In its simplest characterization, the evolution of research on teaching can be described as a gradual shift in pursuit, away from “rigid prescriptions of effectiveness” (Rink, 2003, p. 166), and toward an understanding of how context, with its innumerable variations, influences the direction and outcome of instructional events. One result of this shift is the emergence of a new research paradigm in physical education (PE) that highlights the mediating role of the learner in the teaching-learning process (Solmon, 2003). An increased focus on cognitive mediation variables in student learning brought student attitudes and perspectives into sharper relief as a viable and necessary topic of inquiry within the field.

Despite gaining legitimacy, PE research on student attitudes and perspectives has made relatively slow progress compared to research on other mediating process variables. For instance, in the *Handbook of Physical Education* (Kirk, Macdonald, & O’Sullivan, 2006), limited attention is given to the topic. Solmon (2006) only briefly mentions student attitudes in a single paragraph of her chapter on learner cognition. In Dyson’s (2006) chapter on student perspectives, he discusses the relative dearth of investigative attention given to such perspectives, citing various reasons such as time consuming qualitative methodologies needed to obtain in depth and accurate data that give authenticity to students’ voices. Since 2006 the rate of published studies on student attitudes and perspectives has risen somewhat; however, it is fair to say that the field is still faced with many more questions than answers concerning how students feel about, and view, PE.

This chapter is organized to provide an overview of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and empirical strands in published research on student attitudes and perspectives about PE since 2006. I will discuss issues and limitations involved with research in the domain, application of the current knowledge base to theory development and professional practice, and directions for future inquiry. Student perspectives and attitudes are broadly defined for this chapter as students’ viewpoints, opinions, and/or judgments (Dyson, 2006). While this definition is understood to reflect multiple dimensions of student affect, certain variables of relevance are excluded from this chapter since they are given more attention in other chapters of this volume. In particular, psychometric research on student motivation, values, interests, and preferences is not a focus of this chapter.
Major conceptual/theoretical perspectives

Affective learning theory

The study of student attitudes and perspectives rests within a multidimensional framework that can be broadly defined in terms of student affect. Affect includes attitudes, interests, biases, emotions, motivations, and other variables that together inform a student’s feelings and views related to a particular object or subject of concern (e.g., learning task, school subject, teacher). In the area of general education, Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia (1964) introduced a five-level taxonomy of affective learning that focuses on students’ developing relationships with class content. The two lower levels in the taxonomy, receiving and responding to class content, are defined by affective responses that require minimal engagement with the knowledge and skills taught in class. In PE, students at these levels might demonstrate receptivity to class content by dressing out for class, attending to the teacher, following the teacher’s directions, and staying on task. The three higher levels in the taxonomy, valuing, organizing, and characterization, are defined by affective responses that reflect an increasing willingness to accept and take ownership of the knowledge and skills being taught in class. In PE, students at these levels might show that they value class content by applying skills they learn in class to other physical activity contexts and electing to take other courses focusing on similar content. They organize their values in a way that internalizes and prioritizes the class content, such that their value of the knowledge and skills “successively and pervasively becomes part of the individual” (Krathwohl et al., 1964, p. 28). Krathwohl et al.’s model is based on the assumption that progression from lower levels to higher levels of affect is relatively linear, such that modifications in a student’s value for class content establish new relationships between the individual and the content that are relatively stable at each given level.

Webster, Mindrilà, and Weaver (2011, 2013) applied Krathwohl et al.’s (1964) work to examine high school students’ affective learning from an instructional communication perspective in a compulsory PE course. The researchers found support for a theoretical model that highlights the importance of the teacher’s communication of content relevance to students. Relevance was an influential factor for students electing to take similar courses in the future (considered to reflect higher order affective responses in Krathwohl et al.’s taxonomy) and, ultimately, having stronger intentions to use the knowledge and skills learned in class once the course was finished. In addition, distinct affective learning profiles were identified across the sample of students. For example, one group consisted of students with above average scores on all measures (e.g., perceived teacher communication, lower and higher order affective responses, behavioral intentions). This group was comprised mostly of boys, students who participated in organized sports, and students who reported engaging in free-time physical activity at least 2–3 times per week. Another group, which consisted of students with below average scores on all measures, was comprised mostly of girls, relatively fewer sports participants, and fewer students who engaged in free-time physical activity. Overall, a variable-centered approach to understanding affective learning in PE supported a general pattern of causal assumptions (e.g., perceived content relevance influences higher order affective responses, which in turn influence behavioral intentions), while a person-centered approach highlighted subgroups of learners who may require specially tailored pedagogical intervention to increase affective learning and maximize the impact of PE.
Attitude theory

