

# Secondary Students' Perceptions of Enjoyment in Physical Education: An American and English Perspective

Mark A. Smith and Peter E. St. Pierre

## Abstract

*The purpose of the study was to identify American and English secondary students' determinants of enjoyment in physical education using Scanlan and Lewthwaite's (1986) Sport Enjoyment Model as a theoretical and conceptual framework. Open-ended semi-structured interviews, lasting between 30 and 75 minutes were conducted. Using open and axial coding, four themes and five categories representing student perceptions of enjoyment were established. These themes were: teacher impact, class activities, student determinants, and the physical education environment. Based on the findings, implications for practice are presented.*

Researchers have identified children's physical activity participation variables which impact students' perceptions of physical education (Laws & Fisher, 1999; Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Rice, 1988; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007; Wang and Biddle, 2001). The most influential determinant of students' holding positive attitudes toward both physical education (Luke and Sinclair, 1991; Rice, 1988) and physical activity (Avery & Lumpkin, 1987; McKenzie, Alcaraz, & Sallis, 1994; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985) has been shown to be enjoyment. Additionally, enjoyment has also been identified as an important element in the development of positive attitudes (Avery & Lumpkin, 1987; McKenzie, et al., 1994; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985) and continued participation (Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Gould & Horn, 1984; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986) in physical education, physical activity and sport.

However, enjoyment is an elusive concept that is difficult to articulate and is individualistic

(Biddle and Chatzisarantis, 1999). Constructs of enjoyment have been examined in an attempt to identify its determinants (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001; Goudas & Biddle 1993; Portman, 1995; Ryan, Fleming & Maina, 2003). Researchers have also identified the teacher (Carlson, 1995; Hassandra, Gouda & Chroni, 2003; Ryan, Fleming & Maina, 2003), choice (Carlson, 1995; Dyson 1995), perceived competency (Carroll and Loumidis, 2001; Dyson, 1995; McKiddie & Maynard, 1997; Ntoumanis, 2001; Portman, 1995) and instructional strategy (Mitchell, 1996) as important indicator variables and determinants of enjoyment in educational contexts. Therefore, enjoyment as a construct must be increasingly understood if we are to understand children's initial and continued engagement in physical activity (Garn & Cothran, 2006). Physical education is of particular interest since it continues to be a critical component of a youth's educational involvement in physical activity and has been shown to impact future exercise habits (Coakley and White, 1992).

## Theoretical Perspective

Enjoyment has been described as a "positive affective response to the sport experience that reflects generalized feelings such as pleasure, liking, and fun" (Scanlan & Simons, 1992, pp. 203-204). With enjoyment being a factor that influences student participation in physical education, sport and physical activity, scholars have often linked enjoyment to intrinsic motivation, (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985), while others believe that enjoyment of sport is broader than intrinsic motivation and goes beyond

feelings of competence and control (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan & Simons, 1992). Additionally, it is imperative that research examining enjoyment has a conceptual and theoretical framework, because a lack of one limits researchers' ability to understand and systematically explain it (Garn and Cothran, 2006). The most popular model, the *sport enjoyment model* (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan & Simons, 1992), conceptually frames this study. The model frames sport enjoyment using intrinsic and extrinsic factors and achievement and non-achievement variables creating a four quadrant design:

Intrinsic-Achievement (*Competence and control related to attainment of mastery goals*)

Extrinsic-Achievement (*Competence and control derived from other people*)

Intrinsic-Nonachievement (*Movement sensations and competition emotion*)

Extrinsic-Nonachievement (*Nonperformance aspects such as affiliation*)

Examining enjoyment of physical education through the sport enjoyment model enhances physical education teachers' ability to design, organize and orientate classes to maximize enjoyment, and by association promote physical activity

### Significance of the Study

Research has only "broken the surface" of what determinants students believe enhance and/or detract from enjoyable physical education experiences. In part, this has been a result of the researchers primarily employing quantitative designs and data collection methods (i.e. inventories, questionnaires and surveys). Goudas and Biddle (1993) stated their results provided "some insights" into enjoyment in physical education, and suggested that in subsequent research there is a "need for more in-depth studies with various age groups to examine sources of enjoyment in physical education" (p. 148). For example, Garn & Cothran (2006) examined constructs of enjoyment from a similar theoretical perspective

as this study; however, they also used a quantitative research design and examined college undergraduate students' perspectives of enjoyment, not qualitative methods and middle school students. One limitation of qualitative research is the difficulty in generalizing the results to other settings (Creswell, 2005). However, an in-depth qualitative study can provide detailed explanations of enjoyment determinants of the student interviewed, which in turn can be inferred to other physical education students and educational contexts.

