically, sports such as rugby and soccer (*ibid*). The boys' curriculum's focus on sport mirrored the community sports settings, which were dominated by boys (Hall, 1995).

In 1967 the Centennial Fitness Awards (later to become the Canada Fitness Awards) were implemented in schools, which consisted of a series of fitness tests (Anderson *et al.*, 1989). This led into the seventies, where PE came to focus even more on fitness and healthy lifestyles than it had in the past, following the trends in the general public and in such organizations as Canada's *Participaction*⁶ which encouraged citizens to get active for life (Anderson *et al.*, 1989; Morrow *et al.*, 1989). This shift in public opinion included focusing on the body as something to be worked on and shaped by individuals, which was to be accomplished with weight training for men and aerobics for women.

⁶ *Participaction* was a non-governmental agency partially funded by the government that promoted lifelong healthy lifestyles for all Canadians through various programs and television advertisements that focused on enjoying being active and eating healthy (Martens, 1990).

History of PE in BC

PE in BC had a later start than other provinces, as formal education was not as easily offered in the under-populated province (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). However, once it started in BC, PE's structure took a similar stance to PE in other provinces. During the period of 1900-1920, PE included military drill, which was promoted by government, and calisthenics, promoted by the YMCA (*ibid*). WWI influenced how PE in BC, as well as most of Canada, was delivered due to questions surfacing in the general population concerning the role of the Military in education. Therefore, Normal Schools, which trained future school teachers, began to focus on health education in PE. This included studying: hygiene, physiology, recreation, and physical training (*ibid*). Similar to universities in other provinces, the University of BC began to offer a degree in PE in 1946. But unlike some universities in Canada, who offered it in the departments of medicine or science, in 1962, UBC placed the PE program in the Faculty of Education, altering the focus of PE teachers' training (Cosentino & Howell, 1971). As a result, the UBC PE teachers training program focused on teaching more than other university programs that stressed science in their training (*ibid*). However, as Dewar's (1986) research shows, UBC's program in the 1980s was focusing its core curriculum on a scientific understanding of the body, which viewed differences in male and female bodies and abilities as natural rather than constructed. Today, UBC's PE teacher training program is in the School of Human Kinetics as one of four streams (UBC website, 2004). After

completing a Bachelor of Human Kinetics, PE teachers in training at UBC enter the Faculty of Education for their teacher preparation courses.

Today, in BC, PE still emphasizes physical fitness and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through physical activity, which is frequently sport (for further discussion see Chapters Three and Five). The promotion by the BC Ministry of Education of PE, as a site to maintain the health of citizens and to teach them the tools to lead a lifelong healthy lifestyle, is a means to legitimize the role of PE in public education. Ministry justification for PE is particularly important in a political climate where the BC government has reduced education funding⁷ and is promoting an education system that prepares students for university and the labour market. Christy Clark, BC Minister of Education, recently argued that the benefit of a healthy citizen is a decreased demand on the healthcare system, specifically the health problems associated with obesity (The Vancouver Sun, 2003). The increased focus in PE on healthy citizens has not, however, shifted the practice of relying on sport for much of PE curriculum. It is important to recognize that being healthy has gendered implications, with the definition of a healthy girl being quite different from a healthy boy. For girls, being healthy is equated with having a slim, slightly muscled body while for boys, being healthy is equated with having a well-defined muscular body (Wright & Dewar, 1997; Scraton, 1993; Vertinsky, 1990). The gendered nature of health helps to maintain and promote gender difference and male power.

⁷ For a discussion of BC spending cuts to education see Marc Lee's *Who's Cutting Classes? Untangling the Spin about K-12 Education in BC*, January 2004.

Development of Co-education in PE Classrooms

Based on British traditions, and building on the rationale that the needs of girls and boys differed, PE in Canada started out as single-sex classes (Martens, 1990). Not only did schools differentiate classes based on sex, but so too was the curriculum; girls performed calisthenics and boys military drill. PE's curriculum has diversified, but distinct curriculum based on sex was maintained until the 1960s. In the late 1960's, the women's liberation movement called for PE to be delivered in a co-educational setting in order to attain equality of opportunity for girls. Following suit, the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) issued a formal statement that maintained that classes should not be segregated on the basis of sex. Likewise, the BC Ministry of Education recommended co-education for PE classes stating in its program considerations section of its PE curriculum guide book that "[i]t is generally recommended that the PE class instructional program be provided on a co-educational basis" (Ministry of Education, 1980, p. 8; Ministry of Education, 1987, p. 8). However, the BC Ministry of Education did not implement a formal policy; it only made recommendations that PE be co-educational. With co-educational settings recommended as opposed to required, how to structure PE -- as co-education or single-sex -- was a decision of local authorities, some of whom choose not to change the existing single-sex setting (*ibid*). Writing in Canada in 1986, Martens noted that girls' and boys' programs maintained some different activities, based on generally held perceptions that some activities, "boys" activities, were not

suitable for girls. These perceptions continued to hold fast, particularly in the case of competitive sport.

Along with the government statements, some educators argued that co-educational PE was the answer for equality of opportunity in PE (Martens, 1990). This shift in thought represented current liberal feminist ideals based on notions of sameness. Liberal feminists argued that girls should have the same access to PE as boys did and that co-education would provide students with a more gender equitable education. Co-education was thought to provoke lesser-skilled students to become more involved in the PE lesson, to give girls more interest in aspiring to a higher level of ability, tame overly aggressive boys, and provide challenges for strong girls while minimizing the threatening situations for weaker boys (Martens, 1986). Of course not all teachers agreed that co-education would be the best setting for PE and therefore some resisted the calls for a move in this direction. Similarly, in Britain, school departments were battling with the question of whether PE should be co-educational, rather than single-sex, as a means to meet the equality standards set out in the revised National Curriculum (Penny, 2002). In a system historically divided with separate curriculum for girls and boys, many educators in Britain have resisted co-educational PE.

Likewise, some feminist analysis does not support the strategy of co-education. As Chapter Three shows, radical feminists have questioned the use of co-education as a means for creating gender equity, arguing that boys and girls have essential differences in needs and abilities (see Vertinsky, 1995). Post-structural feminists also question co-education PE in its current form as a

means to provide gender equity. However, their argument is based on different reasons than radical feminists. Post-structural feminists argue that because PE presently relies on discourses that legitimize gender difference as natural, inequity is maintained in both settings. Currently, many secondary schools in BC maintain single-sex PE classes for the mandatory grades of PE (as demonstrated by a review of various schools' websites). The schools do not rationalize this choice, but a discussion with one PE teacher from the schools in this research suggests that some teachers may think that girls prefer PE this way. Similarly, one student in this research also spoke about how he felt single-sex was for the benefit of girls and that most girls would prefer it this way as opposed to co-education. When PE becomes an elective, both co-educational and single-sex options may be made available to students, which results in variance from one school to another. Because of the low rates of participation in PE as an elective, particularly with girls, offering PE as co-educational in those grades might be necessary in some schools due to insufficient numbers to maintain all single-sex classes. This is particularly plausible for all-girl settings, as a large percentage of girls do not take PE when it becomes an elective and may need to participate in co-educational PE if they are to participate at all (see below).

The Current Configuration of PE in BC

At the time of this research, in BC, PE is a mandatory subject for all students in public schools from grades kindergarten through ten. In grades eleven and twelve, PE becomes an elective, with a relatively small enrollment,

especially for girls (CAHPER 1993; Fenton *et al.*, 2000). Fenton *et al.* (2000) reporting for CAAWS, state that only 10% of girls participate in PE once it becomes an elective. Particularly, girls do not participate in programs that have a high content of competitive sport (Dahlgren in Vertinsky, 1995). The BC Ministry of Education (1995) reiterates this concern of girls' lack of participation, noting too that this occurs more so in programs comprised mainly of highly competitive sports. Vertinsky (1995) notes that physical educators and the medical profession are concerned about girls' ability to maintain a healthy and fit lifestyle if they do not participate in grade eleven and twelve PE.

According to the BC Ministry of Education, "(t)he aim of physical education is to enable all students to enhance their quality of life through active living" (Ministry of Education, 1995). PE's role in education is to give students the opportunity to be physically active regularly, as well as to help develop an appreciation for movement (Ministry of Education, 1995). It is also the Ministry's position that PE is an "integral part of the total education process". The BC Ministry of Education emphasizes that PE enhances memory and learning, better concentration and increases students' problem-solving abilities, all of which are qualities stressed in other areas of education. A quality PE program, according to the Ministry of Education, will

- foster the development of positive attitudes
- foster active participation
- require problem-solving skills
- recognize the difference in students' interests, potential, cultures
- develop personal and career-planning skills (Ministry of Education BC, 1995)

This description is somewhat vague, but it does touch on attitudes towards physical activity, value of participation, and the need to recognize diversity amongst students. However, this list gives little assistance to teachers for working with these differences and making PE equitable for all students. This list also does not directly discuss issues of equity, in particular gender equity. However, the Ministry does have a separate discussion on the importance of making PE gender equitable, which is discussed in further detail below.

Expected Learning Outcomes for PE

To exhibit that students have participated in, and benefited from, a quality PE program, students are expected to demonstrate specific learning outcomes. As of 1995, the BC Ministry of Education outlines three key components for the curriculum of PE: active living, movement, and personal and social responsibilities (Ministry of Education, 1995). The active living component promotes active living as an important part of one's lifestyle for lifelong healthy living and includes learning about nutrition, stress management, first aid training, and personal fitness. The second component, movement, has five sub-categories: alternative environment, dance, games, gymnastics, and individual and dual activities. Each of these sub-categories should be covered within the PE activities of each grade. Alternative environment focuses on outdoor activities and survival skills with activities such as snow shoeing or cross country skiing. Dance focuses on social dance skills and has included square dancing, line dancing and as reported by participants in this research now includes modern dance and hip-hop or club style dance (interview transcripts). The

purpose of the games category is to apply movement skills and concepts to a variety of activities, which includes most traditional sport, with 'games' such as basketball, volleyball, soccer, and football. In gymnastics, the focus is on applying movement skills in gymnastic settings, utilizing various apparatuses. Finally, in the individual and dual activities category, the purpose is to apply movement skills in activities that students would do by themselves or with a partner such as weight lifting, jogging, and badminton among others. The last component of the PE guidelines emphasizes personal and social responsibilities, which are comprised of skills often learnt through the various movement activities. In this component, the purpose is to teach students to have positive attitudes and display appropriate social behaviours. These attitudes and behaviours would include co-operation, self-confidence and respect, proper etiquette, the concept of fair play, leadership qualities, and respect for other individuals' interests and cultural background (Ministry of Education, 1995).

The BC Ministry of Education requires these three components for every grade of PE, with new learning outcomes added on for each level, usually building on skills acquired from year to year. Teachers, for the most part, are left to choose the activities they feel will allow them to meet these prescribed outcomes (Anderson *et al*, 1989), which in the case of this research include traditional sports such as basketball, volleyball and soccer as well as more recently popular leisure activities such as extreme Frisbee and personal defense. I have also noticed throughout this research, that what activities teachers choose, can depend on the gender of those participating in the class. For

example, girls in this research mentioned different activities that they did such as self-defense and field hockey and discussed how they did not participate in Karate, lacrosse, or football in their girls-only PE classes, while the boys in this study mentioned how they did football and lacrosse but did not get to do field hockey as that was a 'girls' game'. It is important to recognize that the practice of PE does not necessarily match the policy guidelines of the subject. In reference to PE in Canada, Martens (1990) notes that the game-dominated⁸ curriculum of both girls and boys PE in the 1980's was not in line with policy objectives that saw PE as a subject in school to teach students an appreciation of physical activity, with sport being a small part of the curriculum. Today, sport still predominates as the main activity in the curriculum, despite the Ministry requirements that state otherwise.

Gender Equitable PE

The Ministry has demonstrated concern with the phenomenon of most girls choosing not to take PE when it is an elective (Ministry of Education, 1995). As a result, the Ministry gives considerable attention to the question of how to attract girls to PE and has sought ways to make PE gender equitable within the context of equal participation. In its recognition for the need for gender equity in PE, the Ministry has developed various strategies (see Ministry of Education, 1995).

The strategies for making PE gender equitable, according to the Ministry, include: co-operative rather than competitive activities, communication strategies

⁸ In Marten's discussion of game-dominated curriculum he is referring to sport.

that examine the interaction between male and female students, the use of inclusive language, student input into activities, and the implementation of activities with which neither sex has had much experience (Ministry of Education, 1995). The government's plan for gender equitable PE also includes teaching strategies, such as the avoidance of applying special rules for girls' games or for girls in a co-ed PE class setting (Ministry of Education, 1995). Some of these suggestions are in line with strategies put forth by post-structural feminists such as the examination of interactions between female and male students and utilizing inclusive language. I will argue that these suggestions do have merit, including, adding activities that promote co-operation, using inclusive language, and implementing activities new to most students. However, as discussed in further detail in Chapter three and five, the Ministry's suggestions have not been implemented in the day-to-day experiences in PE for the students in this research.

Beyond the above policy initiatives stated by the BC Ministry of Education, a list of suggested resources is available for teachers, to aid in familiarizing them with gender equitable PE. The BC Ministry of Education (1995) recommended resources for PE teachers includes a selection of articles/pamphlets dealing with the issue of gender equity in sports and PE. These resources are provided by organizations such as the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women & Sport & Physical activity (CAAWS), Promotion Plus, as well as the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (CAHPER). These

various resources offer teachers methods to recognize and overcome gender inequity in PE.

Teacher resources for creating a gender equitable PE focus primarily on two issues: the lack of equity in current PE and the lack of girls' participation in PE and recreational sport (CAHPER, 1993). The suggested strategies provided by these resources to overcome these two issues include promoting the engagement of teachers in personal reflective analysis to confront personal prejudices, beliefs and stereotypical attitudes about gender and physical abilities (CAHPER, 1993). Another strategy offered is to build young girls' self-esteem (Edwards, 1993). Edwards (1993) reporting for CAAWS finds that girls underestimate their abilities and potential, which then leads to a real loss of interest in participation. Not just girls see themselves as lacking in physical ability; others share this view, including some male peers and teachers, which aids in the maintenance of gender inequity in PE. The areas highlighted in these resources for maintaining inequity in PE include curriculum, resources, teacher attention, teacher language, evaluation, student interaction, and time allocation (CAHPER, 1993).

In attempting to discern how gender inequity endures in PE, it is important to understand how the resources offered to teachers define equity. CAHPER offers a clear definition of what they mean by the term.