Krathwohl et al.’s (1964) work can be thought of as an overarching theory of affective learning. Other theoretical perspectives in the domain focus more narrowly on specific components of student affect. In PE research, perhaps the most prominent example can be found in psychometric research on student attitude. The particular importance of attitudes in students’ affective learning can be placed within the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which focuses on the role of beliefs in goal-directed action. Specifically, three types of beliefs – behavioral, normative, and control – are proposed to underpin behavioral intentions. Behavioral beliefs inform an individual’s attitudes and are based on expected and evaluated outcomes of engaging in a particular behavior, such as trying a new learning task in class or being physically active in one’s free time. The more positive students’ expectations and evaluations for outcome behaviors, the more favorable their attitudes toward the behavior will be. Attitude is viewed as a key predictor of intentions to engage in the targeted behavior. A more favorable attitude is expected to lead to stronger behavioral intentions, which are theorized to directly influence actual behavior. This perspective is meaningful in PE because as students get older, their attitudes toward PE decline (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). Moreover, student attitudes may influence future participation in physical activity (Silverman & Subramaniam, 1999).

Investigators have drawn from various conceptions to quantitatively assess student attitudes in K-12 PE. Silverman and Subramaniam (1999) reviewed the literature on student attitudes in PE and concluded that numerous measurement issues, especially the use of measures that reflected a unidimensional and potentially narrow conception of attitude, confound the results of earlier studies. Subsequently, Silverman and his colleagues employed rigorous psychometric procedures to develop improved, validated attitude measures that assess multiple dimensions of the construct (Mercier & Silverman, 2014a; Phillips & Silverman, 2012; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2000). This work and studies that have used the measures support a dual-component conceptualization of attitude, which includes both an affective and a cognitive aspect (Mercier & Silverman, 2014b; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). For example, Mercier and Silverman (2014b) found that attitude scores were higher on cognitive versus affective factors in relation to fitness testing for high school students. Although students understood and valued the importance of fitness tests, they did not enjoy taking the tests. The development of valid and reliable attitude measures has distilled distinct elements of the construct that can be examined to refine theoretical application in research. Additionally, these measures have allowed for more robust quantitative investigations of student attitudes in PE, which have in turn strengthened the translatability of attitude research for practice.

Constructivist and critical perspectives

The study of student affect also has been approached using constructivist and critical perspectives on learning. Constructivism frames learning as an active, as opposed to a passive, process. Learners actively engage in relating new information to existing knowledge structures constructing meaningful subject matter understandings (Crotty, 2003). Interpretive research couched in constructivist principles attempts to unearth these subjective understandings. Critical inquiry situates students’ attitudes and perspectives amid historical, social, and political contexts, and foregrounds issues of equitability and justice in education (Crotty, 2003). Critically framed research seeks to reconcile educational disparities, usually as they relate to gender and race. While constructivist and critical epistemologies align with different agendas,
both perspectives promote increased awareness of each student as unique and central in the teaching-learning process.