In addition to an in-depth study of enjoyment from a student perspective, this study examined constructs of enjoyment for both English and American students. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to identify and examine students' perceptions of enjoyment in physical education and compare perceptions of enjoyment at the secondary level in England and the United States of America.

### Methods

#### *Participants and Settings*

Based on knowledge of the school districts, schools, and physical education departments, two schools were asked to participate; one in America and one in England. Both school sites were chosen after onsite observations and informal interviews with the respective physical education teachers and principals. The selected schools both implemented comparable physical education programs [multi-activity with 1-2 week units], allowed full access to the physical education department and school, and were willing to involve a student grade level. The participating schools were a rural High School (14-18 years of age) located in North Carolina, USA and a semi-rural secondary comprehensive school (11-18 years of age) in Berkshire, England. Following the selection of each school site, a comparable and appropriate grade level was selected. In both schools at age 14-15 [grade 9 in America, and year 10 in England] students were able to select

elective classes. Additionally, the students had progressed through mandatory physical education programs, thus having a variety of physical education experiences. All participating students in 9th grade or year 10 completed and provided parent consent and student assent.

Several purposeful sampling techniques were used to reduce the initial populations from 232 American students and 253 English students, to fifteen students from each school with positive attitudes of physical education. Students with positive attitudes were purposefully selected to examine constructs of enjoyment since it was hypothesized that they would equally derive enjoyment from all four quadrants of Scanlan and colleagues sport enjoyment model, and also test a common assumption that positive attitudes of students' equals only enjoyable experiences. Additionally, research to date has failed to identify determinants that enhance and detract from enjoyment from middle school students who have a positive attitude towards physical education. The main sampling technique that was used to reduce the initial population was a three-part survey. The first section of the survey utilized Jones's (1988) 25 item Likert-scale questionnaire that identified student attitudes toward physical education. The second section used Carlson's (1994) student identification scale which identifies student's attitudes towards physical education. In section three the students were asked to elaborate on their participation in physical activity. On the completion of the survey, criterion-based analysis resulted in each student receiving an attitudinal score, and enabled the participant pool to be reduced to forty students at each location that had a positive view of physical education.

A second open-ended survey was then distributed to identify students that not only had positive attitudes of physical education but could also provide detailed responses to open-ended questions. A basic descriptive analysis of the survey based on 'depth of response' and 'answer appropriateness' reduced the population to thirty

students, fifteen students in each school. This number was selected largely due to time constraints, availability at each location (8 Males and 7 Females from England; 6 Males and 9 Females from America) and expected data saturation. Only 28 interviews were conducted due to participant absences during the interview phase of data collection.

#### *Data Collection*

All student interviews were conducted by the researchers and used a semi-structured interview protocol. For example, each interview started by engaging the students in an informal conversation about their day, sport, or topic of choice and transitioned to the topic of enjoyment and physical education. When the subject of enjoyment was introduced, the student was asked about specific experiences and examples that had either positively or negatively affected their enjoyment of physical education. Based on the student's initial responses and insights gained from the student's second survey, the researcher probed for more in-depth descriptions. The interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and were held during the student's physical education class. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

#### *Data Analysis*

All the interview transcripts were analyzed using open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The first step in the process is to openly code the transcript data or look across the transcripts for comments that are conceptually similar, thus developing categories and themes. Once an initial open coding process had been conducted, each transcript was re-read, coded, and re-coded by continually interpreting and making meaning of the interview data. The second process of analysis is called axial coding; making sense and explaining the links of the data within each determined category. This step includes the process of distinguishing and examining relationships within the category, ultimately outlining ways that categories relate to each other. The inter-

view data from British and American students were analyzed within and across cultures.

To ensure trustworthiness, the verification procedures of member checking and peer debriefing were employed (Creswell, 2005). Importantly, debriefing occurred in the respective country with individuals familiar with each schools' cultural climate, including university professors, teachers, and local community members. All interviewed students were provided with a copy of their transcript. Only two students returned their interview transcripts, both modified for grammar, but were not altered conceptually.