Equity is defined as the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in and equal access to participate in activities which allow development to one's potential regardless of gender, age, motor ability, race, religion or socio-economic level (CAHPER, 1993).

What is noticeable in this definition is the inclusion of opportunity and access and the focus on the individual. This definition holds that as long as girls and boys are given equal opportunity to participate in activities and equal access to equipment and space, gender equity has been met. This problem with the focus on the individual, rather than PE itself is that it leaves it up to the individual to make use of the opportunity to participate and if there is inequity within PE then it is the individual who is responsible. In this deficit model, girls lack ability and self-esteem; PE curriculum and settings do not have to change. The deficit model rests on the assumption that the individual is 'deficit' and in need of fixing (Gaskell *et al.*, 1989). This thesis and the work of others, in particular Penny and Evans (2002), argue that this approach to equity is problematic, as equality of access and opportunity falls short of reaching the goal of gender equity that recognizes the diversity within the categories of gender and questions the inherent nature of gender inequity within the structure and values of PE itself. This broader definition of gender equity would embrace differences and would promote, for example, the idea that girls and boys would participate in ways that are meaningful for them and that allows them to learn how to use their bodies in ways that are empowering and that challenges gender norms and hegemonic masculinity. The problem remains, then, that the definition provided to educators stifles a broader view of gender equity that moves away from holding the individual responsible. However, as the next chapter shows, a great deal of debate exists regarding the definition of equity.

These teacher resources offer valuable insight into the framing of gender equity or inequity for those professionals involved with the delivery of PE and bring to the forefront the issue of gender equity as a goal for PE teachers to strive for. However, it is important to note that the BC Ministry of Education only recommends these readings and does not make them mandatory. Not making these resources mandatory allows for the possibility that many teachers will not read them let alone attempt to implement their ideas. Quite possibly only those who already have an interest in making PE gender equitable will consult these resources and benefit from their insight. It is also possible that those who wish to make PE gender equitable may restrict their efforts to meeting the definition of equity they are supplied with by the BC Ministry of Education and those given in the suggested resources, which lack the goal of an equity that embraces diversity and goes beyond notions of access.

Culture and PE

Other areas of discrimination, which interact with gender inequity, are also important to analyze (See Chapter Three). Gender alone does not define one's identity and any goal of equity must recognize these other factors that create differences between people and in experiences. Public education in general in Western countries was designed in a Euro-male centric nature, which remains largely intact (Streitmatter, 1999). This holds true for PE as well and, therefore, the activities that PE teachers choose to utilize do not always meet with the values of various cultural groups found in Canadian schools. For example, the values promoted in traditional team sport reflect the values of the dominant

groups in Western society such as competitiveness, aggressiveness, and strength (Humberstone, 2002). The way educators expect the body to be used in PE and the attire they expect students to wear are problematic for some cultural groups (Zaman, 1997). For instance, young Muslim women are often caught between their religious beliefs and the Western country they are living in that does not respect their values. PE curriculum may not respect such cultural practices as wearing certain kinds of clothing and viewing the mind and body as one, which raises issues for these girls to participate actively and equally in PE (Zaman, 1997).

In public education in Canada, multiculturalism has been integrated into policy by the Ministries of Education, demonstrated by a brief mention in the BC Ministry of Education's appendix dealing with multiculturalism in public education (Ministry of Education, 1994). According to the BC Ministry of Education, multiculturalism objectives might be fulfilled in PE by using some of the various cultural games and dances of the students in school. However, as with much PE policy, making the curriculum reflect cultural diversity is a suggestion not a requirement and therefore may not be implemented in practice. As with gender equity, cultural diversity has, for the most part, been ignored in PE curriculum. The strong tradition of a PE curriculum based on the ideals of hegemonic masculinity has limited the activities to ones that reflect Western White middle-class male values (Humberstone, 2002). In this research, the students shared with me what activities they were doing in PE and most gave examples of traditional Western sport activities such as basketball, soccer, and volleyball, with

the exceptions of lacrosse, originally a First Nations game in Canada, but one which was appropriated by the White middle class in the mid 1800's to help develop manliness for young men (Fisher, 2002; Hall, 1995) and martial arts. I did not hear of any attempt to integrate non-Western values into the curriculum for PE in the schools these students attend, despite the obvious multicultural nature of the student population, including one participant in this study who was born in Asia and who has lived in various parts of the world before settling in their current secondary school.

Future Plans

In 2003, the BC Minister of Education, Christy Clark, began to review the current state of education including the status of PE. At first, Minister Clark spoke about making PE mandatory for all grades, kindergarten through twelve. However after a few months of consideration and consultation, Minister Clark stated that she will not be making PE mandatory for all grades in BC in the coming school year, due to responses from teachers, parents, and students (see popular media coverage for example: The Vancouver Sun, 2003; The Tri-City News, 2002). However, starting in the fall of 2003, a new program was phased in by the Ministry that will require students to demonstrate that they have participated in 80 hours of physical activity while in grades eleven and twelve, which might include school sports, dance classes or other sport/recreational activities accessed through PE classes, extra-curricula activities at the school, or within the community. This new graduation requirement is part of the graduation portfolio assessment (Ministry of Education, 2003). While I agree that being

active is valuable for all students, requiring students to find and fund activities on their own on top of the full course loads they have in grades eleven and twelve, as the Minister's plan suggests they might, is problematic. Some students have commitments outside of school like caring for their siblings or working part time, others are unable to afford extra curricular activities in the community, and yet others do not meet the athletic requirements to make school teams. This plan will likely advantage students who have time and funds and be taxing for others who do not and who will then have to take PE as an elective to fulfill graduation requirements. These revisions also appear to ignore the issue of gender differences in access to physical activities. Arguably, boys have more opportunity to participate in some of the activities the government is suggesting. For example, community sports and recreation centers often have more time and activities devoted to male-only sports. One lower mainland community has completed a study that demonstrates how their recreational facilities are used with the results confirming that boys use the facilities more than girls (The Tri-City News, 2001a). More examination of this new graduation requirement is necessary to determine how it will affect students across class, gender and ethnic differences. This thesis addresses some of the students' issues with PE that could be helpful to a review before the BC Ministry of Education implements any more changes to PE. In the end, these new changes to PE do very little towards addressing gender inequity in PE or altering the traditional curriculum that instills the values and practices of hegemonic masculinity and gender inequity.

Conclusions

Throughout its development in Canada, PE has struggled to be part of formal education. Today, PE still strives to be recognized as a legitimate subject in Canada's public education, often coming up against arguments of its non-academic status, when compared to other school subjects (Vertinsky, 1990). In its attempts to maintain legitimacy, PE has relied on biological and medical discourses. However, biological and medical discourses naturalize gender difference and gender inequity. The history of PE is strongly influenced by understandings of gender, in particular, the ideals of masculinity as constructed and promoted through competitive sport (Connell, 1987). The dominant groups of society use PE and sport to instill hegemonic masculinity in young boys, represented as being tough, athletic, heterosexual and competitive. This history makes changing PE in a manner that will make it more gender equitable challenging but not impossible.

PE wrestles with the issue of gender equity, in part due to its gendered history. It is clear that over the last two decades gender has become a focus in PE policy, but gender equity still needs to be researched further in terms of the daily practice in PE and from the perspective of students, who are expected to participate in the subject for most of their schooling. Interestingly, the gender equity policy initiatives concur with many of the suggestions for improvement in PE that were given by the students who participated in this research, but for these students do not occur in their PE classes. In a time where education seeks to address issues of equity, the historical and social context of PE aids in the

understandings of the challenges ahead. In order to create a more gender equitable PE, we must first address the core issues of the inequity that exists.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Feminist theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between PE and gender in Western society. Concepts that emerge from a feminist perspective offer valuable critiques of mainstream theories that ignore the gendered organization of PE and sport. Feminist theory is not, however, a unified paradigm. Major debates exist within feminism for understanding the meaning of gender and its relationship to power and inequity. In the study of PE, feminist analysis has taken many forms. Due to their input in the debate between co-education and single-sex PE, in this chapter I will examine the shifting debates between liberal feminism, radical feminism, and post structural feminism, informed by Connell's concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity.

In analyzing these feminist debates, I argue that post-structural feminism is useful for addressing key issues in the relationship between PE and gender. Post-structural feminist framework advocates the necessity of examining the social and historical development of a phenomenon as a means to contextualize understanding of its current state. For PE, this includes examining its history of low status in school knowledge and its ensuing struggle to legitimize itself with increasing reliance on science and sport, a major institution in the production of hegemonic masculinity. Post-structural feminist theory also allows for an analysis of gender as socially constructed and of PE as a central site of the

social construction of gender and the body within education. In addition, post-structural feminism provides insight into the problems with the ongoing debate about the benefits for students of co-education versus single-sex PE, a key focus of this study. R.W. Connell's (1987) wide-ranging work on gender and power has influenced the field of PE and gender. In particular, theorists in this field have found his concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity useful for examining the social construction of gender, its hierarchical structure, and the diversity within gender categories. In this chapter, I will use post-structural feminist theory and Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity to examine three themes that are fundamental to understanding the relationship between PE and gender: the low status of PE and the struggle to legitimate itself with a reliance on scientific knowledge and sport; the construction of gender differentiation and inequity through the body; and the debate between co-education and single-sex class settings as a means of addressing the issue of gender inequity in PE. I will argue that to overcome gender inequity in PE, it is necessary to challenge the biological notion of 'gender difference' that PE has been based on, the assumption that girls' bodies are inferior to boys', and the idealization of a particular form of masculinity in PE curricula through the weighty reliance on sport. I will also argue that there is no clear answer in regards to offering PE as co-educational or single-sex to create gender equity because of the hierarchy within gender and the gendered nature of PE in either setting.

Feminist Debates

While feminist theory holds many contradictory positions, its overall framework is concerned with inequality based on gender and sex, in which women as a group are the oppressed in male-dominated society (Weiner, 1994). Feminist theory is also committed to changing the position of women in society (Hall, 2002). A feminist perspective may acknowledge inequality within the categories of women and men, but argues that generally speaking we live in a patriarchal society where men as a group hold positions of power over women as a group (Kimmel, 2000; Connell, 1996; Hall, 1990). The hierarchies within the categories of men and women are determined by such intersecting dynamics as one's economic class, ethnic origins, ability, and sexuality (Connell, 1995; 1996).

Because the diverse strands of feminist theory utilize different analysis and maintain different focuses, each has distinct solutions and strategies for change (Weiner, 1994). Feminism incorporates many different approaches but for the purpose of this research, it is important to clarify three major strands that are part of the debate between co-educational and single-sex PE: liberal feminism, radical feminism, and post-structural feminism, and discuss the tensions between them. Part of this tension includes where each stands in the debate of sameness versus difference and its relation to gender equity. Liberal feminism argues that men and women are essentially the same, while radical feminism argues that women and men are different. Post-structural feminism recognizes differences within the two broad categories of femininity and masculinity, shifting thought from dualistic categories and allowing for diversity

based on other identity characteristics and the fluid negotiation of identities. Each of these feminist theories provides different explanations of gender inequality/inequity in PE and seeks distinct solutions for overcoming it.

Liberal feminist theory locates gender inequality in the unequal access to legal, political, and educational institutions (Weiner, 1994). Liberal feminism, which argues that men and women are essentially the same, usually works within the present social system to pursue measures such as equal access to education, employment and political activity (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002; Weiner, 1994). This theoretical framework has been active in the history of the feminist movement, within Western society in general, and education in particular, where it has been fairly successful in gaining rights of access for girls and has helped to create the current context of education in BC. Liberal feminist ideals are more viable than other feminist theories in the current physical education programs, in endeavors such as gaining the right for girls to participate in PE (Smeal *et al*, 1994). Liberal feminists attribute girls' lack of opportunity in PE to different socialization practices, gender stereotyping, and discrimination. In PE, liberal feminists have fought for equal access to activities, equipment, time, and space for girls within schools when compared with boys (Lenskyj, 1994). Liberal feminism sees sport as fundamentally sound and a positive experience to which girls need access (Lenskyj, 1994; Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Since liberal feminism does not question the overall structure of liberal-democratic societies, it has not challenged current educational arrangements, which arguably promote a masculinized curriculum. Likewise, liberal feminism does not question the

current organization of sport and PE; rather, it focuses on putting girls into the boys' arena of sport in co-educational PE classes, which implies a model of assimilation (Lenskyj, 1994). In this view, girls and their socialization in a discriminatory society is primarily the problem, not the organization of sport and PE (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002).

With its focus on individual's gaining access to opportunities, rather than altering the current social arrangements that promote a gendered order, liberal feminism has arguably been the most enduring and accepted of the feminisms (Weiner, 1994). It is the 'safer' form of feminist theory that does not challenge the status quo of gender relations that assume male norms and that maintain male privilege. In contrast, radical feminism focuses on patriarchy, the structured system of maintenance of male power, and locates inequity as stemming from this system (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Although radical feminist contains varied perspectives, I am highlighting some of its typical ideas. Generally, radical feminism argues that women are distinct from men, with different interests, experiences, and values. Radical feminists see biology as essential, viewing difference as innate (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Biology is the root of women's oppression in a radical feminist framework -- the biological capacity for motherhood or innate male aggression (Weedon, 1987). It is subordination based on these innate differences between men and women that is the fundamental cause of gender inequity. Radical feminists seek to rid society of patriarchy, the oppressive system of gender relations, and to celebrate women's differences from men, such as interdependency and co-operation, and to develop

a separatist philosophy rather than seek equity with men. Radical feminists are concerned with the compulsory heterosexuality in Western society that "... acts as a form of social and sexual control by normalizing and naturalizing (hetero)sexuality" (Scraton and Flintoff 2002, p., 34) that maintains male power.

The contributions made by radical feminists in the area of sport include adding to the knowledge of homophobia in sport, especially in terms of lesbianism and of male violence through sport (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Hall (1990) argues that sport can be and is a site for violence, aggression, and fierce competition. Sport, radical feminists argue, plays a key role in the production of male heterosexuality that aids in the maintenance of men's power over women (*ibid*). Sport encourages women to subscribe to heterosexual norms of attractiveness as demonstrated by the uniforms for women's sport as well as in the focus in media on women's appearance rather than their performance in regards to sport. Radical feminism places value on separate spaces for women, which in sport includes women-only recreation spaces and activities as well as girls-only PE (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). Radical feminists move away from the deficit model found in liberal feminist theories that see women and girls as lacking, towards a relational approach that examines sport as a site for the reproduction of social inequalities such as gender inequality (Hall cited in Lenskyj, 1994). Radical feminists argue that we should challenge the assumption that sport must be defined in a manner that excludes women's values such as friendship, co-operation, and connection. A newly defined sport that embraces values attributed currently to women could be helpful when

examining how to change the PE curriculum in a manner that makes it more gender equitable. However, radical feminism arguably has a tendency to essentialize the category of women and what it is that they value, and to reduce arguments to biology and difference, while failing to recognize the multiplicity within the categories of women and men based on other factors of inequity such as class, race, and ethnicity (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002). The essentializing of women ignores the different experiences of girls who have varying backgrounds, abilities and values and therefore diverse needs and wants.

