

EXPLORING THE PAST: A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG MEN IN HIGH SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

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Abstract

High school physical education classes aim to provide young men with the competence and confidence needed to lead a physically active lifestyle (Borghese, 2019; Tanaka et al., 2018). As well, physical education is recognized as a significant contributor to the daily accumulation of moderate to vigorous physical activity among young men (Tanaka et al., 2018). However, a considerable gap exists in the literature regarding what specific factors influence young men to participate during their physical education classes. Using a retrospective, qualitative description study, this research project explored the previous high school physical education experiences of 10 male-identifying students at the University of Saskatchewan. Using two rounds of semi-structured, individual interviews, each participant's previous physical education experiences were investigated at length. The findings from these individual interviews can be understood through three themes: *Us and Them*, *The Physical Education Teacher: "Him and His Football Boys"* and *Physical Cultural Capital*. Woven throughout these three themes, the findings suggest that several key factors play a role in determining a young man's participation and engagement in physical education. These key factors include competitiveness, participation in community hockey or on the school football team, relationships with the physical education teacher and accrual of physical cultural capital. The findings of this study support previous research, identifying physical cultural capital as a factor that affects engagement in physical education (Jachyra, 2014). As there is a paucity of research regarding young men's experiences with participation in physical education, this study aimed to add relevant information to a topic that lacks sufficient research.

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Dedication

To my brother, Brett, who continuously encouraged me to be the most authentic version of myself. Your exuberance towards life and passion for helping others was truly inspirational. I feel so fortunate to have had you in my life. This thesis is for you.

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Physical education is widely recognized as a key component and contributor to the accumulation of physical activity among children and youth, while simultaneously equipping children and youth with the competence and confidence needed to live a healthy/active lifestyle (Borghese et al., 2019; Sprengeler et al., 2019; Tanaka et al., 2018). Gender impacts the participation of students in physical education classes as boys frequently spend more time participating in vigorous activity during physical education classes than girls (Smith et al., 2014). This discrepancy in participation has motivated many researchers in the field of physical education to explore why girls tend to participate less than boys (Cairney, 2012; Johnson, 2015). However, there remains a gap in our knowledge and understanding of the experiences boys' have in their physical education classes. Although boys tend to report greater levels of enjoyment and engagement in physical education than girls (Cairney, 2012; Johnson, 2015), a study in Ontario indicated that boys in high school were withdrawing from physical education as soon as they were allowed to do so (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). This trend (Jachyra 2014) is problematic as participation in physical education can be linked to a number of physical, emotional, social and mental health benefits (Bawaked et al., 2019; Belair et al., 2018; Guddal et al., 2019; Kleppang et al., 2018; Wilkie et al., 2018). Despite the indications that boys are frequently withdrawing from physical education, there remains a very limited understanding of what motivates participation and engagement (or lack thereof) among young men in physical education classes.

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences that male-identifying university students had in their high school physical education classes. To better understand these experiences, I collected retrospective data from 10 male-identifying university students. A qualitative description design was implemented to explore the physical education experiences of this selected group of university students. Qualitative description research is most often used when information is sought to better understand a phenomenon experienced by participants (Bradshaw et al., 2017). This design recognizes the subjective nature of the issues within physical education and allows participants to describe their experiences and perceptions (Doyle, 2019; Sandelowski, 2010). Participants were recruited from three Kinesiology courses at the University of Saskatchewan. In Phase One of data collection, background information was collected on the participants using an initial survey. This survey was used to purposefully sample the participants for the study. Phase Two of data collection consisted of two individual semi-structured interviews with the selected participants to gain an in-depth understanding of their previous experiences in physical education classes. Young men are seldom provided with an opportunity to discuss their experiences in physical education in a safe judgement-free environment (Jachyra, 2014). This research project addressed this issue by offering participants an opportunity to reflect upon and speak about their previous experiences in physical education.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 History of Physical Education. As experiences in physical education are the focus of this thesis, it is important to understand the evolution of physical education and how it became a required component of the education of children and youth in Canada. The origins of