### Findings

The data analysis of the students' responses produced eleven categories distributed across the four themes of: (a) Teacher impact; (b) Student Characteristics; (c) Class activities and Content; and, (d) The physical education environment. It is important to note that based on data analysis, both the American and English students' responses will be reported as one population since they identified the same determinants of enjoyment and provided very similar justifications for each determinant.

#### Teacher Impact

Many of the student responses regarding enjoyment discussed indicators that both detracted and contributed to enjoyable experiences in physical education. For example, 24 students indicated the teacher was of central importance of the physical education experience. Following further analysis, the teachers' influence was distributed into three main categories, teacher's attitude and personality, teacher/student interaction, and instructional strategy.

#### *Teachers Attitude and Personality*

Teacher's enthusiasm, caring, sense of humor, and outgoing personality were all traits that students felt made physical education enjoyable. Students believed that enjoyment was enhanced when teachers possessed enthusiasm for teaching

and the subject of physical education itself. Enthusiasm as discussed by the students related to the teacher's outward display of passion and excitement for teaching. One British male student said "when a teacher is enthusiastic ... he makes it more enjoyable." Additionally, one American female student commented, "If I was a teacher, I would try and act like it's fun because if students saw that you were having fun at it, they would say 'that looks fun, I want to have a go'."

As with enthusiasm, teachers who had a caring persona influenced students' enjoyment levels. One female English student discussed a negative physical education experience about a teacher perceived by her to be less than caring,

She was more like an army drill sergeant or something. Everything had to go well, and she didn't care about what kids think. All she did was get one class out, get a new class in, get them out and get a new class in.

As noted, students from both sides of the Atlantic alluded to the importance of teacher's having a good personality when discussing their own perceived levels of enjoyment, including having a "good sense of humor," were "frequently funny" and were "entertaining."

#### *Teacher and Student Interaction*

Interactions between teachers and the students were also seen as an important source of enjoyment. Interestingly, both verbal and nonverbal teacher/student interactions were discussed as mediators. Several students expressed that enjoyment of their physical education classes increased when teachers actively participated in the class activities, a determinant that goes against advocated best practices (NASPE, 1998). One English male student noted "it was fun when teachers showed us how to do it, then joined in and played games with us." An American female student noted "I like it when the teacher plays with us." These views were substantially supported through the interviews with more than two thirds of the

students expressing that they enjoyed the teacher actively participating. However, even when probed, students' were unable to provide specific examples related to activities, situations and specific teacher actions.

Through positive and negative responses, students indicated that verbal interaction between students and teachers also impacted enjoyment. The teacher's ability to communicate effectively, provide encouragement, and provide positive feedback were all seen as important determinants of enjoyment. One American male student noted, "Enjoyment in PE would be improved if there was more communication between us and the teacher." In discussing the teacher's ability to encourage students in a constructive and productive manner, one male English student stated, "let them [students] know that they only need to do their best, they don't need to beat other people. When people get stuck [made fun of], it makes them enjoy it less. ...If they're not doing well, let them know that it's ok." In summarizing the important roles the teacher played in student enjoyment, a negative story told by a British male student may indeed say it best. He discussed one particular class where the attitude, personality, and enthusiasm of the teachers, as well as his interaction with the students, proved to be a negative experience that not only affected his enjoyment of that class, but of physical education in general. He noted,

When you're outside playing rugby, it's raining and freezing cold, and the teacher is in all his wet proof stuff and under an umbrella, you feel really down. Then when the teacher keeps saying, "keep going you will warm-up if you keep moving", then physical education is not fun and not enjoyable.

#### *Instructional Strategy*

The students identified the level and style for which an activity was taught affected their enjoyment of physical education. In discussing the method of delivery, one American male student said,

Enjoyment depends on how they teach, because certain teachers are really into being a drill sergeant, which is boring. But some teachers are really interested in group activities. This makes it easier to learn and more fun to learn.

Additionally, 18 of the interviewed students noted the method of instruction impacted their perceived enjoyment level of the class. Students also discussed their dislike in general for activities that placed public emphasis on performance. For example, "performing in front of my friends", and "being asked to give a demonstration in front of the whole class," were seen as factors that negatively impacted enjoyment. In addition, strategies that allowed peer interaction and group work were seen to positively influence enjoyment.