Post-structural feminist theory, like radical feminism, questions the power structure of our society, including gender relations. However, post-structural feminist theory has a more complex notion of personal agency, acknowledging that individuals' resistance occurs in a variety of contexts and takes many forms. Post-structural feminist theory looks at the way language is used to construct reality, including competing discourses that paint varying portraits of reality (Weedon, 1987). As such, a post-structural understanding recognizes that gender is not static, rather it has changed over time and individuals have the ability to confirm or question the status quo of gender relationships (Wright, 1998). As well, post-structural feminism questions the view of gender as a binary that maintains gender as two discrete categories. Post-structural feminist theory argues that gender inequity is rooted in a biological discourse that has naturalized gender difference, dualisms, and male superiority (Weedon, 1987). Post-structural feminist theory recognizes differences and multiplicity within the categories of male and female (Scraton and Flintoff, 2002).

Post-structural theory is a more recent development in feminist theory and therefore has not been used extensively in research and practice, but offers new ways of investigating gender and gender equity in the context of PE in secondary schools. Like radical feminist theory, post-structural feminists question the structure of sport in Western society, seeing sport as it is currently defined as limiting itself primarily to the ideals of hegemonic masculinized characteristics and not allowing for different ways of using and experiencing the body. A primary concern of post-structural feminist theory is the use of binaries such as male/female, mind/body, and sport/recreation that create a naturalized hierarchy that necessarily ranks one as above the other in terms of status. Post-structural feminist theory challenges the use of these binaries and seeks to deconstruct them in terms of the inequity embedded within them (Butler in Hughes, 2002). Connell's (1987) conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, which addresses the diversity and hierarchy within male and female categories, has been particularly influential in post-structural analysis of gender and PE.

Connell's (1987) conceptualization looks at hierarchies involved between and within the categories that play a role in the power relations between and among women and men, including class and ethnicity. For Connell (1987; 1995), hegemonic masculinity is the currently accepted idealized form of masculinity in a given society. Presently Western society idealizes the athletic, White, heterosexual, middle-class, independent, and competitive male. It is important to note, however, that most males do not fit the ideals of hegemonic

masculinity; rather they strive to meet them. For PE, the ideals of hegemonic masculinity are particularly focused "... on White European, mesomorphic [idealized athletic body shape], middle class heterosexual males with dominant and competitive dispositions" (Brown, 1999 p. 144). In addition to hegemonic masculinity, there are other masculinities that are lower in status (and power), including subordinated, marginalized, and complicit masculinities (Connell, 1987; 1995; 2002). Subordinated masculinity is exemplified by gay masculinity in Western society, marginalized masculinities by such oppressed groups as ethnic minorities, and complicit masculinity by those that accept patriarchy's rewards for men while at the same time not defending patriarchy (Connell, 2002). Connell (1987) argues that because of the patriarchal nature of Western society, in which men in general have power over women, hegemonic femininity cannot exist. Connell (1987) identifies three main forms of femininity: emphasized femininity, defined by compliance with subordination to men; another defined by a strategy of resistance and non-compliance; and another characterized by a combination of compliance, resistance, and co-operation. Connell's multiple categories of masculinity and femininity are useful for understanding the diverse responses of students to their experiences with hegemonic masculinity and for understanding how PE and sport help to organize these experiences.

Due to the importance placed on competitive sport in Western society, the ideals of hegemonic masculinity are exemplified by athletic elites (Connell, 1996; 2000). Therefore, boys and men who do not have the athletic abilities idealized in competitive sport, or who do not participate in sport, fail to succeed at

hegemonic masculinity. In addition, those boys and men who participate in activities that are categorized as feminine, such as dance or figure skating, are assumed to be homosexual and labeled as 'sissy' or gay (Daniels, 2001). In the context of PE, where much of the class time is spent learning and playing sport, boys are marked as either representing hegemonic masculinity or not based on their ability to perform in sport. These are strong factors in promoting boys' compliance rather than resistance to hegemonic masculinity.

By recognizing diversity within gender categories and utilizing Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity as well as post-structural feminist theory, which questions dualistic understandings, I was able to examine PE's role in the construction of distinct gendered bodies and in maintaining the status-quo that naturalizes gender inequity. In the context of PE's marginalization as a school subject and its history of maintaining differences between boys' and girls' bodies and abilities as natural, gender equity is a difficult task. Therefore, we need to examine why PE has had to fight to legitimate itself as a school subject and the ramifications of this process, including the naturalizing of gendered bodies and the debate between feminist theories on how to organize PE. I now turn to a discussion of key works for examining three important themes: legitimizing PE within school knowledge, the gendering of bodies, and the debate between co-educational and single-sex class settings.

Low Status of PE Within School Knowledge

PE's status in education plays an important role in shaping its structure. Within education, PE has low status compared to other subjects. As Paechter

(1998; 2000) suggests, a major reason for its low status is that PE is particularly focused on the body. Western knowledge has generally given greater status to the mind, and as a result, schools give greater recognition to subjects like Math and Science than to PE. Historically, PE educators have sought the legitimization of PE through the reliance on a 'scientific' discourse of the body. Schooling also has a gendered history, which has emphasized masculine forms of achievement. The gendered history of PE has included sex segregation with disparate curricula (see Chapter Two). In this gendered history, sport has increasingly been relied on by teachers for boys' PE curriculum to promote the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in Western society, while for girls' curriculum, sport has been modified in order to protect girls (Paechter, 1998).

Western knowledge has relied on dualisms to make sense of the world. Two important dualisms in Western knowledge have been mind/body and male/female (Paechter, 2000). Included in these dualisms are systems of opposition and hierarchy and as such the mind has been held superior to the body and males superior to females. Because of the importance put on the mind in Western knowledge, education in the West has primarily focused on subjects that use the mind. The focus on the mind has left PE, a subject that focuses on the body, in a precarious position and in a constant state of needing to legitimate itself.

As a means of legitimizing PE, the profession has utilized science, in particular, biological science (Paechter, 1998). Paechter (1998) argues that schools in Western societies put an emphasis on masculine forms of

achievement, placing importance on the mind and reason which is incorporated into science, while devaluing the body and emotion, which are necessarily feminized. With PE focusing on learning through the 'body', which is historically feminized, it has needed to promote traditionally male values in order to legitimize itself as an important school subject in an institution which values masculinity. Connell (1995) argues that currently science is the valued form of knowledge in Western thought. The discourse of science maintains the dualisms of Western thought and normalizes the hierarchies implied in them. Scientific discourse also normalizes the gender inequity that results from a discourse of natural gendered difference in abilities. Dewar's 1986 study of the course content of UBC's PE teacher training program showed how such 'scientific' concerns led to an emphasis on biological reductionism in PE. She found that the program strongly emphasized applied courses in the sciences and devoted less time to those exploring the social explanations of gender difference; the latter were periphery courses. The participants in her research placed more value on the science courses as they allowed participants to take away variables such as 'sex' and measure 'pure' ability objectively (Dewar, 1987). Smeal *et al.* (1994) suggest that student teachers take such understandings with them into their schools and maintain PE's focus on a biological understanding of the body, which promotes individual achievement, competition and learning outcomes that are quantifiable.

Based on the masculine nature of education and the reliance on scientific explanations, PE has ranked sport above other forms of physical activity. Sport -

- an activity that is physical, competitive, and institutionalized -- is easy to analyze in a scientific manner, with components that can be measured and improved (Kirk, 1997). Other activities that include physical activity (or use of the body) but are not competitive and may not be rule oriented are generally defined as 'recreation'. Sport, within this definition, maintains the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and works on the premise of scientific explanation of difference and therefore aids in the legitimization of PE in an education system that values masculinized forms of knowledge. The hierarchy of sport/recreation has been well established and is associated with boys and girls respectively (Lenskyj, 1991). While girls do participate in sport and boys in recreational activities, the PE curriculum valorizes a definition of sport that promotes those characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, making it difficult for some students, both male and female, to participate fully. Female students aspiring to the ideals of emphasized femininity demonstrate their femininity in opposition to sport and the values it is comprised of and male students who resist hegemonic masculinity might also demonstrate their masculinity in opposition to sport. The importance placed on sport in PE reinforces gender inequity by valuing the characteristics socially accepted and idealized as masculine, such as competition and aggression and downplaying characteristics constructed as feminine, such as cooperation and expression (Vertinsky, 1995). Wright (1997), interviewed women who felt alienated when they took PE and determined that these women attributed their alienation to the sport content of the PE classes. Later in life these women realized that they could find pleasure with their bodies in activities

that were less routine, more connected to feelings of flow and rhythm, and that they could do with friends or family members in a non-competitive atmosphere.

Historically, PE has had two very distinct curricula for girls and boys based on different assumptions and purposes. PE has "... been strongly associated with stereotypical views about the behaviours and activity that is appropriate for girls and boys respectively and with noticeably singular images of femininity and masculinity" (Kirk, 2002b p. 25). The primary purpose of girls' PE was to train girls to be future wives and mothers, ready for their roles in the private domain of the household. Boys' PE was traditionally organized to make men out of boys, ready for the pressures they would face in their public positions. PE taught boys to be competitive, strong, and individualistic. These two curricula constructed very different gendered bodies.

PE and the Gendering of Bodies

Gender, a key concept in this research and in the undertakings of feminist theory, is a complex phenomenon that is a product of individual interactions with other individuals and with institutions in society (Kimmel, 2000). Gender is a socially and historically constructed set of power relations whereby men have more power over women than women over men (Hall, 1990). Although, as I have demonstrated above, the structure of PE takes gender as natural, post-structural feminist theory questions the taken for granted status of biological explanations of difference, instead arguing that gendered difference is socially constructed. However, Penny and Evans (2002) argue that the distinction in the literature on 'gender' that separates gender as socially constructed difference

and sex as biological difference is also problematic. The separation of sex and gender maintains false notions of culture versus nature, ignoring the complex socio/biological processes that help to construct gender and sex. Connell (1987) also argues that sex is socially and historically constructed in a manner that creates relations of power. As well, biological discourse is socially constructed and serves to naturalize difference, ignoring the role of culture. As Gatens (1999) argues, women and men's respective activities construct bodies that are different and in a manner that validates power relations between men and women. In PE, differentiated curriculum for boys teaches them to use their bodies as a tool for violence (contact sport) and curriculum for girls teaches them to use their bodies as objects to be viewed by others (aerobics/dance) (Vertinsky, 1995; Paechter, 2003). In recognizing that gender and sex are constructed through complex sets of relationships, it is important to look at locations where this construction takes place. Due to its work with and on bodies, PE is an important site in this construction of femininity and masculinity (Paechter, 2003).

The naturalizing of difference and inequity between men and women has continued in education despite efforts by some feminists to question biological discourse and to make education more gender equitable. In part this naturalization is due to the competing discourses within feminist theory, including a radical feminist theory that also draws on a biological discourse to explain difference. PE aids in the maintenance of gender inequity by focusing on differences in boys' and girls' bodies. With a history of gender differentiation, PE has actively constructed differences between male and female bodies through

the use of distinct curricula and expectations. Vertinsky (1990) argues that to analyze gender and PE, it is necessary to consider the effects of conceptualizations of the human body on the practices of PE. In her research she shows how historical processes of medicalization and professionalization of PE, in attempts to legitimize it, have created and reinforced ideologies about the inferiority of women's bodies relative to men's. Medicine, science, and PE have conceptualized women's bodies in terms of a biological framework that believes in natural differences between women and men and that reinforce women's bodies as lacking the desired abilities found in men's bodies. For example, physical abilities such as strength and speed are used as indicators of physical ability in Western society and these traits are something boys' bodies have and girls' bodies do not, ideas propagated by mainstream media and biological discourse. These assumptions are still in use today and account for some of the exclusion of women from sport (Vertinsky, 1990).

In PE, the biological discourse of natural difference manifests itself in the defining of activities that boys predominantly engage in (such as football) as sport and the activities that girls predominantly participate in as recreation (such as social dance) (Humberstone, 2002). These definitions are constructed in opposition to each other and in a hierarchical nature that place more importance on the activities labeled as sport than activities defined as recreational (Paechter and Head, 1996). The dualisms of male/female and sport/recreation are not questioned or disputed in PE; rather they are promoted through curriculum that enforces hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity through different

uses of gendered bodies. The differentiated PE curriculum is based on the view that girls' bodies lack the ability to do what boys' bodies do, particularly those traditional team sports that rely on violence such as football and have been maintained in single-sex settings (Scraton, 1993).

The scientific discourse of the body incorporates the belief that bodies can be regulated by the individual, removing the importance of cultural aspects of regulation. Wright (1996) utilizes Foucault's discussion of the regulation of the body to demonstrate how PE can be viewed as a site for the regulation of the body within the education system, with its promotion of certain types of bodies that students must work at to create. Wright (1996) further argues that the body is a site of contesting discourses, where beliefs about what is 'normal' and desirably feminine or masculine are determined, and that PE is one of many sites in which discourses produce the gendered body. Western society, Wright (1997) argues, defines health for girls as having a thin body, while for boys, health means having a well-defined muscular body. These definitions add to the construction of boys' bodies being powerful and girls' bodies being weak and therefore maintain unequal power relations between the 'sexes'.

It is important to recognize that not all students have internalized the discourse of naturalized inequity between boys and girls. Although it is difficult to resist such naturalized forms of knowledge, some students do resist the biological discourse of gendered difference, as demonstrated by girls participating in traditionally male sports such as all-girl rugby teams and by male students who participate in traditionally female activities such as dance. Another

form of resistance includes students who question the use of different rules in sport that assume the inferiority of female bodies compared with male bodies such as no-tackle football or fewer push-ups in physical fitness tests for girls. Finally, resistance may take the form of abstaining from physical activity altogether.