Azzarito’s research examines PE student attitudes and perspectives drawing on constructivist and critical traditions grounded in feminist poststructuralism (e.g., Azzarito & Katzew, 2010; Azzarito & Solmon, 2006a, 2006b; Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Hill & Azzarito, 2012). In one study, for instance, interviews with high school girls and their teacher were analyzed to examine ways in which students participated in or resisted PE (Azzarito et al., 2006). The results indicated that, although girls enjoyed and valued physical activity, they negotiated their participation within PE when they perceived activities that limited their choices and favored boys. Another example of a critical lens in the domain is research within a student voice framework. Enright and O’Sullivan (2013) adopted this framework and used qualitative data sources to examine adolescent girls’ perspectives on popular physical culture. Findings showed that girls primarily derived their understanding about physicality from cultural artifacts that endorsed fad diets and cosmetics and reinforced negative self-perceptions and attitudes toward physical activity. Consistent with the student voice movement, this research challenges dominant discourses that surround and imbue educational policy and practice by seeking to authenticate and harness students’ voices as a means to reframe school reform (Cook-Sather, 2002).

Key research findings

In this section I will summarize prominent focus areas and key findings from recent research on student attitudes and perspectives in PE. Study purpose and findings are organized into three general themes, (a) affective concepts and dimensions, (b) student characteristics, and (c) program context and characteristics. These themes illustrate evolving facets of the knowledge base and coalesce organizing frameworks used in previous reviews of research on student attitudes and perspectives (Dyson, 2006; Silverman & Subramaniam, 1999; Solmon, 2003). Themes are not always mutually exclusive, as some emphases/findings are relevant to more than one theme. In addition, due to space limitations and the overall intent of this handbook, what follows is not designed to serve as a systematic review of the research literature, but rather as an overview of the developing knowledge base. The studies reviewed are intended to provide illustrative examples of each theme. I include brief descriptions of theoretical frameworks and methods used in the studies to punctuate commonly used scientific approaches within and across themes and to give transparency to the findings.

Affective concepts and dimensions

As discussed in the previous section, a number of theoretically driven quantitative studies were conducted using psychometric approaches to define and examine aspects of student affect. These studies demonstrate that affective learning is driven by both cognitive and affective factors. The studies by Silverman and colleagues (Mercier & Silverman, 2014a, 2014b; Phillips & Silverman, 2012; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2000, 2007) consistently supported a dual-component attitude construct, which included a cognitive component (i.e., perceived usefulness of the attitude object) and an affective component (i.e., perceived enjoyment related to the attitude object). These attitude components are conceptually similar to variables measured by Webster et al. (2011, 2013), including perceived content relevance (the extent to which the student feels the class content can satisfy personal interests and goals) and willingness to take additional PE courses (a higher order affective response in Krathwohl et al.’s (1964) taxonomy). Webster et al.’s (2011, 2013) studies found these variables were related, though distinct, and each variable
C. A. Webster

uniquely contributed to the construction of an affective learning typology among high school PE students.

The congruency between the affective attitude component (i.e., enjoyment) and higher order affective learning in Krathwohl et al.'s (1964) taxonomy (e.g., willingness to pursue additional learning within a subject area) reinforces other theoretical perspectives commonly applied in psychometric research on student cognition. For example, within self-determination theory, intrinsic self-regulation (being motivated purely through the enjoyment of doing an activity) is viewed as optimal for learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Similar to the ascent from lower to higher levels of affective response in Krathwohl et al.'s (1964) framework, the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation in self-determination theory is understood to reflect the gradual internalization of a particular value (such as for PE content) leading to increased enjoyment.

The psychometric studies discussed above highlight key components of affective learning. In tandem with these studies, research examining PE students' perspectives of learning has helped further to operationalize affective dimensions and processes. Prusak, Davis, Pennington and Wilkinson (2013) conducted a mixed-methods study of fifth and sixth grade students' attitudes toward a district-wide mandated PE program. Qualitative data revealed that perceptions of usefulness and enjoyment underpinning the students' attitudes were strengthened when the learning environment and class activities provided opportunities to socialize, were believed to have an impact on health knowledge and behaviors, and were well managed with an engaging teacher.