The level at which the lesson or subject was presented was another variable that students discussed as impacting their enjoyment of physical education. One male English student highlighted the need for task differentiation based on ability as a factor that could enhance enjoyment. He commented,

For a student who is excellent they [teachers] set tasks that are too easy. For students' that are not very good they set them too hard. I think it affects enjoyment because if it is too easy, you can get bored and if it's too hard it is not fun because you can't do it. I think that they [teachers] should try and cater for all different abilities levels. ...I remember, in one lesson we had to run a mile, for some people its fine but for some people it is hard. I don't think it's fair to make people run that far if they can't do it, and if someone can do more, then they should be allowed to.

According to the students in this study, teachers played an integral role in their potential enjoyment of physical education. The perceived personality and attitude of the teacher by the students influenced the level of enjoyment they felt in physical education, including the teachers'

attitude towards the subject and the students themselves. The teacher's ability to organize and differentiate teaching and interact both verbally and non-verbally with students were seen as important factors. A teacher that is interactive with students, who cares and is enthusiastic impacts students' enjoyment of physical education.

### **Student Characteristics**

The impact of the students themselves, their interactions, and determinants of self, also affected their enjoyment of physical education. Two main themes were identified within the student responses. The first theme discussed is the concept of the individual student's perception of their own Perceived Competence and Ability. The second theme links enjoyment to Social Interactions with friends and peers.

#### *Perceived Competence and Ability*

When a student is asked to perform a skill or a task, the success of that performance is often determined by the student's ability to perform that task. Physical education is a subject where academic performance is public. Fourteen students referred to "public" performances and demonstrations as "scary," "intimidating" and "not fun," thus detracting from enjoyment. In contrast, one American male student found it enhanced enjoyment, he commented, "I like performing skills and stuff in front of the class – its fun." Closely linked to public performances of a task are students' perceptions of task difficulty in relation to their own perceived competence and ability. Twenty-two out of the twenty-eight students believed their own personal competence affected their enjoyment both positively and negatively of not only physical education but also physical activity. For example one British female student stated "if people are not good at sports and they don't do well at it, it can turn them off PE. Some people also make fun of others if they can't do stuff right, sometimes it makes people just give up." Another American female noted "I don't enjoy PE when I can't do it well." In

contrast, just over 35% of the students commented on the notion that at times they thought tasks and activities were easy and made physical education boring.

Being able to perform a task to a self-perceived level of success influenced the enjoyment of that task. Students who perceived their ability and actual success to be below what they perceived as the teachers expectations and/or that of their peers decreased their enjoyment of the activity. In addition, students that perceived the task to be easy and not personally challenging felt that enjoyment was also diminished.

#### *Social Interactions*

Within the student examples discussing competencies and physical abilities, it was noticeable that peer acceptance played a pivotal role in student enjoyment. Sixteen students [9 American & 7 English] discussed the fact that it hurt their feelings when other students made fun or laughed at their inability to perform a task. Additionally, students suggested negative peer feedback also decreased enjoyment. In contrast, students noted that positive interactions with fellow classmates enhanced their enjoyment levels.

In discussing the positive influence of peer interactions, students expressed that getting to interact and socialize with their friends increased enjoyment. Typical American and English student responses included, "It is good fun working with your friends" and "You can have a good laugh working with your mates." In particular, one student's testimony highlighted the importance of positive interactions with other students and strongly implied that it is not the activity that's primarily responsible for making physical education enjoyable, it is the social interaction itself. "What makes it [PE] enjoyable is playing with and against your friends, even if you don't do great, its still fun." However, negative interactions with classmates also detracted from enjoyment. A quote from one American female student not only supports the importance of creating positive intra-class relationships but also

links the notion of a student perceived competency and ability with student interactions, "Sometimes people are not good at some things. Sometimes it's me. It hurts when you can't do it, but it hurts even more when people laugh at you when you can't do it."

In summary, the students' perceptions of their own abilities were seen as important factors in enjoying physical education. Whether they believed they could perform the skill or task was further negatively influenced by peers either laughing at or making fun of student abilities. However, in general student interactions, especially those with friends, were seen as positive. Students enjoyed the ability to be active, socialize, and work with and against friends and classmates.