Co-education or Single-sex Physical Education

Educational research over the years has debated single-sex versus co-education. Generally, public education in BC is co-educational. However, PE is the one area of public education in BC that continues to purposely use single-sex classroom settings for the majority of its instruction time at the secondary level⁹. As noted earlier, in BC, no policy stipulates how PE is to be delivered. However, the BC Ministry of Education recommends that PE be provided on a co-educational basis (Ministry of Education, 1987). Yet, when the participants of this research took PE, they had co-educational classes in elementary school and single-sex classes in secondary school.

It is necessary to understand that both delivery systems have weaknesses and benefits (Lenskyj, 1991). As suggested above, varying feminist perspectives view this debate differently in light of their understandings of gender equity. Strategies to promote co-educational settings in PE surfaced in the Western world in light of questions about equality of the sexes in education during the

⁹ Other courses may end up having a single-sex make-up due to the gendered values in society for courses such as sewing or mechanics, however these courses are open to co-educational enrollment whereas the single-sex PE this paper addresses is not open to co-educational enrollments

1970s and 1980s. Legislation such as Title IX in the USA as well as the implementation of the National Curriculum in Britain has made this issue a major concern in Western society. However, it is not as simple as equating co-education with equity (Scruton, 1993). From a liberal feminist perspective, creating co-educational PE classes in which girls and boys are offered the same activities, the same lessons, the same time and space might seem to be the solution for gender inequality. However, as Penny (2002) argues, equality of opportunity does not create gender equitable PE. In both settings, some students will dominate and leave others without access to the same quality of PE (Penny, 2002).

Connell (1996) argues that co-educational settings allow for an easier mark of difference between the 'two' sexes than does single-sex, creating oppositional categories, which reinforce gender inequity and hegemonic masculinity. Gender difference is demonstrated in practices such as the lining up of boys and girls separately, competitions of girls against the boys, different equipment in PE such as the size or weight of the ball, and different bathrooms/change rooms. By marking the difference, or rather opposition, between male and female, co-education may put pressure on boys and girls to conform to distinct gender norms. Co-educational PE may mark masculinity as athletic and competitive and femininity as not. Likewise, Paechter and Head (1996) see the creation of co-ed PE classes as a means of masculinizing the subject. In their research, in Britain, the move to co-educational PE has meant adding girls to the boys' PE class, not a blending of the historically different

curricula. Humberstone (1990) echoes others in stating that co-educational PE can be a site to reinforce hegemonic masculinity and gender inequity. She too argues that because PE has come from a tradition of sex-segregation, combining the two sexes into one has been difficult and that it has usually meant adding girls to the boys' classes with the traditional male curriculum intact and consequently the marginalization of the traditional girls' curriculum.

Therefore, co-education has thus far failed women. By not changing boys' PE curriculum when moving to co-education, PE puts female students and teachers at a disadvantage as they have not had as much experience as boys in male dominated sports in which they are now expected to participate (Paechter, 2000). Scraton (1993) shares this concern and argues that co-education in PE, particularly when it is done for resource reasons rather than as a result of a well thought out educational plan, has meant boys' PE, with the focus being on 'boys' activities. In particular, in a tradition where sport and PE have been used by the school system to assert hegemonic masculinity in male PE, co-education fails to accept much of traditional female games and activities such as movement and dance (Scraton, 1993). In Scraton's (1993) research, she found that in co-educational PE classes girls were not as involved as boys and boys tended to dominate the learning environment by verbally ordering girls around and demonstrating more often for the teacher.

Vertinsky (1995), drawing from a radical feminist perspective, argues that single-sex PE is beneficial for girls, based on her belief that girls have socially different interests and abilities than do boys, which need to be recognized in PE

curriculum. Yet the radical feminists' argument that there should be a female-only PE is also problematic, as it essentializes the needs of all girls into a homogenous category, overlooking the diversity of girls' interests as research has shown (Wright, 1996). Wright (1997) argues that both single-sex and co-educational PE "... construct different social realities for girls as compared to boys"(59). In her research, Wright (1997) found that in both settings the language and style teachers used in PE classes created and naturalized difference based on gender of the students. She witnessed the way the instructors used different language when speaking with boys and girls in a manner that demonstrated an assumption that boys already knew the information needed to participate fully and that girls did not and were not interested. Penny (2002) also notes that in both settings some students may dominate, leaving other students without access to the same quality of experience. In PE as it is currently organized, those students who subscribe to the ideals of sport, such as aggressiveness and competition, will dominate over those students who do not or cannot. Furthermore, girls-only PE in BC does not guarantee that a woman will be teaching it; men teach girls-only and boys-only PE classes in BC as demonstrated by the discussions with students in this research. Wright (1997) also found in her research on co-educational and single-sex PE classes that men teach girls-only PE. Having male teachers who have been trained, including through their own educational experiences in PE, to promote hegemonic forms of masculinity teach girls-only PE raises serious questions about how 'girl-friendly' this atmosphere would be.

A post-structural feminist analysis demonstrates that both settings have problems and that proponents of them tend to simplify the issue of gender, avoiding questions about the categories of male and female, maintaining the creation of difference as the key to defining gender and sex, and not allowing room for diversity and difference within these categories. However, the question of which setting to use has not been answered in this debate thus far. Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity has, however, brought more depth to the debate by recognizing that the focus needs to go beyond single-sex versus co-education, sameness versus difference, to look at the diversity within the two categories of girl and boy and the power relations these categories represent. Scraton (1993) suggests that a long-term goal of co-education will benefit all students if it is done in a critical manner that questions the way PE contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. She argues that, ultimately, single-sex classes only serve to enforce naturalized discourses of gendered difference. PE does have the potential to be a site for resistance, for breaking down boundaries, but not as it is currently practiced (Paechter, 2000). Co-educational PE could be used to break down gender differences by allowing students to participate in activities that demonstrate the diversity in abilities of girls and boys as well as the ability of learning through one's body to be empowering for all students. As Humberstone (1990) found in her research, when girls and boys did activities new to them, such as rock climbing in an outdoor recreation facility, and that had them relying on each other to complete the task, gendered stereotypes about the body began to break down.

In the short term, Scraton (1993) suggests single-sex PE or at least some single-sex spaces for girls in PE is necessary to allow girls the opportunities to redress gender relations that fail girls. And Vertinsky (1995), who argues for a girls-only PE, also notes that a co-educational class that utilizes a gender-sensitive perspective¹⁰ when designing curriculum could work, opening up room for debate about how to restructure PE in a co-educational setting that would be more gender equitable. I argue that an important first step to transforming gender inequity in PE should be a focus not only on how to deliver it, single-sex or co-educational, but also a critical evaluation of the organization of PE's curriculum and focus. In particular, a critical examination of the use of traditional sport as the primary teaching tool in PE is necessary. My research and that of Wright (1997), Humberstone (2002), and Penny (2002) show how PE curriculum relies on sport and as such instills the values and practices of hegemonic masculinity. In BC, policy recommendations exist within the strategies to make PE more gender equitable that caution teachers to avoid relying heavily on sport, but for the students in this research, the daily practice of PE still does. Recognizing the diversity in students' needs and backgrounds is necessary and altering PE in either setting to reflect diversity is essential. I envision PE as a site where hegemonic masculinity is questioned by students and teachers as well as in the curriculum. PE can be a site where students learn to appreciate their bodies and use them in a manner that empowers rather than constrains.

¹⁰ Vertinsky is working within the framework of Jane Roland Martin's (1985) gender-sensitive perspective, which argues that sex or gender is to be taken into account when it will make a difference in furthering equality.

Conclusion

Liberal feminist theory that treats boys and girls as the same and sees individuals as the problem, not the structure of PE, falls short in the goal of gender equity. Likewise, the radical feminist approach to gender that essentializes femaleness has the tendency to ignore the diversity within the category of female, thus failing to provide gender equity for girls who do not aspire to the values of femininity constructed in this framework. Utilizing a post-structural framework allows us to take the discussion of gender equity further, recognizing the diversity in gender and the power of biological discourse that naturalizes femininity and masculinity in a manner that maintains the status quo. In particular, post-structural feminist theory questions the naturalization of dualistic understandings of gender. Post-structural feminist theory, when applied to the data from this research, helps to make sense of what the students are experiencing in PE and how this relates to the construction and maintenance of gendered bodies in Western societies such as in BC. It also aids in understanding the diversity of responses to PE by both girls and boys, recognizing that individuals do resist the status quo and inequity. By drawing on Connell's concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity for interpreting the interview data of this research, we can examine how the biological rendering of PE lends itself to the continued essentialist understanding of natural difference between boys' and girls' bodies and the notion of girls' bodies as deficient in relation to boys' bodies, rather than recognizing the diversity that exists within and between these two categories. Post-structural

theory also questions the dualistic nature of Western societies' understanding of the mind/body split that contributes to the secondary status of PE in public schools in BC and that fails to question the secondary status of the body in Western society. Finally, post-structural theory seeks to go beyond the question of co-education versus single-sex PE, instead examining the historical and social context of PE that maintains gender as a binary and the masculine nature of PE and sport, looking for space to use PE as a place for challenging the status quo in gender relations.

By applying the method of open-ended interviews with students, the primary group affected by the education process, in this thesis I seek to explore how PE is related to sport, gender and the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and gender equity. In the following chapter I will discuss the interview methods utilized in this thesis as well as some of the difficulties encountered in accessing participants and in working with adolescents as research participants.

Chapter Four: Methods

Research Methods

In attempting to understand the significance of PE and gender equity in secondary schools in BC, this thesis is based on several sources. Chapter Two examined the social and historical context in which PE developed in Canada, reviewing policy documents from the BC Ministry of Education and the recommended teacher resources regarding gender equity. Chapter Three discussed the debate within feminist theory concerning gender equity and argued that a post-structural feminist theory allows for an analysis of gender equity in PE that moves beyond issues of access to an analysis of the construction of gender in a manner that naturalizes inequity. In this chapter, I will discuss the primary source of data in the thesis – semi-structured interviews with secondary school students. These interviews were crucial for exploring how these students have experienced the construction of gender in PE. As this chapter will discuss, the process of collecting this primary data, however, was not straightforward. In particular, I will discuss the problems with access to students in BC and the dilemmas involved with interviewing minors. I will also indicate details of the research process and a profile of the students interviewed.

In this study, I interviewed seven students in total, three girls and four boys, from grades ten and eleven. The interview participants attended two secondary schools in a suburban school district of BC. Four were accessed

through PE teachers at one secondary school and the other three, through a community sports organization that I am personally involved with. The participants were informed about the research and then asked if they were interested in participating. As the participants were minors, each had parents/guardians give permission in addition to giving their own informed consent. Each participant chose a pseudonym to be used in the research, the writing process, and the written report.

The Research Sites

I chose to do my research in the school district in which I lived, a suburb of Vancouver BC. Initially, I selected two large secondary schools with diverse student populations as sites for access to potential participants. I made the decision to include two schools as I felt this would give me a higher probability of gaining access to students with diverse experiences in PE. As well, since one of these schools had co-educational PE classes in grades nine and ten and the other had primarily single-sex PE classes for these two grades, I felt these two schools would allow me to address my research questions pertaining to co-educational and single-sex PE. However, the school with co-educational classes did not participate in this study due to issues with the PE department head (as discussed in more detail below). When I did not gain access to the school with co-educational PE, I approached a third school in the same district that had primarily single-sex PE for required grades. Although I was not able to include students from a secondary school with co-educational PE, I was able to compare the two settings as the students in this research had participated in co-

educational PE in elementary school and single-sex in secondary school. In the end, the fact that the students were in single-sex PE in secondary school proved to be an excellent opportunity to contrast their own experiences in both settings, one that would not have been possible for the students in co-educational secondary PE who would have only had that experience. To protect the identity of these schools I am not using their names.

The first school that I entered and accessed participants from had over 1600 students. These students were ethnically diverse, with approximately 1/5th of the student population participating in ESL and over seventy languages represented (principal, personal conversation, 2001; school website, 2001). The location of this school also suggested some diversity in economic status, as demonstrated by the variety of housing levels in the catchment zone from low-income housing to large single-family dwellings. This school had both male and female PE teachers. Grades nine and ten PE classes were primarily single-sex classes, with one exception due to scheduling. This exception was to allow students to participate in a yearlong elective course that was co-educational and ran concurrently with PE. Grade eleven and twelve PE also had a selection of specified 'girls only' courses such as one that focused on leisure pursuits, as well as some co-educational options¹¹ (school website, 2001). Five participants in this study attend this school and all participated in single-sex PE in grades nine and ten.

¹¹ While no courses at the time of this research were specified as boys only, some of the co-educational ones may have had only boys in them. This data was not accessed during this research, as I did not gain access to these classes.

The second school that I gained access to had approximately the same number of students. It too had both male and female PE teachers, and had single-sex PE for the mandatory grades of nine and ten. This school also had both co-educational and single-sex options for PE when it became an elective in grade eleven and twelve, including a boys PE class for males who enjoy highly competitive sports and a girls class for students more comfortable with this format (School website, 2001). I have little information on the composition of the students in this school as I had difficulty gaining access to this school. The catchment zone suggests that there is some diversity in economic status as I discerned from the different levels of housing. As well, my brief trip to the office suggests that there is some ethnic diversity in the student population. The two participants from this school attended single-sex PE in secondary school.

Gaining Access to the Schools

With approval from the SFU University Ethics Review Committee (see APPENDIX A), I applied to the school district to request permission to conduct research within their schools. This process included completing a written proposal indicating the nature of my research, the value of it to the school district, the school, and the participants, as well as the research procedures I would be using. The school board and the PE department heads of the district reviewed and approved my application. After receiving word of my approval, I then sought the permission of the individual schools I had selected for the study.

I received word from the district office of the approval of my research on May 29, 2001, the end of the school year. In June 2001, I approached the two

schools in which I wished to conduct research with a request to begin my study early in the following school year, October 2001. The first school I approached was very receptive. The principal agreed with the research and gave permission as long as the PE department head approved it. The PE department head was very interested in discussing my research goals and procedures and after first talking on the phone and then a brief meeting to discuss the project, gave his permission as well. This individual was extremely helpful in attempting to gain volunteers from this school, openly advocating the usefulness of the project for designing future PE courses that students would enjoy and allowing me access to several classes in attempts to find participants.