Several studies provide deeper insight into the nature of enjoyment as an affective response. Dismore and Bailey (2011) explored children's perceptions of enjoyment at Key Stage 2 (ages 7–11) and Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14) in one borough in England. Students' attitudes toward PE were based in conceptions of fun and enjoyment, and these conceptions changed as students transitioned from Stage 2 to Stage 3. Older students viewed fun as linked to challenge, whereas younger students viewed it in terms of pleasurable responses to playing games. In another study, Garn and Cothran (2006) investigated university students' conceptions of fun. Participants were asked to describe the most fun they ever had in K-12 PE. Results underscored the importance of task/skill challenge in conceptions of fun and also pointed to other important factors, including students' relationships with their teacher and classmates and competition (some participants liked competition and others did not). Research with secondary school students in the U.S. and England found similar results (Smith & St. Pierre, 2009). Researchers purposefully selected student participants on the basis of survey responses indicating positive attitudes toward PE. They interviewed them to learn their perceptions of subject enjoyment. Factors that emerged as related to enjoyment included the themes associated with the teacher (e.g., teacher-student interactions, instructional strategies), social interactions with peers, students' own conceptions of ability, class activities (e.g., challenging activities, competitive activities), and the PE environment (a different physical setting from other school subjects).

**Student characteristics**

In recent literature, the second general theme associated with student attitudes and perspectives focuses on student characteristics. Most studies in this theme focus on gender. A number of studies on student attitude and perspectives identified differences between boys and girls or focused on girls’ learning experiences. In psychometric studies discussed above, Mercier and Silverman (2014b) found that girls scored significantly lower than boys on the affective-feelings factor of their measure, which assessed attitude toward fitness tests. Webster et al. (2013) found that students who scored below average on all measures used to classify affective learning profiles were mostly girls.
Other psychometric studies also have reported results concerning gender. Nicaise, Cogerino, Bois, and Amorose (2006) examined high school students’ perceptions of teacher feedback and perceptions of physical competence. The association between perceived teacher feedback and perceived physical competence was stronger for girls than boys. A study by Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Fahlman, and Garn (2012) focused solely on girls’ learning experiences. High school girls from inner-city schools completed measures of relatedness toward teachers and peers in PE. The students and their PE teachers also completed measures of the students’ behavioral and emotional engagement. Results showed that relatedness played a direct role in both behavioral and emotional engagement in PE. Girls reporting higher relatedness were more likely to enthusiastically participate in class and exert effort in activities. In contrast, girls reporting lower relatedness were more likely to be bored and alienated in class. Students’ relationship with their PE teachers was especially prominent in predicting engagement. This research builds on studies by Garn and Cothran (2006) and Smith and St. Pierre (2009), which highlight the importance of positive relationships to student affect in PE.

Qualitative studies investigating gender issues have also tended to focus on girls’ experiences in PE. Gibbons and Humbert (2008) examined the coeducational PE experiences of middle school girls in Canada. Results indicated the girls felt their activity choices in PE were limited and did not usually enjoy the current offerings. The girls also perceived they were not given a sufficient chance to develop physical competence. Although they understood the importance of physical activity, they did not always value it, and felt the PE teacher favored boys more than girls.

Other studies conducted from a critical perspective resonate with these findings. Oliver, Hamzeh and McCaughtry (2009) conducted a feminist poststructuralist study of fifth grade girls’ self-identified barriers to participation in physical activity and helped the girls to negotiate those barriers to increase their physical activity opportunities. Findings revealed that the girls employed a “girly girl” façade to avoid participating in activities they did not like within male-dominated spaces. With the researchers’ help, girls co-constructed a curriculum of activities they found appealing. Stride (2014) reported similar results in a study examining South Asian Muslim girls’ PE-based experiences in England. Key themes reinforced Oliver et al’s (2009) concept that girls’ physicality is fluid; they choose to resist or embody dominant discourses and practices. Some girls took active agency in negotiating their PE/activity experiences. Social relations were important to their PE enjoyment and participation. Overall, critical perspectives of gender and affect in PE demonstrate that girls experience barriers, reflecting the embodiment of oppressive, male-dominant social structures. They, however, also at times devise shrewd strategies to survive and even thrive in class (Azzarito et al., 2006; Fisette, 2011, 2013).