### **Class Activities and Content**

When analyzing the data, it was apparent that several distinct aspects of the activities or content of physical education affected student enjoyment. These factors included teamwork, challenge, competition and learning. Students indicated that activities that perpetuated enjoyment were team sports, such as soccer, basketball, rugby, netball, flag football, and field and floor hockey. Student responses relating to the concept of teamwork or the lack of teamwork were also seen to impact enjoyment. Comments included, "its fun working together and doing well," "I hate PE when people argue about silly stuff and blame each other," and "working as a team is fun when it is done well, it's not when done badly." However, student responses linked with activities were primarily sport specific and limited in depth.

Closely linked with sport and physical education, is the inherent notion of competition. As a construct of enjoyment, competition was largely seen as a factor that could lower or raise enjoyment levels dramatically. Although gender was not seen to impact enjoyment of physical education in other categories, the level of competition within physical education did make a slight difference. In general, male students saw competition as a positive and motivating factor

for participation. However, although female students commented on the positives of competition, they also discussed negative aspects. One noted "I like competition sometimes, but other times it can take away from the fun because you just want to play with friends not beat them."

In most cases, the content of a physical education curriculum consists of more than team sports. For example, based on self-reported response, the school in England allocated the following time per the National Curriculum recommended breadth of study activities for key stage 3 (age 11-14), Games 45%, Fitness 9%, Gymnastics 10%, Athletics (track and field) 18%, Outdoor & Adventure Activities 9%, and Dance 9%. Students that commented on the health and fitness components of a physical education curriculum linked the need of personal challenge with enjoyment. Personal challenge was expressed through the idea that testing yourself against your own personal best constitutes a challenge and that improving one's best and competing with oneself provides an increased sense of personal achievement. One American male student noted, "I enjoy them [fitness tests] because you can push yourself to do your best, you compete against yourself and not others."

Activities that were competitive, challenging, and involved teamwork were all areas that students believed impacted enjoyment. The most popular curriculum areas that fueled enjoyment were team based activities where students could compete and interact. Health and fitness components were additionally seen as intrinsically motivating when students were afforded the opportunity to compete against previous performances and personal standards, not other students. Additionally, 12 students [7 American & 5 English] believed that new and novel content increased enjoyment. However, several students did note that physical education classes that taught the same sports over extended periods became increasingly boring. One student said "it is fun when we do something new and different. If we do the same thing all the time it gets boring."

### **The Physical Education Environment**

The final theme, the environment, is contextually important as it directly references the holistic structure and context of the physical education program. However, it was discussed in general by the students. Grouping students during class and simply having physical education as a school subject were two environmental factors that affected enjoyment. Six students believed that stratifying students based on ability and skill level positively impacted enjoyment. One English male commented, "I think that it is better if the not so good students' are all together, because if they are with someone who excels in PE, they're going to find it hard to stay with them and not enjoy it". However, an English female voiced a different perspective about dividing students by ability, noting that, "The people in the lower groups might give up, as they might think I'm not good at this so why should I try, but I guess the good people like it because it ranks people."

Finally, the most favorable environmental factor that influenced enjoyment of physical education was the fact that it is physical education. Twenty-four of the students made reference to physical education being a change in physical setting from other school subjects and that it enabled students to be physically active and socialize. One American male student simply noted that "it [physical education] is better than sitting behind a desk all day or being stuck in a classroom."

Therefore, the physical education environment, when compared to the majority of classroom environments is unique in both its context and setting and is perceived by students as enjoyable. Perceptions of students in this study indicate that physical education as a subject had a novel learning environment that influenced enjoyment. Physical education teachers should embrace the uniqueness that physical education holds and maximize the differences such as movement and physical activity to contextual enjoyment.

At first glance, enjoyment in physical education seems to be self-evident, with

enjoyment of an activity being personal to the individual student and consisting of discrete elements. On the surface, determinants of enjoyment can be categorized and labeled in isolation, but in reality a multitude of elements must be combined to produce various depths of enjoyment. These discrete elements (the student, the teacher, the activities, and the environment) synthesized together can form a planning building block for teachers. It can be further hypothesized that when two, three and four determinants are perceived, enjoyment would be increased.