The next school to which I attempted to get access to proved more difficult. Because of circumstances at this school, including other research, the principal wanted to think about it and discuss it with his PE head after the summer break before approving it. In September, the principal approved the project and told me to go ahead and discuss it with the PE department head. Unfortunately, I was unable to get in touch with this individual. After leaving many messages at the office and in voice mail, I decided that the PE department head would not be returning my messages and that it was not likely that I would be able to conduct research at the school; therefore in late October I looked into involving another secondary school in the district as the second site.

This attempt started out well, with the principal giving approval immediately. I then began the task of working out the details with the PE head. Again, this part of the process was more difficult. The PE head returned my call,

but seemed hesitant about the research. He requested that he choose the volunteers he felt were 'suitable' for the project. Also, he was hoping to only allow me access to two students, one male and one female. I requested that I perhaps interview a few more and he said he would see what he could do. At his request, I did not go into the class to talk about my research but instead left consent forms for him in the schools main office. On my own accord I left copies of the introduction letter (see Appendix B) with the consent forms. I waited for some time, but never heard back from him. I then decided to enquire about asking students I knew at my place of work who attended these schools to participate. After some discussion with my committee, I decided this would be acceptable, as both principals had given me permission to speak to any of their students. At this time, I approached the skating club where I had worked for one and a half years about asking some of the skaters if they would like to participate in the study. My position at this club was as a part-time figure skating coach working with various young athletes in my community, some of whom attend the two secondary schools included in this thesis. I sought out permission first from my employer, the president of the skating club, and then from the girls' primary coach. They both agreed without hesitation. I then approached girls that attended the two schools that had already granted me permission to conduct the study. The students at this skating club were aware that I was working on a Master's degree but had no prior knowledge as to specifically what I was researching.

Finding the Participants

Finding participants for this thesis proved far more difficult than I had expected. Once the access to the public schools had been granted, the task became that of finding willing participants for the interviews. In the end, I utilized different approaches in order to find my participants. This was in part due to the lack of willing volunteers accessed through initial attempts.

As previously mentioned, with the first school, I sought access with the aid of the PE department head and other PE teachers of grade ten and then grade nine PE classes. I went into both boys-only and girls-only grade ten classes and spent a few minutes introducing myself and telling them a bit about my research, what they would be asked to do if they chose to participate, and the use of consent forms. The teacher and myself gave each student in the class a handout with a brief summary of the interview process and a return portion for them to indicate if they were interested in participating (see appendix B). The return portions were then to be collected by the respective class teachers and given to me. Unfortunately, only six students volunteered to participate in the study. Four of these participants then made appointment times with me to meet for the interview and took the consent forms home to be signed by parents and/or guardians and themselves (see Appendix C). Two girls from the grade ten classes, who had told their teacher that they would participate in an interview, declined to be involved after taking the consent forms home to be signed by their parents/guardians and themselves.

I proceeded with the four interviews, while still attempting to locate more participants, in particular female participants. As it is important to discuss the issue of gender equity with both male and female students, I was not satisfied with speaking to male students only. I spoke to a grade nine girls-only PE class and a teacher gave another girls-only class information about the project, including the handout letter used with the other classes. In addition, the department head approached the one co-educational grade ten PE class in the school and gave the students information about the project and participation requirements. These attempts did not produce any volunteers.

As previously mentioned, for the second school, I had difficulties in gaining access to students and therefore sought participants through my work as a coach with a community figure skating club. These participants were given the same information as their counterparts from the first school. As a result of this search process, three girls agreed to participate in the study; one from the first school and two from the second school. Although I had originally planned to interview students currently in mandatory PE (grades ten and nine), one girl from each school was in grade eleven. I felt that they could offer their experiences from PE in their previous years of school and therefore included them in the research. The primary difference between these participants and those accessed in the PE classes was that the girls were not strangers to me and had some knowledge of my values and interests. The boys knew very little about me as a person, only being told about my desire to discuss their experiences in PE with them. This is important in regards to the level of comfort that the participants might have had

with me. The boys may not have felt comfortable talking with a stranger. Likewise because the girls were familiar with me and some of my values they may have felt compelled to answer in a way that framed their experiences and perspectives in line with what they felt mine were.

The values that the girls were familiar with included my high regard for taking care of their physical and mental well-being. I had the opportunity to work with all of these students as an off-ice trainer where we worked on strength, stretching and jumping techniques. We had had various discussions about general health, including the importance of eating well, maintaining flexibility and strength in order to be able to participate in figure skating to their fullest ability in a safe and fun manner. This would impress on them that I defined health in specific ways and that I felt that girls could work on and increase their physical strength.

My original research plans were to speak with approximately 16 students. Although this was the original research plan, access to participants was at times difficult as was engaging students to volunteer once access had been established. The lack of participation suggests that students may not have wanted to participate or did not feel they had much to say about PE, possibly because of its lower status as a subject (see Chapters Three and Five for further discussion). The difficulties I encountered with PE department heads also raise questions as to why they chose not to have their students participate. Without discussing this with the teachers, I cannot state for certain their reasons, however, I would suggest that the teachers felt it may be too intrusive to have an

outsider discuss their classes or that my research was not worthwhile to them. Even though I was not able to speak with as many students as I had planned, the purpose of this research was to explore the kinds of understanding and experiences secondary students have in regards to gender, not to seek a representative sample of all BC secondary students. Although investigating why some teachers did not allow me access to their students is beyond the scope of this project, including teachers in research that asks about the relationship between gender inequity and PE is an area in need of more research in the future and may allow further access to students.

Introducing the Participants

Seven students, four boys and three girls, from two BC secondary schools volunteered to participate. They chose pseudonyms as follows:

From School number one:

Zac, a grade ten male student, was enrolled in boys-only PE at the time of the research. He shared with me that he enjoys PE but will probably not take this subject as an elective. Zac participates in sport activities outside of school.

Maverick, a grade ten male student, was enrolled in boys-only PE. He feels PE is all right, and can be fun. However, he does not plan on taking it once it becomes an elective as he plans to take other courses as his electives.

Maverick does not feel that he is very good at sports.

Joe, a grade ten male student, enjoys PE and feels it is a good way to get his energy out. He says that if he has a chance, a free elective, he would like to

take PE, but says he doesn't think he will. Joe is not involved in sports outside of school.

Alfred, also a grade ten male student in boys-only PE, likes PE the way it currently is but is not sure if he will be taking it when it becomes an elective, adding that it depends on the other courses he takes. Alfred participates in sport outside of school.

Andrea is a grade eleven female student who was not taking PE at the time of the interview. Her grade nine and ten PE classes were single-sex. She did not always enjoy participating in PE but found some of it to be good, especially because it kept her active and in shape. She chose not to take PE when it became an elective as she wishes to take more academic courses. Outside of school, Andrea is involved in the sport of figure skating on a recreational level. She is not involved in any other sport.

From School number two:

Roxy is a grade eleven female student who enjoyed PE when she took it. Her experiences in PE in secondary school were single-sex. Once PE became an elective, she chose not to take it, as there were many other options that she felt she had to take as her electives. Roxy is also involved in figure skating as a form of recreation. She has participated for many years in dance at a local dance studio.

Susie, a grade ten female student, is a competitive athlete who no longer participates in the mandatory PE class due to her involvement in competitive

figure skating. She participated in co-educational PE through elementary school and in single-sex grade nine PE in secondary school. She only participated in the first few weeks of grade nine, before being excused from the subject due to her active participation in a competitive sport. In order to be excused from PE in grade nine and ten she had to provide the school with information such as written evaluations from the judges at her competitions. She is very active in sport outside of school, including figure skating and many other activities.

The Interviews

Qualitative interviews are an important method for conducting research, particularly in an educational setting. The semi-structured interviews that I used allowed me access to certain information that other methods cannot provide such as the meaning and details of people's experiences (Tierney and Dilley, 2002). Before undertaking the interviews, I had identified themes that I wanted to discuss and some open-ended questions to address them (see Appendix E). I wanted to know what the students thought about PE, what changes they would make to PE to create their ideal PE, what they had experienced in regards to co-educational and single-sex PE, the content of their PE classes currently, and if they felt there were any gendered activities. Because these questions were open-ended, they allowed students to discuss them relative to their experiences and allowed me to reshape them as the interviews progressed to better suit what the students were sharing with me. The use of semi-structured interviews also allowed me to ask for clarification about the experiences that they shared with me, as well as the opportunity to explore in more depth, subjects that they

brought up, which would not have been possible in another style of research such as a survey. My research design included individual interviews that I conducted with the students. Individual interviews are common in studies that deal with issues regarding the body (Eder and Fingerson, 2002).

I felt strongly that in order to allow the participants the room to speak candidly about subjects that may be sensitive for them, it was necessary to interview them on a one-to-one basis as opposed to a group setting with their peers. Group interviews, I felt, might have prevented some students from feeling safe to discuss their experiences in a detailed manner. However, with two participants, their mothers were present for the entire interview. I accessed both of these participants through our connection at the skating club. In one instance, the participant had forgotten to remind her mother that she was staying after practice for the interview, so the mother had arrived to pick her up and stayed and did some paper work during the interview. Although this mother was not actively participating in the interview, she was aware of what was being said as was demonstrated by a few comments made by her during the interview. In the other instance, the mother wanted to be present due to an interest in what I was doing. Neither participant seemed uncomfortable with their mother being there; they talked in a manner that appeared to be open and non-reserved. Although I had not anticipated parents being present during the interviews, it did not greatly affect how I carried out the interview, as I was comfortable with both of these people. However, it may have affected how the students responded in the discussion, including what they shared with me. While I cannot be sure of the

extent to which having their moms present affected the girls' responses, I am confident that what they shared with me reflected their experiences and their discussions with me have been included in this thesis.

I interviewed all of the female participants in an office at the public arena we used for skating after a skating session. In contrast, I interviewed the male participants at their school during their lunch break¹². These interviews took place in a private office within the main school office. The interviews ranged in length from approximately fifteen to forty minutes. The office space utilized in the schools may not have been the best option for a relaxed interview as it was a very formal setting with a large table and chairs and no windows. The interviews with the female participants in the rink were in familiar territory for both the participants and myself. Two of the interviews with boys were relatively short, one lasting approximately fifteen minutes and the other just over twenty minutes. Both boys appeared to be very shy or nervous and did not appear to be completely comfortable talking with me about their experiences in PE. The other two boys were much more talkative and willing to share details of their experiences. Their interviews were approximately thirty minutes in duration. The girls were comparatively more comfortable talking about their experiences in PE with me, making jokes, laughing, and sharing their thoughts candidly. However, all three had had contact with me in our mutual sport involvement and were therefore most likely more comfortable talking with me in general. Of course as discussed previously, the girls' comfort with me had benefits and drawbacks.

¹² The interviews took place during their lunch hours so as to avoid taking away from class time.

The benefit was that they talked more in depth with me than the boys, but the drawback was that they might have been more inclined to frame their discussion in terms of what they thought was important to me. All seven of the interviews were audio taped with the participants' consent. I chose to audiotape the interviews to allow for an accurate source to refer back to when analyzing the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Research that deals with participants who are minors is necessary in order to give voice to an underrepresented group in society. In education, particularly, the inclusion of minors in research allows the voices of those most affected by the educational process to be heard (Tierney and Dilley, 2002). However, research with minors also has unique dilemmas, such as parental consent, informed consent of minors and the power imbalance in society between adults and adolescents (Eder and Fingerson, 2002).

Since this research included interviews with minors, it was necessary to gain the consent of a parent and/or legal guardian. This raised a few concerns for me. Mason (1996) also raises concerns about third party consent for participation, cautioning against the power that parents or guardians have over minors. However, according to the ethics guidelines of Simon Fraser University, when interviewing minors the researcher must obtain the consent of the parents or guardians of any minors participating in the research. Therefore, one concern was that some students, who did not really want to consent, would be asked to participate by their parents or guardians. In this age group parental pressure

may not have been a major issue as they may have decided not to participate and therefore not told their parents about the research. However, the parents who were asked permission by their children to participate could have mentioned the research to other parents. In case students were feeling pressure from parents to participate, I reminded each student at the beginning of the interview that they could leave at any time and could change their mind about participating. This procedure is standard practice in the ethical guidelines of Simon Fraser University and included on the participant consent form that the students signed (see Appendix C). However, I felt that it was important to make the point that there would be no consequence to changing their mind in regards to participating very clear. However, this was not as effective in the two instances where a parent was present. Another issue is that parents may not allow willing participants to become involved with the research. This issue may have been the case with the two girls from school one who had shown interest in participating, but declined after taking home the consent forms.

Ensuring that consent is informed is also a difficult task in any study, especially with participants who may not have participated in a research project prior to this one. I did not assume that these participants would have a full understanding of what they were consenting to in this research. In particular, I was concerned about the students' understanding that by consenting to participating in this study, they were consenting not only to the interview, but also to my analysis of these interviews, as well as the written copy of the findings in my thesis, which would then be available for the public to read (see Mason,

1996). To take this concern into consideration, I discussed the research process I would be using with each participant before proceeding with the interview, discussing with them how I would be transcribing the interview, analyzing it and then writing a research report. As well, I asked each participant before and after the interview if they had any questions. I also recognize that discussing informed consent with my participants did not guarantee that they were informed.

Although I told them what they were consenting to, they still may not have completely understood the process of analysis that I would go through in examining their interviews as data for the purpose of my research. However, it was my hope that by discussing consent and the research process with each participant I would be as open as I could about the research process and initiate room for discussion and questions that the students might have had. The consent forms informed parents/guardians and participants that they could request a copy of the findings by contacting me and at the time of the interview I also offered each participant a copy of a summary of my findings. All of the students declined to take my offer and no one contacted me afterwards to request a copy.

Another concern in this research was accessing students through the very system that I was asking them to discuss: the PE classes in the school. Although it seemed logical that to access secondary school PE students, one would go to these classes and ask for volunteers, I recognize that having the teacher present during my brief introduction to the study may have had an impact on the students. Although the PE teachers were telling their students this

research was a great opportunity for them to voice their thoughts about PE, in a sense helping my position as a legitimate researcher, the power relationship between teacher and student may have led students to feel that they must participate in order to please them (Mason, 1996). However, my low participation rate would indicate that most students did not feel pressured to participate. Another possible problem due to the power dynamics in the teacher-student relationship is that some students may have been afraid that their teachers would have direct access to what they said. This fear may have prevented some students from participating or possibly altered the discussion during the interviews with those students who did participate. Teachers unintentionally influencing students not to participate is more likely the case, as I had difficulties finding participants in the schools. I addressed the concern of teachers accessing directly the participants' interviews in my introduction letter for the students, informing the students that I would ensure confidentiality (see Appendix B), however I still recognize the problem of gaining the trust of students who are contacted through their teachers.