Another focus of research in this theme is the attitudes and perspectives of students of different skills levels. For example, Bernstein, Phillips, and Silverman (2011) examined middle school PE students’ attitudes and perceptions of competitive activities. The researchers found that high skilled students enjoyed competing with their friends in PE because they felt it was fun and not high stakes like sport. Moderate skilled students enjoyed competitive activities when they perceived the activities as challenging and felt they were improving. Low skilled students enjoyed collaborating with their peers. However, findings also showed that low and moderate skilled students felt they had limited opportunities to learn because high skilled students dominated the activities. This research indicates that perceptions of enjoyment change with skill level.

Whereas earlier PE research emphasized low skilled students’ attitudes and perspectives (e.g., Carlson, 1995; Portman, 1995), recent studies have shifted attention to high skilled or gifted and talented students. Crance, Trohel, and Saury (2013) examined a highly skilled French male high school student’s experiences during two Sport Education-based PE handball
lessons. Findings indicated that he worked to negotiate the application of skillfulness (developed through participation in an elite sport context) to the particular constraints of school PE (e.g., his less skilled peers, school rules). His learning experience was ultimately positive, defined by confronting challenges to his sport-based identity within the class and reshaping his role from athlete to tutor.

While some high skilled students may learn to function successfully within and contribute to the goal structure of school PE, research on students identified as gifted and talented raises concerns that PE may not always provide the necessary support structure to accommodate these students’ learning needs. Operating within a student voice framework, Lamb and Lane (2013) investigated secondary students’ perspectives on being in the gifted and talented PE program in England. Focus groups and a questionnaire were used to collect data. While students expressed appreciation for being recognized for their athletic skills, they also felt a disconnect between program and school goals. Issues, such as the academic teachers’ perceptions (e.g., being unaware the students were in the gifted and talented program, having misgivings about the time commitment involved as a participant in the program) and the toll that being a program participant had on students’ social lives, led to a perceived tension between school and sport. When offered, mentoring helped to ease this tension; however, findings suggested that mentoring was limited and generally unstructured. Extending this work, Lamb and Aldous (2014) found that a university-based mentoring program, facilitated mostly through email exchanges, fostered an open dialogue between gifted and talented students and PE undergraduate student mentors and helped students balance academic work with PE participation. Although research on high skilled and gifted and talented students is still in its early stages, findings seem to suggest these students may perceive challenges to participating in school PE or balancing the demands of high level programming with other school responsibilities; however, these perceptions may be quelled with adequate external support.

Program context and characteristics

This theme consists of studies focused on students’ attitudes and perspectives related to PE program context and characteristics. Most research in this theme is qualitative and centers on urban settings. Dyson, DiCesare, Coviello, and Dyson (2009) examined students’ perspectives of middle school PE programs. Themes indicated students had both positive and negative perceptions of their programs. Positive perceptions were tied to socializing with peers, playing games, and feeling better from exercising. Negative perceptions were tied to overcrowded gyms, repetitive and boring lessons, gender inequity, and insufficiently challenging content. Urban students’ perceptions of uninteresting or meaningless curriculum content also were evident in a study by James and Collier (2011). These researchers used a classroom ecology framework to examine an elementary PE class. Results showed that the teacher’s management and instructional systems were weak and students perceived the content to have little relevance.

Some research has identified ways to improve the quality of urban PE programs. In a study with inner city teachers and children, Holt, Sehn, Spence, Newton, and Ball (2012) found that having a specialist teacher, establishing clear expectations during the lesson, and promoting children’s perceptions of choice were important components of positive youth development. Flory and McCaughtry (2011) also addressed issues of meaningful learning experiences in urban PE. The researchers conducted a four-year study of PE programs in urban secondary schools from the perspective of cultural relevance. Enhancing students’ perceptions of cultural relevance was linked to teachers’ expressions of care and respect, use of caring and respectful language and communication, and selection of culturally meaningful
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curricular content. Care was central to teachers’ concerns about both the overall wellbeing of students and their mastery of the subject matter. Respect involved strategies teachers enacted to “flatten” social hierarchies, including those among students and between students and teachers. Language and communication included strategies for minimizing barriers to teaching based on issues related to English as a second language and urban communication. Culturally relevant curricular content reflected students’ interests and diverse cultural perspectives.