### **Discussion**

Physical education teachers have frequently expressed that student enjoyment is a rudimentary program goal (Rink, 2002), with the assumption that if students like physical education then they are more likely to be physically active after school and hopefully participate in physical activity for a lifetime. Research supports the notion that enjoyment plays an important role in continued participation in sports settings, and that positive and negative physical education experiences impact future participation (Coakley and White, 1992; White and Coakley, 1986).

The findings of this study provide further insights into not only the potential determinants of enjoyment but also the constructs behind them. Contrary to Goudas and Biddle's (1993) study, the teacher was seen by students to play an integral role in enjoyable experiences, a result consistent with Briggs (1994), who found significant correlations between enjoyment and perceived teacher behavior. Additionally, the study findings also affirm Carlson's (1994) conclusions that secondary students believed the teacher's ability to care, relate to, and understand students impacted whether they hated, tolerated or loved gym class. In Carlson's study, teacher personality, interaction ability, and attitude were viewed as factors that only detracted from the enhancement of enjoyment; in this study they also enhanced it.

Although the results of this study were based on students' perceptions, enjoyment consists of a

complex web of interrelated components. Interestingly, the students did not seem to associate the teacher with physical education as a whole, with the exception of instructional strategies, students primarily referred to the teacher's personal traits and behavior patterns. Student interactions with each other also influenced enjoyment levels. Students discussed interactions between peers and friends as important components of enjoyment, as well as positive interactions with their teachers. Overall, students viewed personal relationship factors, considered as extrinsic-nonachievement, as a strong construct of enjoyment. These findings, in part, support Stein, Keller and Carpenter's (1991) recommendations that friendship and positive teacher/coach relationships can aid in children's enjoyment of physical education.

Linked with students' beliefs about social interactions were the students' perceived abilities. Perceived competence and personal challenge are intrinsic-achievement motivating factors which influences student enjoyment. Researchers have previously identified perceived competence as an important factor of physical activity (Brustad, 1993; Wang & Biddle, 2001; Williams & Gill, 1995), and physical education (Carroll & Loumidis, 2001; Goudas, Biddle & Fox, 1994; Goudas, Dermitzaki & Bagiatis, 2000; Luke & Sinclair, 1991; Portman, 1995). The results of this study further emphasize the importance of student's perceived ability (intrinsic-achievement) of a presented task whether it is too difficult or too easy, in relation to their perceived enjoyment. Additionally, student responses indicated that the way the content was delivered impacted their perceived competence (intrinsic-nonachievement) and therefore enjoyment.

Surprisingly, none of students identified winning (intrinsic-nonachievement) as a variable of enjoyment in physical education, thus supporting the results of previous sports enjoyment studies (Briggs, 1994; Brustad, 1988; Kimiecik, Allison & Duda, 1986; Roberts & Duda, 1984). However the findings did identify

that students' felt being able to compare their performances with previous performance were enjoyable. The notion that personal challenge is a stronger indicator of enjoyment (intrinsic-achievement) than winning or game outcome in both sport and physical education (extrinsic-achievement) has significant implications for teachers designing educational experiences (Briggs, 1994; Dyson, 1995; Ntoumanis, 2002; Roberts and Duda 1984; Wankel and Sefton, 1989).

So what can teachers do to maximize student enjoyment? Additionally, how can teachers develop enjoyable practices that empower students to be active for a lifetime? For the students interviewed in this study the teacher was viewed as an influential construct of enjoyment. Findings from studies in sport psychology (Scanlan, & Lewthwaite, 1986) support the impact that non-achievement-extrinsic factors, including teachers, have on enjoyment. Although the teacher was seen as a major factor in the development of enjoyable learning experiences, it is also important to determine what each individual student perceives as beneficial and enjoyable. The perceived ability and perceived competency of the individual student also played an integral role in derived enjoyment. A teacher that wants students to enjoy physical education and physical activity must diligently attempt to understand the needs, desires and expectations of the students, and create environments that enhance positive interactions through appropriate and effective teaching practices, or as Wang and Liu (2007), noted, "PE must provide an enjoyable experience such that students do not feel they were taking part in PE because of external rules or feelings of guilt" (p. 159). For example, only one student commented that demonstrating in front of his peers was fun, where a number of students found public displays of ability to be far from enjoyable; an interesting finding considering the 28 students that were interviewed had positive attitudes towards physical education. Additionally, of instructional importance are the students' comments that directly relate enjoyment to negative and hurtful

peer interactions. A teacher that wants to increase student enjoyment might want to consider incorporating instructional strategies that focus on the affective learning domain and positive student interactions, before focusing on public displays of performance. In addition, instructional goals and objectives should focus on intrinsic achievement and nonachievement factors and extrinsic non-achievement components of instruction. Lesson objectives and instructional environments should be limited in relation to extrinsic-achievement factors.