The issues raised in gaining access through teachers did not pose a concern with the students I accessed from outside the school, in the local skating club as their primary coach did not discuss the research with them. However including students I work with in my research also raises concerns. Although I am not the primary coach for these athletes, as previously discussed they did work with me occasionally in the relationship of coach and student during off-ice sessions, which may have compelled them to participate for fear of disappointing

me if they did not. I was aware of this and watched for signs of the girls being uncomfortable during the interviews, but all three seemed to be at ease. Another concern was that these three girls were aware of some of my values as discussed previously. It is possible that this may have altered what they shared with me during the interviews.

The Analysis

I transcribed each taped interview into text format. It is common to transcribe taped interviews so as to maintain an accurate record of what was said during the interviews, as our recollections are not always reliable in capturing all that was expressed during the interview (Silverman, 2003). After transcribing the interviews, I read the transcripts over several times, to become very familiar with what the participants and I had said. Next, I looked for themes, pulling out parts of the conversation from various interviews that dealt with similar issues. The three main themes I focused on when analyzing these transcripts were: the status of PE as a marginal subject in schools in relation to the hierarchy of knowledge in education; the construction of difference between girls and boys, in particular in relation to the body and how it should be used; and the debate about the ability of co-educational or single-sex class settings to provide a gender equitable PE class. The following chapter discusses these themes in detail, utilizing the interview transcripts. There are different ways to include the voices of participants in a study such as using inclusive language when referring to participants, using the language of the participants in the analysis, or including direct quotes (Eder and Fingerson, 2002). I have chosen to include direct quotes

from these interviews as a means of including the voices of the participants with my analysis. I chose this method of inclusion because I feel it is important for the reader to know what the students themselves said rather than solely my interpretation of their words.

As mentioned, I had planned to interview more students. However, due to the difficulties in accessing students, I spoke with seven. While this makes the data in the study limited, the interviews do provide some valuable insight into some of the students' perceptions about PE and their implications for gender equitable PE. In particular, this small sample demonstrated that the questions pertaining to making PE gender equitable are not easily answered. The next chapter discusses these students' insights into their PE experiences.

Chapter Five: Student Perspectives of Gender in PE

The Interviews

The primary data for this research are the transcripts from the seven interviews with secondary students. In conducting the interviews, I broached specific topics with the students that were informed by the feminist debates that were discussed in chapter three. Open-ended questions about topics such as co-education enabled the students to discuss how they conceptualized issues regarding PE and gender equity. In discussing their experiences in PE, the students in this research talked about PE's lack of importance in relation to other school subjects, the differences in PE based on gender, and the use of co-education and single-sex class settings in PE. In analyzing these data, I focused on three main themes that are implicated in the construction of gender and gender inequity within the context of PE: the low status of PE in school knowledge and the high status of sport within PE as a means of legitimizing PE; gender difference and the body; and the debate regarding the use of single-sex or co-education class settings for delivering gender equitable PE. In this thesis, I am arguing the following: that school curriculum solidifies the mind/body dichotomy by de-legitimizing PE as a form of academic knowledge; that PE maintains the hierarchy of sport over recreation, which reinforces the construction of hegemonic masculinity that legitimizes male superiority in physical activities and abilities; that PE maintains the dichotomized norms of

difference in the uses for the female and male body, by constructing the female body as inferior to the male body. And finally, that the debate of whether to offer PE in a single-sex class setting versus a co-educational setting is shaped by these understandings of differences based on dualistic notions of the mind and body, sex and gender as well as sport and recreation.

Interview participants discussed the low status of PE in the hierarchy of school knowledge in the sense that they viewed the subject of PE as less academic than other subjects, as not necessary, or as not worth the limited space they were allotted for elective courses in grades eleven and twelve. All the students discussed sport as a main component of their PE experiences. Most participants discussed gender and gender difference and what these terms meant to them. Some students referred to societal norms as something that played a determining role in what they could and could not do with their bodies because of their gender. Some discussed what they should do to fit within socially prescribed gender norms. Others discussed gender difference in a biological framework, which naturalized difference in the categories of male and female. Each student discussed the issue of single-sex versus co-educational classes during the interview and all of the students had experienced both settings in PE, co-education in elementary school and single-sex in secondary school.

Low Status of PE in School Knowledge

With PE at the bottom of the hierarchy of school knowledge, it has had to constantly struggle to legitimize itself. As a means of legitimization, PE knowledge has drawn upon a scientific and biological framework that naturalizes

the body and difference (Dewar, 1986; Vertinsky, 1990). The naturalizing of difference by policy makers, educators, and health officials has aided in the ranking of activities in PE, with competitive sports on the top of the hierarchy and others that are more recreational (less competitive) and do not aid in the legitimization of PE at the bottom of the curriculum or out of the curriculum altogether (Humberstone, 2002). Because sport is easier to break down and teach scientifically in terms of mechanics with measurable outcomes that could be deemed right and wrong than are recreation activities that rely more on aesthetic uses of the body, maintaining sport in the curriculum is a means of legitimizing PE in an academic setting where science is given high status (Dewar, 1986; Kirk, 1997). As well, recreational activities such as outdoor pursuits that focus on equal dependency between all students through teamwork are often left out of the curriculum that tends to focus on competition. This focus on sport in the curriculum continues the masculinized nature of PE to the detriment of girls and boys who do not fit the ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

In the interviews of this research, students, both female and male, confirmed that PE is not as important to them as other more 'academic' subjects, demonstrating recognition of the hierarchy of knowledge in school subjects that, in particular, places the mind over the body. The students stated that they do not have room for PE in their schedules, as they need to make room for more 'important subjects'.

Researcher: How important do you think PE is?

Andrea: Um, I think there could be like better things to do

In general, the students did not consider PE as important to education, but rather as a break from the real business of education, enjoyable but not a 'real' subject.

Researcher: Do you think PE is an important part of school?

Zac: Um, it's not as important as math or science, but I think it's good to have.

Researcher: Yah, why?

Zac: Just so you don't get tired of the same old thing.

In regards to the hierarchy of sport over recreation, this thesis also reveals that these students have experienced sport as the main activity in PE similar to the findings in Humberstone's research (2002). Boys and girls in this study listed the many sports they participated in during PE, such as volleyball, basketball, soccer, football, lacrosse, and field hockey. Despite the Integrated Resource Packages (IRP's) stating that team sport is just one of the five areas to be taught in PE (see Chapter Two), those interviewed in this research confirm that for them, PE has meant primarily learning sport. Therefore, for these students, policy and practice did not coincide. For example, Zac, who likes PE because of its sport content, listed some of the sports he was doing in PE this year.

Zac: Last week we did basketball, and we're doing football this week, and we did volleyball, I think we're doing badminton, soccer, hockey and who knows.

Likewise, Alfred indicated that his experiences in PE have involved a high content of sport and that this is the primary reason he likes it.

Researcher: What about PE do you like? Why do you like it how it is?

Alfred: I just like how you get to like play every, like different sport, you get a mixture of them.

Researcher: Okay so you do a little bit of lots of things?

Alfred: Yah.

Researcher: So what kinds of things are you guys doing in PE?

Alfred: We've done football, soccer, basketball, volleyball, we're doing archery, table tennis.

This quote includes two activities that are not traditionally defined as team sports, archery and table tennis, but it is notable how Alfred listed them after the four main traditional sports utilized in PE.

Another important discussion in the interviews was with Joe who demonstrated the importance given to some sport activities in his PE experiences as confirmed by the time allotted for different activities.

Researcher: About how long do you do each [sport]...

Joe: [cuts in] Two weeks of each, or one if it's a smaller or lesser sport or something.

Joe brings up the notion of lesser sports or activities when we are discussing sport in PE. He recognizes a rank order of activities in the curriculum, which is accomplished by allotting twice as much time for the higher status sports as opposed to the lower status. Through discussions with these students and a

review of the posted curriculum for a grade ten boys-only PE class, the higher status sports included team games such as basketball, volleyball, and football and the lesser, badminton and archery. The legitimization of 'high status' sport within the curriculum reflects broader cultural conceptions, particularly those that are informed by dominant group interests in society (Paechter, 2001). Clearly for these students PE is still predominantly organized around participating in sport, acquiring the skills associated with various traditional sport games (such as basketball soccer, and volleyball) and playing these sports. However, not only do students learn the skills and rules of a sport such as basketball, they learn the qualities promoted through sport such as being competitive, aggressive, task-focused and achievement-oriented (Humberstone, 2002). With many of the traits valued in PE coinciding with the values of hegemonic masculinity, PE becomes a place for girls to assert their emphasized femininity by distancing themselves from physical activity, making it difficult for them to succeed in this school subject (Paechter, 2003). In contrast, PE becomes a place for boys to assert their hegemonic masculinity through active participation in sport. Sport carries on a tradition of viewing the body as purely a biological phenomenon, untouched by culture, preventing a transformation of PE that is conducive to allowing students to question harmful understandings of the body (Kirk, 2002a). The focus on sport versus recreation in PE also allows for the perceived need to separate girls and boys for PE, on the basis that girls and boys do not have the same needs and abilities, legitimizing single-sex PE. Proponents of girls-only PE argue that by having separate classes for boys and girls, PE may offer activities that are

viewed as more desirable to girls. This argument is often framed within a biological framework that legitimizes the naturalizing of difference in two distinct sex categories.

Gendered Difference and the Body

Part of the gendering of bodies is the construction of accepted norms about what female and male bodies should and can do. The concepts of femininity and masculinity include assumptions about what bodies are for and how they should be used. In this way, biology is a social construction, as are bodies. When discussing PE, both boys and girls had definite perceptions about what boys and girls did with their bodies such as boys playing sport and girls participating in recreational activities such as dance or exercising for beauty.

Some of the boys in this research and in Wright's (1996), had already formed opinions about what activities are girls' activities, for example:

Researcher: Do you think most girls like PE?

Maverick: Well I don't know, girls probably wouldn't really focus on, on sports and activities. Well they would more focus on workouts and beauty and things.

Maverick touches on a common perception that girls do not like sports and that girls attach more importance to beauty and weight control, and participate in physical activity to increase their value based on appearance (Lenskyj, 1991; Vertinsky, 1995).

Andrea is one girl who appears to have internalized the equation of being fit, or "in shape" with looking attractive by Western standards that dictate thinness

for girls (Wright and Dewar, 1997). Andrea felt that for her, PE could be a site for working on her body in a way that made it more physically fit but that focused on attractiveness.

Researcher: What was your favorite thing about PE?

Andrea: Um, I'm not sure. Well just like how it kept me in shape. Cause I had it last semester, or last term, so by summer time I had like almost a six-pack, stuff like that.

Collins (cited in Vertinsky, 1995) argues that girls choose to exercise as a means to change their body shape, not to enhance their physical fitness. Of particular interest is the focus on certain body parts such as this student's focus on the stomach. This example demonstrates the separation of the mind and body with the body being something which girl should work on, control and monitor (Lenskyj, 1991).

Participants of this research associated gender with certain activities; but to what extent did they internalize or resist these ideas? And to what extent did the students maintain a hierarchical ordering of these activities, which gave less value to 'girls' than to 'boys' activities? Susie raises the notion of gendered activities.

Researcher: Have you ever participated in an activity or on a team where you were one of the only girls?

Susie: No

Researcher: No.

Susie: Oh, I also want to play hockey.

Although not explicitly stated, this statement demonstrates that Susie knows that Western society currently perceives hockey as a boys' activity. When asked about being the only girl Susie says no but then brings up hockey. Susie goes on to discuss how some people feel figure skating is a girls' sport and hockey is a boys' sport and that it is boys who she hears making this distinction which clearly annoys her. Susie is a competitive figure skater who feels she is an athlete and that figure skating is a sport, but she discusses societal norms, which downplay female activities by telling me "people say it's [skating is] a hobby! ... but in the dictionary it says it is a sport!". Susie has resisted internalizing these gender associations with physical activity, but even so is affected by them as she is constantly in a position where she must defend her self-image as an athlete.

As found in other works (Scruton, 1993; Wright, 1996), this research contained comments about the gendered nature of dance, one compulsory component of PE (see Chapter Two).

Researcher: Are there any sports that you think are predominately boys' sports or any sports you think are girls' sports?

Zac: ... we [boys] have to do dancing and stuff like that, so I think we shouldn't do dancing.

Generally the boys interviewed associated dance with girls and expressed their distaste for it. They stated that they were uncomfortable with the dance component of PE, especially in a single-sex setting.

Maverick: Well you know in dance, like in [my other school] in dance, it's like boy and girl stuff. But in here [secondary school], dance is more like gymnastics, where you prepare like a set of moves in a group ... it's kind of like weird. It's like you're in a band or something (laughs).

Although Susie's earlier quotes demonstrate that she clearly resisted internalizing the standards she saw in society she knew that the general population would classify dance as a girls' activity.

Researcher: Do you think that there is any truth to it, these girls' sports versus boys' sports discussions?

Susie: NO!

Researcher: Are there any other examples that you have heard?

Susie: Yah, ballet. And football; girls can't play football!

Dance is one area that is often promoted by proponents of girls-only PE as an activity that should be part of the curriculum (Scraton, 1987). These girls-only proponents view dance as a physical activity that allows for empowerment by allowing for personal expression through movement. Scraton (1987) argues that dance is an area of the traditional curriculum in girls-only PE that has been devalued in Britain's move to co-educational PE. However, as Paechter (2003) discusses, the construction of dance as feminine, while giving girls something that is theirs, reinforces the masculine/feminine hierarchy of activities.

Like Susie, Joe discussed how gendered differences between boys and girls in regards to physical activities can be attributed in part to social

explanations rather than purely biological. His remarks signal a resistance to the status quo, which naturalizes gendered difference.

Joe: Some girls are better at some things than boys, but like there are some sports that boys are better at because they've played it all their life and lots of girls haven't really played much.

Researcher: Like for example?

Joe: Like you know, like street hockey, you don't see many girls playing that, but there are some, who are really good, but you never like really see girls playing that sort of sport so they aren't usually as good.

Joe's comments begin to question biological understandings of difference in girls' and boys' uses of their bodies, raising the issue of the social construction of difference through the different experiences Western society offers girls and boys. His remarks reflect an important realization that social issues play a significant role in creating the differences between boys and girls. Like Susie, who knew the norms but did not agree with them, Joe is questioning the construction of girls as not being physically able, instead recognizing that social constraints may prevent some girls from being able to participate in sport. Susie and Joe resist the naturalized dichotomy of difference in boys' and girls' abilities.