Researchers have examined other program characteristics from students’ perspectives including assessment practices and teacher appearance. In a study by Mercier and Silverman (2014b), high school students’ attitudes toward fitness testing differed by type of fitness test; students preferred the Fitnessgram as opposed to the President's Challenge. Redelius and Hay (2012) examined secondary students’ views on criterion-referenced assessment in Sweden. Despite clearly understanding the PE grading criteria, students did not believe teachers followed the stated criteria. Rather, they perceived that teachers graded based on student attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors. Gold, Petrella, Angel, Ennis, and Woolley (2012) conducted a study investigating middle school students’ perceptions of their PE teacher, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Students perceived teachers who appeared to be either normal weight or underweight as more knowledgeable about PE and more capable of motivating them to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. Girls preferred teachers who appeared underweight and had more favorable perceptions of these teachers than boys.

Overall, research over the last decade highlights several themes, pointing to the importance of perceived relevance, usefulness, enjoyment, and interpersonal relationships in fostering positive attitudes and perspectives in PE. While the major strands of this research focus on affective concepts and dimensions, student characteristics, program context and characteristics, promising new directions also are evident in the recent literature. For instance, studies have focused on students’ perspectives of misbehavior (Cothran, Kulinna, & Garrahy, 2009), students’ help seeking behaviors (Nye, 2008), and students’ perceptions of alienation in PE (Spencer-Cavaliere & Rintoul, 2012). Findings from these emerging areas strengthen and reinforce many traditional themes reviewed in this chapter.

Implications for evidence-based practice

The research evidence presented in this chapter carries tentative implications for professional practice. It is clear, for example, that student attitudes and perspectives are malleable and linked to a range of variables within the PE classroom, including the teacher, the teacher’s classroom behaviors (instructional, managerial, and social), other students, and class activities. It also is clear that a potentially wide range of affective learning profiles exists within PE classes; some students perceive little value in the subject, while other students may struggle to identify with PE.

Teachers may find that taking time to learn about students’ backgrounds, interests, and ambitions creates opportunities to enhance instruction by selecting relevant content, tailoring expectations for student participation and learning, and strengthening teacher-student relationships. These changes may, in turn, promote positive attitudes and perspectives, especially for students with maladaptive affective profiles. It also may be possible for teachers to nurture these students’ positive attitudes and perspectives by designing learning experiences that encourage student-student interaction. Selecting class activities based on students’ interests may be particularly important to fostering favorable affective profiles among girls.
Future directions for research

The majority of studies on student attitudes and perspectives have focused on older children and adolescents, mostly in secondary school settings. While this trend is logical, based on the tendency for student attitudes in PE to sour as children age (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007), the focus should expand to younger children in elementary PE to ensure that programs meet the needs of all students. Moreover, most research to date has been descriptive in nature. Such research is important and must continue, as it helps to identify groups in need of additional support. Concomitantly, researchers should endeavor to identify meaningful tasks that foster positive affect in PE. Research stemming from multiple strands and traditions can inform the selection of independent variables for such experiments. For example, psychometric studies indicate that affective outcomes may hinge on perceptions of class relevance. Girls tend to perceive less relevance in PE than boys (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Fahlman, & Garn, 2012; Webster et al., 2011, 2013). Qualitative studies based on constructivist and critical perspectives underscore the importance of teacher-student relationships in girls’ attitudes and perspectives toward PE (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Nicaise et al., 2006; Stride, 2014). Based on these results, field-based trials that manipulate the nature, extent, and quality of teachers’ communication of content relevance or the amount of interaction and personalization teachers employ with girls can provide answers to important questions related to students’ attitudes and affect.