physical education can be traced as far back as 1500 B.C. in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, where the education of men was essentially military based (Mechikoff, 2006). These civilizations used education to practice military exercises such as handling weapons, riding horses (chariots) and exercising for battle (Martinescu, 2015). In addition to military training, it was common for men to participate in athletics and sports such as boxing and wrestling or Olympic events such as footraces, discus and javelin throw, long jump, chariot racing and pentathlon (Freeman, 1997). In Greece, the program of physical education was concentrated at the first *gymnasium*, a large outdoor facility, constructed just outside of Athens. The aim of the educational process at the *gymnasium* was to physically train and strengthen young men, while also improving movement skills such as posture and the mechanics of graceful movement (Freeman, 1997). These militaristic practices of physical training continued until the fall of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages in the twelfth century. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, there was much confusion in Europe surrounding the views of the Catholic Church on physical education as the Catholic Church was disturbed by the Roman sports and games and associated Roman games with pagan religions. During the early Middle Ages and beginning of the Renaissance period in the fourteenth century, it was frequently mentioned that Christianity had no desire for bodily exercise (Bird, 1972; Broekhoff, 1968; Solovey, 2015). However, some young men during this time in Europe did receive physical training and education towards knighthood and nobility. This training concentrated on learning the arts of war, developing the body for combat, gaining military prowess and developing social graces and sports skills (Freeman, 1997).

In seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, more progress towards incorporating physical activities into the education of youth occurred (Solovey, 2015). In the early seventeenth century, physical education became a popular method for developing skills and alertness for war, but also a way to stay healthy and practice grace, through movement (Freeman, 1997). Physical activity became even more emphasized in the eighteenth century when portions of the school day were devoted to physical activities such as fencing, dancing, games and gymnastics (McIntosh, 2013). In 1774 Johan Basedow, a German educator started a coeducational school called the Dessau Educational Institute, which focused on teaching children without the influence of any church. Basedow's educational system stressed the importance of physical activity in education, and incorporated camping experiences that share some similarities to present day outdoor education (Ljunggren, 1996). Although the institute only lasted until 1793, the experimental program, which recognized the importance of physical activity in education was very influential throughout Europe and led to integration of gymnastics (tumbling, climbing, jumping, vaulting, the horizontal bar, balance beam and rope ladder) into educational curricula, throughout Europe (Ljunggren, 1996).

For much of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, gymnastics became the primary activity taught in physical education in Europe. So much so, that in nineteenth century Europe, physical education was simply called *gymnastics* (Kennard, 1977). There were two main systems of gymnastics taught by physical educators (Swedish system and German system), both originating in Europe. The Swedish system was invented by Per Henrick Ling in the early nineteenth century and involved mostly free-standing exercises that sought to systematically exercise each part of the body through increasingly intricate flexions and

extensions. It also involved some apparatus work such as vaulting (Kirk, 2002). The German system was more competitive in nature and involved work on apparatuses such as the rings, parallel bars and pommel horse. This competitive form of gymnastics was less common throughout the nineteenth century, but gained traction in schools following the 1948 Olympics, where gymnastics was displayed as a competitive sport made up of the six activities of floor-work, vaulting, rings, bars, beam and pommel horse (Kirk, 2002). Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Swedish gymnastics became popular in other countries. Austria, Belgium, Chile, England, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Japan, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, the United States and Canada all adopted Swedish gymnastics into their respective country's education curricula (Wanneberg, 2018). In Canada, the transition to Swedish gymnastics was a result of Egerton Ryerson's (the first chief superintendent of education for Canada West) visits to Sweden and his desire to incorporate what he learned about Swedish gymnastics into the Canadian education curriculum (Morrow, 2012).

Egerton Ryerson was a prominent contributor to development of the public school system in Canada through his leadership and improvements to schools across Canada (Semple, 2007). In the 1840s, Ryerson frequently visited Europe to study the teaching practices and curricula in European countries (Morrow, 2012). At the time of Ryerson's trips, much of the institutional physical education in Europe was focused on Swedish gymnastics (Canada. Fitness Amateur Sport Directorate, 1970). During Ryerson's visits, he became fascinated by Swedish gymnastics and upon his return, he began advocating for Swedish gymnastics to be implemented into the curriculum of Canadian schools. Not soon after Ryerson's return,