The girls in this research discussed differences between boys and girls in relation to physical activity, with diversity of understandings of why these differences existed. Some believed that these differences in ability and activity were natural, while others questioned such discrepancies seeing them more or

less as limiting their chances, not because they believed the differences were natural but rather because teachers believed that they were.

Susie: Sometimes if the teacher's a guy, it's kind of, he's kind of like, he expects less, like physically, like instead of like if he had a boy. So like they're like less demanding cause um, we're not very physical.

... they like don't do tackle and stuff. Like if we play football its touch but the guys get to tackle.

While radical feminists believe that treating all girls as different from all boys is making PE more accessible for girls, clearly for Susie, different rules determined by the sex of participants has sent her a message about societal expectations, about what girls were capable of versus what boys were. For Susie, constraining her to 'girls' rules was a problem; it did not make PE more gender equitable. Susie displays a dislike for this catering to perceived inabilities of girls in PE, however not all girls do.

Another important issue raised by a student was the messages she received about the different uses each sex would have for their body outside of PE.

Roxy: ... they [boys] do like Karate I think and the girls do self-defense. (laughs).

Researcher: What do you think about that?

Roxy: Um I don't know, because I guess they think that girls need to protect themselves (laughs) or I don't know. ... cause they think guys are the ones that are going to attack the girls.

Roxy's suggestion that boys are trained in Karate to attack, while girls are taught self-defense is insightful. This difference in activity sends a message to girls that they will need to defend themselves, while boys will be on the other end of this situation, the attacker. Although self-defense was only one aspect of PE curriculum in this student's experience, it was an important use of difference that constructed girls' and boys' place in the female/male relationship that maintains male power over women in general. Wright (1996) also found that PE constructed boys' and girls' bodies as very different, boys' bodies as strong and tough and girls' as weak and fragile, with boys' bodies as the ideal and girls' as unable to meet that ideal. The use of different activities in PE constructs differences between boys' and girls' abilities, maintaining current gender relations based on inequality (Scruton, 1993). The biological arguments either in science or in radical feminist theory have led to a debate about whether PE should be offered as co-educational or single-sex.

Co-educational Versus Single-sex PE Classes

As discussed in chapter three, PE in secondary grades in BC is single-sex in some schools, co-educational in others, and is mixed in yet other schools. In the feminist literature, the debate centers around what class setting is best suited for gender equitable learning situations. Liberal feminism argues, from the standpoint of sameness, for co-educational settings as the best solution for equitable PE to provide equal access for girls. Radical feminism argues that single-sex settings would be the only way for girls to gain equality in PE, to ensure that PE could center on valuing girls' bodies and activities. Post-

structural feminism argues that the dualism of boys/girls is problematic and that the category of girl and boy includes considerable diversity, which makes it difficult to determine a single solution in the debate between co-education and single-sex PE that would be best suited for all students.

The students brought up many issues and had diverse opinions about how secondary schools deliver PE in BC. Some students, female and male, thought that single-sex PE might be best for them, while others felt that co-education would be better. One student said that student choice in the matter would be best, while recognizing the difficulties of this proposition.

Joe: I think we should have the choice, I think we should have the choice.

Researcher: So that you'd have, say a boys' class, a girls' class and a co-ed one each semester?

Joe: Yah.

Researcher: What do you think most people would pick?

Joe: I think most boys would choose co-ed (laughs) and most girls would probably just stay with just girls.

Researcher: That's interesting.

Joe: So I guess it wouldn't work well (laughs)

Other students gave their own reasons for preferring one setting to the other. One boy felt more comfortable in boys-only PE, stating that he felt less pressure in this situation and preferred it to co-educational PE. Another boy felt that co-ed would be better for him, stating that when it is co-ed, he finds less

attention placed on him by the other boys in the class. As research suggest, all-male environments can put extreme pressure on boys to conform to hegemonic masculinity (Humberstone, 2002). A co-educational setting in PE offers boys who are uncomfortable with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity an atmosphere more responsive to diversity (Wright 1996). The girls also had mixed reactions. One girl felt that all girls' classes were good,

Roxy: cause when we were with the guys they kind of like, like throw the ball at us and hit us and stuff (nervous laugh) and they're more violent than we are so,...

... it was just funner cause guys are too aggressive and they're like, I don't know they're just, I don't know when we're playing games they're like really rough and we don't like it so.

This participant felt a distinct difference in the behaviour of boys and girls in PE that made single-sex classes preferable for her. However, another girl perceived that the difference in boys' actions made co-ed classes preferable. The two students labeled the boys' behaviour differently. While Roxy saw the boys' behaviour as aggressive, Susie saw it as competitive.

Susie: I'd want it co-ed.

Researcher: Co-ed. Do you have any particular reason why?

Susie: Because most of the boys are more competitive and it probably would be more fun (laughs).

Susie preferred playing with the boys as she saw the trait of competitiveness -- a trait of hegemonic masculinity -- as something to which she aspired. Susie did not question the ideals of naturalized gender difference, but

rather wished to be more like the boys than the girls. Wright (1996) also found that girls who wanted to participate in co-educational PE did not really question the nature of hegemonic masculinity as displayed in boys' PE or the notion that boys have superior abilities, but rather they wanted to work towards the masculine standards, to be 'pseudo-boys'.

Another important area pertaining to co-educational versus single-sex PE that was brought up in the interviews was how PE was different when it was single-sex. Joe noticed changes between co-educational PE in his previous school and single-sex PE in his current school.

Joe: When I was in [my previous] school we always played more games than we played sports.

Researcher: Now it's [PE] more sports orientated?

Joe: Yah. So like girls play field hockey and boys play like rugby or something; I've never seen the girls play football or anything.

Joe's discussion raises the point of gendered understandings of the body that correlate with different activities in boys-only PE. Joe's experiences in his co-educational and single-sex PE classes demonstrate the understanding that boys can play more sport -- in particular traditional team sports that include elements of violence such as football -- once PE is in single-sex settings and girls can do activities and sports more oriented to girls such as field hockey, in which boys do not currently participate. Andrea also brought up this distinction:

Andrea: And there was some stuff that we didn't do, but other classes got to do it ... Sometimes the guys' classes would get to do stuff we didn't get to do. Like we got to play field hockey and they got to do field lacrosse, and I like field lacrosse, but we never got to do it.

Clearly the students in this research were aware that different activities were scheduled for boys and girls and in the case of Andrea, she did not think that the difference was necessary. Andrea expressed a desire to participate in this male-only PE activity that was denied to her in the girls-only curriculum. An important distinction in the discussion about lacrosse and field hockey is that boys play lacrosse, a traditionally contact and aggressive sport, while the girls play field hockey a no-contact sport (Fisher, 2002; Wedmann *et al.*, 1994). While it is not clear if Andrea or Joe knew the difference between the two sports, the teachers who plan the girls and boys curriculum most likely did.

Both boys and girls held views about gendered behaviour that led some students to prefer single-sex and others to prefer co-education. Both girls and boys in this study discussed a difference in the conduct of girls versus boys in the context of their PE. However, their preferences for co-educational or single-sex PE in light of these gendered behaviours were not simple. Susie felt that the boys' behaviour (competitive) made co-education a better atmosphere while Roxy held the behaviour (aggression) of boys responsible for her preference for single-sex PE. Likewise, Joe preferred co-educational PE because it was "more fun" and he did not like being segregated with the boys who he said were always "just rough-housing". Zac, however felt less pressure to perform in the boys-only atmosphere and preferred this to co-education. And for Maverick, even though

he felt that some “girls are kind of like whiney and stuff” he still preferred co-education because in this setting the attention would not be on boys who may not be the best athletes. It is important to note that none of the participants appeared to question that in general there are differences between boys’ and girls’ behavior in PE, rather what they felt about this behaviour is what was different.

What stands out in the data is that there is a diversity of opinions pertaining to what works best for different individuals. At the same time, in BC some schools organize PE as a co-educational subject while others organize it as a single-sex subject. While many secondary schools in BC do offer PE as a single-sex subject¹³ in secondary schools, this research suggests an absence of consensus in students’ preferences for single-sex PE. Further, the government’s stated preference is for PE, in fact, to be delivered in a co-educational setting (Ministry of Education, 1987), giving rise to questions about why schools offer it as single-sex and what they hope to achieve by doing so. The radical feminist argument is that single-sex will benefit girls in some way, but we must ask how single-sex settings will benefit girls and if all girls will benefit. From a post-structuralist feminist framework, I would argue that not all girls would benefit from single-sex settings as not all girls are the ‘same’ in the sense that not all have the same desires or physical abilities. Also important is what will single-sex settings do for boys? This research and others demonstrate that boys-only PE can serve

¹³ This observation is based on these data, a review of school websites, personal experience in PE, and informal discussions with various people pertaining to their experiences.

to masculinize the subject even more and put further pressure on boys to conform to the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (See Scraton, 1993).

The data from this research shows that not all girls desire single-sex PE, but clearly some do. It also shows how, as other researchers such as Wright (1996) have found, that not all boys desire single-sex PE, especially those who do not embody the values of hegemonic masculinity. While simply putting boys and girls together in PE classes does not address gender equity, neither does simply putting them in separate classes. If we put all students in a co-educational setting without any changes to how and what is taught, we will still reinforce hegemonic masculinity that values sport as a tool for masculinizing boys (Humberstone, 2002). Britain's moves to co-education have offered us important lessons about the difficulties with making PE co-educational within a system with such an overtly gendered history. However, keeping girls and boys separate for PE can also serve to reinforce biological discourses on difference. The underlying problems with the structure of PE -- such as the reliance on sport, that leads to gender stereotyping and the creation of difference between two socially constructed categories, male and female -- need to be addressed in order to truly attempt to create a PE that is gender equitable.

Implications of this Research

Clearly, students' thoughts about and experiences in PE are not homogeneous. Although the sample of students was small, it shows that students express considerable diversity about preferred class settings, as Wright (1996) found in her research in Australia. PE teachers and school administrators

in BC have largely ignored the construction of gender in a way that maintains naturalized inequity based on gendered bodies. While PE is just one of many sites aiding in the construction of gender in Western society, it has the distinction of being the primary subject in education that works on and with the body and therefore with gender. Although the government and some PE teachers have shown concern over gender equity in PE, thus far their concern has primarily centered on keeping girls in PE. The strategies that they have used to address low participation rates have done little to question the larger problem of the absence of more relevant activities (Penny and Evans, 2002). The BC Ministry of Education has thus far done little to critically evaluate PE's role in the constructing of gender and gender difference and therefore why girls aspiring to meet the values of emphasized femininity do not want to participate in PE. Instead, the Ministry has primarily focused on girls as the problem when addressing concerns about lack of participation in PE as an elective. Nor does the BC Ministry of Education address completely how PE is not conducive to emphasized femininity, as it is currently defined in opposition to the masculine values to which PE curriculum and pedagogy subscribes. Also, the current organization of PE does little to question how practices of hegemonic masculinity continue to promote athleticism, competitiveness, and heterosexuality as desirable traits in boys, while maintaining the dualism of gender, therefore making all of these traits less desirable for girls. The curriculum and teaching methods in PE need to be assessed in light of this research and others to fully understand the ways in which PE contributes to maintaining hegemonic

masculinity and emphasized femininity and how changes to PE might allow for this to be a place where gender relations are renegotiated.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

In this thesis I have argued that gender equity has not been attained in PE in BC. Although the BC Ministry of Education has officially recognized gender equity as a goal, students' experiences as revealed in this research suggest that thus far the PE curriculum does not reflect the policy suggestions pertaining to gender equitable PE. In addition, I have argued that the Ministry's discussion of gender equitable PE includes a limited notion of access that does not allow students the chance to fully use their bodies in rewarding ways that are pleasurable and empowering. The BC Ministry of Education's policy for PE has not questioned a dualistic understanding of gender as two discrete categories and as such, it is difficult to work towards gender equity within their framework. This research looked at students' experiences in PE to examine how they may have led to certain understandings about gender, in particular, gendered bodies and inequity. What emerged through these interviews was a discussion about gender as it is played out in PE, especially in the context of co-education and single-sex PE. Important concepts for this discussion were the use of scientific discourse and sport as a means of legitimizing PE, the use of curriculum that maintains gendered difference that maintains girls' bodies as lacking, and the use of single-sex PE as a means of maintaining gendered difference, hegemonic masculinity and male superiority.

It has been argued that scientific discourse has been used as a means of legitimizing PE in education. This discourse assumes as natural gender difference based on two discrete categories. Likewise, sport, which is easily taught in a scientific manner, is relied on for PE curriculum. This research demonstrated that for these participants, traditional sport games including activities such as basketball, soccer and volleyball continue to dominate PE curriculum. All of the students in this study made a connection between sport and PE. Some felt that their ideal PE would be comprised of more sports, or different sports and they did not question the use of traditional sport as defining PE. Others felt that PE could include activities that are not currently defined as sport such as bowling or skating, but as recreational pursuits that do not entail a competitive aspect.

I, as well as others (see Wright, 1997; Penny, 2002; Humberstone, 2002; and Vertinsky, 1995) would suggest that the status that traditional competitive sport has in the PE curriculum must be rethought so that PE can move away from its current practices of reinforcing a hegemonic masculinity that is harmful for all students. The literature shows that sport in this sense promotes the traits of hegemonic masculinity such as aggression, competition, and violence. In the short term, I argue that the PE curriculum needs to give more space to physical activity that is not defined as sport and move away from relying on the same traditional sports. Instead, PE curriculum could draw from physical activities popular in many cultures. In the larger picture, sport as it is currently defined needs addressing as well. By valorizing the traits of hegemonic masculinity,

sport plays an important role in maintaining gender inequity in society in general, maintaining male bodies as superior and teaching primarily boys to use their bodies in forceful ways to attain their goals. This is particularly important in Western society where sport is a highly valued institution (Hall, 1995; Connell, 1995). Sport defined by competition and aggression also serves to make full participation by girls difficult, as doing so would contradict the ideals of emphasized femininity and call into question the heterosexuality of those girls who do excel. The suggestions made by the students in this research and contained in the BC Ministry of Education policy share a vision of PE that includes a greater variety of activities. It is particularly important to include a wider range of activities that do not rely on competition and aggression when attempting to meet the goal of PE to create healthy citizens who are able to lead healthy active lives as mandated by the BC Ministry of Education. However, this research demonstrated that although these suggestions already exist in policy, they do not in the daily practice of PE. Therefore, it is the day-to-day practice in PE that must be rethought and reworked.