### Conclusion

Researchers have identified that enjoyment is both an important component of students' positive attitudes towards physical education, and an important aim of physical education teachers. The students interviewed did not talk of winning as being a major influence (extrinsic-achievement). Instead they referred to positive relationships and interaction with teachers and peers (extrinsic-nonachievement) and perceived competence (intrinsic-achievement).

The findings of this study partially confirm what many experienced and effective teachers have continuously advocated—students enjoy physical education classes that employ appropriate teaching practices centered on the needs of students. Teachers need to provide students with activities that are personally meaningful and which involve students in the learning process, so they feel like they are active participants (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). Although physical education has the potential to effectively justify its existence through providing positive and enjoyable learning experiences that motivate individuals to be physically active, it also has the potential to continue to alienate future generations through ill-advised practices. The results of this study strongly support Fairclough's (2003) conclusions that relationships between psychological outcomes and physical activity within physical education must be increasingly researched in light of determining effective teaching

approaches. It is imperative that future research examining student perceptions of enjoyment should increasingly attempt to understand the link between enjoyment and continued physical activity habits of today's youth.

### REFERENCES

- Avery, M., & Lumpkin, A. (1987). Student's perceptions of physical education objectives. *Journal of Teaching Physical in Education*, 7(1), 5-11.
- Biddle, S.J., & Chatzisarantis, N.L. (1999). Motivation for a physically active lifestyle through physical education. In Y. Vandeen Auweele, F. Bakker, S. J. Biddle, M. Durand, & R. Seiler (Eds.), *Psychology for physical educators* (pp. 5–26). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Briggs, J. (1994). An investigation of participant enjoyment in the physical activity instructional setting. *Physical Educator*, 51(4) 213- 221.
- Brustad, R.J. (1988). Affective outcomes in competitive sport: The influence of intrapersonal and socialization factors. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10, 307-321.
- Brustad, R.J. (1993). Youth in sport: Psychological considerations. In R.N. Singer, M. Murphey, & L. K. Tennant (Eds.), *Handbook of research on sport psychology* (pp. 695-717). New York: Macmillan.
- Carlson, T.B. (1994). Why students' hate, tolerate or love gym: A study of attitude formation and associate behaviors in physical education (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1994). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 55, 502A.
- Carlson, T.B. (1995). We hate gym: Student alienation from physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 14(4), 467-477.
- Carrol, B., & Loumidis, J. (2001). Children's perceived competence and enjoyment in physical education and physical activity outside

- school. *European Physical Education Review*, 7(1), 24-43.
- Coakley, J., & White, A. (1992). Making decisions: Gender and sport participation among British adolescents. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 9(1), 20-35.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. C. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2005). *Qualitative inquiry and research design (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Dyson, B.P. (1995). Students' voices in two alternative elementary physical education programs. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 14(4), 394-407.
- Fairclough, S. (2003). Physical activity and perceived competence and enjoyment during high school physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 8(1), 5-18.
- Garn, A.C., & Cothran, D.J. (2006). The fun factor in physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 25, 281-297.
- Gill, D.L., Gross, J.B., & Huddleston, S. (1983). Participation motives in youth sports. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 14(1), 1-14.
- Goudas, M., & Biddle, S. (1993). Student perceptions of enjoyment in physical education. *Physical Education Review*, 16(2), 145-150.
- Goudas, M., Biddle, S., & Fox, F. (1994). Perceived locus of causality, goal orientations, and perceived competence in school physical education classes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 64, 453-463.
- Goudas, M., Dermizaki, I., & Bagiatis, K. (2000). Predictors of students' intrinsic motivation in school physical education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 15, 271-280.
- Gould, D., & Horn, T. (1984). Participation motivation in young athletes. In J.M. Silva and R. S. Weinburg (Eds.). *Psychological foundations of sport* (pp. 359-370). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hassandra, M., Gouda, M., & Chroni, S. (2003). Examining factors associated with intrinsic motivation in physical education: A qualitative approach. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 4, 211-223.
- Jones, B.A. (1988). A scale to measure the attitudes of school students towards their lessons in physical education. *Educational Studies*, 14(1), 51-63.
- Kimiecik, J.C., Allison, M. T., & Duda, J.L. (1986). Performance satisfaction, perceived competence and game outcome: The competitive experience of boy's club youth. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 17, 255-268.
- Laws, C., & Fisher, R. (1999). Students' interpretations of physical education. In C. A. Hardy & M. Mawer (Eds.). *Learning and teaching in physical education* (pp. 23-37), London: Routledge.
- Luke, M.D., and Sinclair, G.D. (1991). Gender differences in adolescents' attitudes toward school physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 11(1), 31-46.
- McKenzie, T.L., Alcaraz, J.E., & Sallis, J.F. (1994). Assessing children's liking for activity units in an elementary school physical education curriculum. *Journal of Teaching Physical Education*, 13(3), 206-215.
- McKiddie, B., & Maynard, I. W. (1997). Perceived competence of schoolchildren in physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 16, 324-339.
- Mitchell, S.A. (1996). Relationships between perceived learning environment and intrinsic motivation in middle school physical education, *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 15(3), 369-383.