It also will be necessary to work toward a more comprehensive understanding of how student attitudes and perspectives fit broadly into a general theory of affective learning. Limited research exists to operationally define affective variables. Given that Krathwohl et al.’s (1964) work delineates a range of affective learning responses and illustrates the hierarchical relationships between such responses, this work can be applied in future research to frame conceptual, theoretical, and measurement approaches. Research along these lines also should identify antecedent variables that impinge on students’ affective responses. Manipulating independent variables in practice (e.g., the teacher’s instruction) is especially important in theoretical investigations so that results inform future research. The ultimate research goal should be to provide PE teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers with a strong evidence base that (a) demonstrates the importance of student affect to the major aims of PE, (b) identifies effective curricular and instructional strategies for enhancing students’ affective learning, and (c) provides clear direction for implementing these strategies in schools.

Summary of key findings

• The major findings from the research reviewed in this chapter confirm that based on psychometric research, a student’s attitude consists of two components – perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment (Mercier & Silverman, 2014a, 2014b; Subramaniam & Silverman, 2000, 2007).
• These components, grounded in attitude theory, reflect key aspects of affective learning (i.e., perceived class relevance, interest in electing to take additional courses in the subject, and intentions to use the knowledge and skills learned in class after finishing the course).
• These two components were originally conceptualized in Krathwohl et al. (1964) and extended using an instructional communication perspective (Webster et al., 2011, 2013).
• Qualitative studies, many conducted in urban schools, support the concept that perceived usefulness and enjoyment underpin students’ approach/avoidance tendencies within PE.
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(e.g., Cothran et al., 2009; Dyson et al., 2009; Flory & McCaughtry, 2011; James & Collier, 2011; Spencer-Cavaliere & Rintoul, 2012).

- This work examining students’ perceptions of usefulness and enjoyment extend the conceptual and theoretical dimensions related to student affect.
- These components are tied to (a) social opportunities/relationships with peers (Dismore & Bailey, 2011; Dyson et al., 2009; Prusak et al., 2013; Smith & St. Pierre, 2009; Stride, 2014), (b) a belief that class activities have an impact on health knowledge and behaviors (Prusak et al., 2013), and (c) an organized, skillful, and engaging teacher (Holt et al., 2012; Prusak et al., 2013).
- Further, conceptions of enjoyment change with age (Dismore & Bailey, 2011) and skill level (Bernstein et al., 2011). Girls enjoy PE less than boys (Mercier & Silverman, 2014b; Webster et al., 2013) and tend to not view it as useful (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Webster et al., 2013).
- Teachers appear to influence students’ attitudes and perspectives in PE (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011; Garn & Cothran, 2006; Gold et al., 2012; Holt et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2012).
- Teacher–student and student–student interactions may be particularly important in shaping girls’ attitudes and perspectives toward PE (Nicaise et al., 2006; Shen et al., 2012; Stride, 2014).
- Girls are capable of navigating and negotiating their PE experiences to actively resist male-dominated discourses and events and, when given the opportunity, may create more personally meaningful opportunities to participate and learn (Azzarito et al., 2006; Fisette, 2011, 2013; Oliver et al., 2009; Stride, 2014).
- Highly skilled students may learn to scale their skillfulness within lesson constraints to accommodate program objectives (Crance et al., 2013).
- Mentoring or other forms of external support might be needed for such students when they are enrolled in specialized programs with demanding schedules and performance expectations as these programs may present or exacerbate competing priorities between PE, academics, and students’ social lives (Lamb & Aldous, 2014; Lamb & Lane, 2013).

Reflective questions for discussion

1. Why might students’ attitudes toward PE decline from childhood to adolescence? What could teachers do to nurture and sustain positive student affect?
2. Several psychometrically derived constructs, based on attitude theory and affective learning theory, were discussed in this chapter. How might these constructs fit into a theoretical framework explaining the affective learning process? What implications would the theory have for teachers?
3. What kinds of strategies could teachers use to foster students’ enjoyment in elementary PE? How might these strategies change when teaching high school students?
4. Why do girls feel the need to carve paths of resistance in PE? What role could teachers play in reducing this need?
5. What are the key components of a mentoring program in PE for gifted and talented students? How would the program be designed to help students (a) adjust to working with less skilled peers and (b) learn to value and identify with the goals of the PE program?
References


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