Once the students in this research reached secondary school, their PE classes were segregated by sex and included different 'gender appropriate' activities for boys and girls. For example, boys played football and lacrosse whereas girls played field hockey and learned self-defense. When girls did play traditional male sports in PE, the rules were altered in attempts to make it easier for girls such as using smaller basketballs or having no contact in normally contact sports. However, boys-only PE kept intact traditional 'boys' sports that

can be dangerous for boys' health, including the inherent risks in contact sport such as pain and injury (Kirk, 1997). While changes to the rules of contact sport in the girls-only PE may have benefited students due to the inherent risks of contact sport -- pain and injury -- changing the rules for girls and not boys serves to reaffirm that girls are weaker than boys, maintaining the naturalistic view of difference and inequity.

By creating gendered bodies based on difference and opposition, PE aids in the maintenance of gender inequity, by promoting physical ability as a masculine trait so that girls must break the social norms of femininity in order to use their bodies in ways that will empower them. One clear example of gender-differentiated bodies that was discussed in this research was the discussion by Roxy about girls learning self-defense and the boys learning Karate. Roxy felt that this meant girls were learning to protect themselves while boys were learning to attack. While Karate is not explicitly teaching its students to attack, but rather to defend, the way that the teachers have labeled the activity differently for boys and girls left Roxy feeling that there was a difference. She clearly felt that girls needed to learn self-defense and the boys did not. Another example brought up by boys and girls was field hockey. This sport has become a 'girls' sport and is characterized by no contact and the boys instead play lacrosse, which is a contact and fairly aggressive sport.

Research that examines gender inequity in PE and pursues the creation of a more gender equitable PE, noticeably focuses on which setting is better suited to keep girls active, co-educational or single-sex. Liberal and radical feminist

perspectives have debated the two options with liberals promoting co-educational and radical promoting single-sex PE classes based on their differing conceptualizations of gender and goals for change. As this research and others has discussed, from a post-structural feminist perspective, the debate of whether PE should be offered in a co-educational or a single-sex environment is not easily answered (see Scraton, 1993; Wright, 1997; Humberstone, 2002; and Penny, 2002). This thesis has argued that both settings are gender inequitable in the context of a strong reliance on scientific discourse that naturalizes gender difference and inequity.

The participants of this research have diverse opinions about how PE should be offered and why. The answer is not simple because gender is not simple. As we begin to question the validity of conceptualizing gender as two discrete categories, feminine and masculine, the question of how to offer PE becomes more complex. If we recognize that 'the sexes' are neither the same nor different in the traditional sense of liberal and radical feminist theory, but rather are diverse and that the categories of male and female contain many differences within and between them, then there may not be a definitive answer. In acknowledging that no one answer exists, those concerned with gender equity may find it difficult to move forward and make changes to PE, but not impossible. This research suggests that we need to ask the question why and for whom are we offering PE as single-sex or as co-educational in secondary schools in BC; we cannot simply offer PE in one setting or the other without careful consideration. Research shows that the move towards co-educational PE in

Britain's secondary schools has not necessarily led to a more gender equitable situation, instead it puts girls into boys' PE. However, as Scraton (1993) and Wright (1997) point out, single-sex PE is also failing, as it continues to uphold the biological understandings of difference and male superiority. The questions must go past issues of class setting to ones that address PE curriculum and the discourses which it relies on, in particular, scientific discourse which naturalizes gender difference and gender inequity.

Policy Direction

The BC Ministry of Education has stated that it is concerned with girls' participation in PE. As well, the policy documents for PE in BC contain a discussion pertaining to gender equity and how to make PE more gender equitable. At a time when the Ministry is reviewing education policy and the relevance of PE to students, it seems a ripe occasion to broaden the definition of gender equity and to implement changes to the PE curriculum and the way it is delivered so as to work towards a goal of gender equitable PE. Gender equity cannot be met within the current structure of PE curriculum, which promotes norms associated with hegemonic masculinity. Further, the scientific explanations of gender difference that underlie PE curriculum do not allow room for questioning the values of hegemonic masculinity as natural (Kirk, 1997). In both settings, co-educational and single-sex, PE as it is currently organized does not make it possible for girls to fully participate and meet the expectations of emphasized femininity. It also makes it difficult for boys to express different

forms of masculinity that may not align with the requirements of hegemonic masculinity.

In particular, the reliance on sport needs to be critically addressed. Examining sport and the role it plays in maintaining a PE setting that alienates some students and pressures others to conform to ideals they may not want to could open doors for alternative expressions of gender. Some of the students in this research discussed the desire they had to try other activities in PE and for more variety rather than the use of the same sports year after year. As discussed in this thesis, the use of a more varied curriculum in PE to meet the learning outcomes could help to alleviate the alienating nature of PE for those -- both boys and girls -- who do not subscribe to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and therefore do not enjoy participating in sport. As well, educators need to develop stronger policy that makes it more difficult for teachers to dismiss issues such as gender equity. Currently much of the policy directed at physical education is suggestive rather than mandatory. Although being too restrictive in policy can ignore diversity, policy that is too relaxed is harmful because it allows for the continuance of practices that we know promote gender inequity.

Currently the Ministry does make some recommendations that may help the move towards a more gender equitable PE, such as not relying on sport and offering alternative activities with which both boys and girls have less experience. For example, rock climbing, which does not have such a strong gendered history as sport, could provide students with the opportunity to learn how to work

together rather than to focus on winning. In addition to reviewing policy, teacher training programs must be reworked to ensure that the biological reductionism of difference does not prevail. As long as biological discourse maintains prominence in teacher training, a definition of gender that holds girls' bodies as deficient when compared to boys' and as each gender being discrete in its needs, abilities and desires, will be utilized by teachers no matter what the official policy states.

Future Research

Research that examines classroom dynamics is needed to add to the information the students of this research provided. By listening to the students and monitoring what happens in the day-to-day operations of PE we may gain further insight into how to go about practical changes at the school level that will aid in working towards gender equity. Also, the small number of participants in this research needs to be addressed, as the more students we talk with, who have had diverse experiences in PE, the better able we are to understand how PE and its promotion of hegemonic masculinity works to maintain difference in a way that maintains inequity. Further research that examines the complex relationship between PE and school sport teams – including PE teachers' dual role as teachers and coaches -- would demonstrate the complexities involved in attempting to remove the current sport focus in PE. PE has a long history of using sport to construct gendered bodies and it will take time to make changes that will affect the understanding of gender and gendered bodies in a way that will value differences and allow for social/cultural explanations in addition to the

biological ones so prevalent in this school subject. Finally, research that examines questions that arose out of this research such as why students did not want to participate in the study, why parents did not consent to their children participating, or why teachers were hesitant about allowing their students to participate would be beneficial for addressing how more participants could participate in research such as this.

Concluding Remarks

I have argued in this thesis that gender inequity exists in both co-educational and single-sex PE in BC. I have argued that in its attempts at legitimizing itself as a valid school subject PE has increasingly relied on scientific discourse. Because of the ease of measuring and improving performance outcomes in sport, its use as the primary curriculum in PE has intensified. With the use of sport is the inherent promotion of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity - aggression, competition, and physical strength. Within this framework, girls and boys are disadvantaged and put in a setting where they cannot use their bodies in ways that are empowering and that question gender inequity and gender stereotypes in the wider society. In order to make changes to PE in a way that will work towards gender equity, we must insist on a decrease in the use of sport in the traditional sense in PE curriculum. PE can be a site for resisting gender as a dualism and naturalized difference based on sex, but because of its gendered history it needs substantive changes and this will take time.

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APPENDIX A*

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA
CANADA V5A 1S6
Telephone: 604-291-3447
FAX: 604-268-6785

April 14, 2004

Ms. Tanya Noel
Graduate Student
Sociology & Anthropology
Simon Fraser University

Dear Ms. Noel:

**Re: Gender Equity and Physical Education in BC:
Re-thinking feminist debates on co-educational
versus single-sex classes**

The above-titled ethics application has been granted approval by the Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board, in accordance with Policy R 20.01, "Ethics Review of Research Involving Human Subjects".

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal Weinberg, Director
Office of Research Ethics

* For inclusion in thesis/dissertation/extended essays/research project report, as submitted to the university library in fulfillment of final requirements for graduation. Note: correct page number required.

Appendix B

Introduction Letter to Participants

Attention students:

November 2001

My name is Tanya Noel and I am a graduate student at Simon Fraser University in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. As part of my studies, I am conducting research about students and their experiences and thoughts in regards to Physical Education. Students' thoughts are important as they hold a unique insight into the education experience. Education is an important part of all of our lives and research such as this can add to the information used to suggest changes in education that reflect students' needs. I am looking for volunteer students from grade nine or ten PE in your school to participate in this research.

The research consists of one-to-one interviews with students and myself, which will be held during your lunch break at your school. The interviews will take about half an hour. What the interview will be is a conversation about PE and whatever is said will be confidential. Your names will not be given out or linked to information that you share with me. The information from the various interviews will be put together to form the data I will be using to write up my research report. I welcome any student from grade nine or ten PE to participate in this study.

If you would like more information you can contact me at tdnoel@sfu.ca. If you are interested, please fill out the bottom of this letter and bring it back to you PE teacher. Then, you will receive two consent forms that must be signed. One is for students to sign and one is for your parents/guardians to sign, both must be signed in order for you to participate. These may also be returned to your teacher. Together we will choose a day in the next couple of weeks that works best for us to meet and discuss PE. I look forward to discussing your thoughts and experiences in regards to PE with you.

Tanya Noel

I am interested in participating in this study with Tanya Noel

Name: _____ Date: _____

Best days to meet: _____ Lunch Block: _____

Appendix C

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent by Students to Participate in a Research Project

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of participants. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received and read this document, which describes the procedures and benefits of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Description of procedures:

I would like you to participate in a discussion of your thoughts and experiences in regards to physical education. The study will take place at school and will involve an interview with students on a one-to-one basis for approximately one hour. The interviews will be audio taped, with the permission of participants, to ensure that all proceedings are faithfully recorded. The aim of this research is to gain students' perspectives on the experience of participating in secondary school PE.

Confidentiality:

Only TANYA NOEL will have access to the audiotapes and any written transcripts generated from the interview. These items will be securely stored. Any information resulting from the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Also, participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Contact:

You may register any complaint you might have about the project with the researcher named above or with Dr. Ellen Gee, Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology Department of Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive SFU Burnaby BC V5A 1S6.

You may obtain a copy of a summary of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting Tanya Noel at tdnoel@sfu.ca or by mailing requests to Tanya Noel c/o Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 8888 University Drive SFU Burnaby BC V5A 1S6.

Consent:

Your parent(s)/guardian(s) have been asked if it is OK for you to participate, but it is also up to you. You do not have to be part of this discussion, and if you do choose to participate, you can stop at any time.

Having been asked by TANYA NOEL of the Sociology and Anthropology Department of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project, I have read the procedures specified in this document. I understand the procedure to be used in this study. I also understand that I may withdraw my participation in this project at any time. I agree to participate by taking part in individual interviews with the researcher at my school.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

WITNESS: _____

ONCE SIGNED, A COPY OF THIS
CONSENT FORM AND A
SUBJECT FEEDBACK FORM WILL BE
PROVIDED TO THE STUDENTS.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

**Informed Consent for Minors by parent, Guardian
and/or Other Appropriate Authority to Participate
in a Research Project**

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of participants. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures of the proposed research. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received and read this document, which describes the procedures and benefits of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Description of procedures:

The study will take place at school and will involve an interview with students on a one-to-one basis for approximately one hour. The interviews will be audio taped, with the permission of participants, to ensure that all proceedings are faithfully recorded. The aim of this research is to gain students' perspectives on the experience of participating in secondary school PE.

This research project is undertaken by Tanya Noel, supervised by Dr. Arlene McLaren, of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University.

Confidentiality:

Only TANYA NOEL will have access to the audiotapes and any written transcripts generated from the interview. These items will be securely stored. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study.

Contact:

Any complaint about the project may be brought to the researcher named above or to Dr. Ellen Gee, Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology Department, Simon Fraser University. 8888 University Drive SFU, Burnaby BC V5A 1S6, Telephone: 291-3144.

You may obtain a copy of a summary of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting Tanya Noel at tdnoel@sfu.ca or by mailing requests to Tanya Noel c/o Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 8888 University Drive SFU Burnaby BC V5A 1S6.

Consent:

I understand the procedures in this study. I also understand that my child's participation is entirely voluntary and that he/she has the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

As parent/guardian of _____, I consent to her/his participation in this study.

NAME (please print): _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

ONCE SIGNED, A
COPY OF THIS
CONSENT FORM
WILL BE
PROVIDED TO
YOU.

Appendix D

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Subject Feedback Form

Completion of this form is **OPTIONAL**, and is not a requirement of participation in the project. However, if you have served as a participant in a project, and would care to comment on the procedures involved, you may complete the following form and send it to the Chair, University Research Ethics Review Committee. All information received will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

Name of Principal Investigator: Tanya Noel

Title of Project: Student's Perspectives of Secondary School PE

Department: Sociology and Anthropology

Did you sign an Informed Consent Form before participating in this project? _____

Were there significant deviations from the originally stated procedures? _____

I wish to comment on my involvement in the above project, which took place:

(Date) (Place)

Comments: _____

Completion of this section is optional

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

This form should be sent to the Chair, University Research Ethics Review Committee, c/o the Office of Vice-President, Research, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, V5A 1S6.

Appendix E

Interview Questions

1. If you could design your ideal PE class what would it be?
 - a) What do you think most boys would say?
 - b) What do you think most girls would say?
2. How do you feel about participating in PE as it is? Why?
3. Do you see yourself taking PE as an elective in your remaining years in high school?
Why/Why not?
4. What do you like about PE?
5. What do you dislike about PE?
6. How important do you think PE is as a school subject? Why?
7. Are you comfortable in a single-sex atmosphere for PE? Why/why not? What is it about it that you like/dislike?
8. Are you comfortable in PE as a co-ed class? Why/why not?
9. Which do you prefer, co-ed or single-sex?
10. What kinds of sports do you like to participate in?
11. Are there sports you'd like to participate in, but haven't been able to? Why is that?
12. Have you participated in sports in which you are the only one or one of few boys/girls?
Why or why not?
13. Are there sports that only boys/girls participate in? What might some examples be?
14. Are there sports/activities that girls/boys seem to be better at or enjoy more? Why do you think that is?