- National Association for Sport and Physical Education. (1998). *Appropriate practices for high school physical education*. Reston, VA: Author.
- Ntoumanis, N. (2001). A self-determination approach to the understanding of motivation in physical education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 71*, 225-242.
- Ntoumanis, N. (2002). Motivational clusters in a sample of British physical education classes. *Psychology of sport and exercise, 3*, 177-194.
- Portman, P.A. (1995). Who is having fun in physical education classes? Experiences of sixth-grade students in elementary and middle schools. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 14*(4), 445-453.
- Rice, P.L. (1988). Attitudes of high school students towards physical education activities, teachers and personal health. *The Physical Educator, 45*(2), 94-99.
- Rink, J.E. (2002). *Teaching physical education for learning* (4th Ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Roberts, G.C., & Duda, J.L. (1984). Motivation in sport: The mediating role of perceived ability. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 6*, 312-324.
- Ryan, S., Fleming, D., & Maina, M. (2003). Attitudes of middle school students toward their physical education teachers and classes. *Physical Educator, 60*(2), 28-42.
- Sallis, J.F., & McKenzie, L. (1991). Physical education's role in public health. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 62*(2), 124-137.
- Scanlan, T.K., & Lewthwaite, R. (1986). Social psychological aspects of competition in male youth sport participants: IV. Predictors of enjoyment. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 8*, 25-35.
- Scanlan, T.K., & Simons, J.P. (1992). The construct of sport enjoyment. In G.C. Roberts (Ed.), *Motivation in sport and exercise* (pp. 199-215). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Silverman, S. & Subramaniam, P. R. (1999). Student attitude towards physical education and physical activity: A review of measurement issues and outcomes. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 19*, 96-124.
- Stein, G.L., Keller, B., & Carpenter, P.J. (1991). Helping children enjoy physical activity experiences. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 62*(8), 17-19.
- Strauss A., & Corbin J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Subramaniam, P.P., & Silverman, S. (2007). Middle school students' attitudes toward physical education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*, 602-611.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Healthy People 2010*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- Wang, C. K., & Biddle, S.J. (2001). Young people's motivational profiles in physical activity: A cluster analysis. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 23*, 1-22.
- Wang, C.K., & Liu, W.C. (2007). Promoting enjoyment in girls' physical education. The impact of goals, beliefs, and self-determination. *European Physical Education Review, 13*, 145-164.
- Wankel, L.M., & Kreisel, P.S. (1985). Factors underlying enjoyment in youth sports: Sport and age group comparisons. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 7*, 51-64.
- Wankel, L. M., & Sefton, J. M. (1989). A season long investigation of fun in youth sports. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 11*(4), 355-366.
- White, A., & Coakley, J. (1986). *Making Decisions*. London, England: Sports Council.

Williams, L., & Gill, D.L. (1995). The role of perceived competence in the motivation of physical activity. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 17(4), 363-378.

---

Dr. Mark Smith is on the faculty at the University of Northern Colorado and Dr. Peter E. St. Pierre teaches at Kennesaw State University (Georgia).