Canadian public schools began adopting Swedish gymnastics into their physical education classes (Canada. Fitness Amateur Sport Directorate, 1970; Morrow, 2012). Throughout the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, physical education in Canada continued to focus on gymnastics, but shifted to also incorporate military drill and calisthenics (Canada. Fitness Amateur Sport Directorate, 1970). Military training became common in Canada and the United States in the early 1900s as both countries' governments grew concerned of the number of soldiers who were physically unfit and in need of physical training (Morrow, 2012; Verville et al., 2015). Physical education became an opportunity for preventative medicine with the belief that training and conditioning the body will not only help young men become physically fit enough for war, but also to prevent disease, physical breakdown and physical accidents (Verville et al., 2015). A pioneer in creating these physical fitness programs in Canada and the United States was R. Tait McKenzie, who was the first Medical Director of Physical Training at McGill University and later, a professor of physical education and physical therapy in the United States (Leys & McKenzie, 1960). In 1909, a trust was established by Lord Strathcona (Canada's High Commissioner to Great Britain at the time) to promote physical education in Canadian schools, and to encourage the formation of military cadet corps (Canada. Fitness Amateur Sport Directorate, 1970). Three years later, in 1912, physical education became compulsory in Canadian public schools for the first time (Canada. Fitness Amateur Sport Directorate, 1970).

The Strathcona trust played a large role in the implementation of mandatory physical education in Canadian schools, however some leading physical educators in Canada felt that this focus on military training represented a substantial step backwards for child-centered education and for the incorporation of sports and games in physical education (Morrow et al.,

1989). Instead of educating the whole child, body and mind; physical education was focused on disciplining the body and mind into military obedience. Dr. Anthony Lamb, the director of physical education at McGill university, was adamantly opposed to the focus on fitness advocated by the Strathcona trust and worked diligently to instill a “new” form of physical education: one that focused on the education of the whole child. In 1933, Dr. Lamb created Canada’s first national physical education professional association (Morrow, 2012).

In the early 1900s, sports and games were considered extra-curricular activities. It was not until the 1940s, when degree programs for physical education training were established at the University of Toronto, McGill, and the University of Western Ontario and British Columbia, that sports and games received legitimate curricular attention (Morrow et al., 1989). Prior to 1940, physical education was taught mainly by retired drill sergeants or military instructors (Morrow, 2012). As physical education in Canada progressed throughout the late 1900s, the focus on Swedish gymnastics faded, but still left a space for fitness gymnastics (Lundvall & Schantz, 2013). From the early 2000s until present day, physical education has been focused on everyday physical activity and its fundamental principles of providing students with the necessary tools to be healthy and physically active for life (Cairney et al., 2019; Lundvall & Schantz, 2013; Tanaka et al., 2018).

1.2.2 Physical activity in children and youth. Physical activity and living a physically active lifestyle are widely recognized as significant ways for children and youth to improve their overall health (ParticipACTION, 2020). For example, greater participation in physical activity among children and youth has been associated with both physical and mental health benefits. These benefits include improvements in aerobic and cardiovascular health, self-efficacy, self-

esteem and life satisfaction, as well as decreases in levels of anxiety, depression and obesity (Bawaked et al., 2019; Belair et al., 2018; Guddal et al., 2019; Kleppang et al., 2018; Wilkie et al., 2018).

The 2020 ParticipACTION report card on physical activity for children and youth synthesizes hundreds of academic studies on physical activity for the most comprehensive assessment of child and youth physical activity in Canada. The report card serves as a blueprint for collecting and sharing knowledge about physical activity and its importance in everyday life. To present a detailed description of how active children and youth are in Canada, the report card classifies physical activity into four categories of “daily behaviours” (ParticipACTION, 2020, p. 7): active play (unstructured), active transportation (walking/biking instead of driving), organized sport (extra-curricular or school based) and physical education (physical education/recess) (ParticipACTION, 2020). Despite numerous opportunities for Canadian children to be active throughout the day, statistics suggest that the majority of Canadian children and youth are not getting enough daily physical activity (Belanger, 2018; Guthold et al., 2019; LaBlanc, 2015). The Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines (Tremblay et al., 2016) recommend that children aged 5-17 should receive 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day, yet only 39% of Canadian children in this age group meet these guidelines (2016-17 Canadian Health Measures Survey [CHMS], Statistics Canada). Physical education classes are frequently noted as excellent opportunities for children and youth to be physically active during the school day. Thus, physical education classes are recognized as a significant contributor to the accumulation of moderate to vigorous physical activity among children and youth (Tanaka et al., 2018).

1.2.3 Physical education classes. Physical education classes provide children and youth with the opportunity to be physically active during the school day and develop the fundamental motor skills necessary for living an active lifestyle (Borghese, 2019; Tanaka et al., 2018). The physical activity students receive during their physical education classes is associated with a number of health and psychological benefits (Leisterer, 2019). Some of these health benefits include increased on-task behaviour in the classroom, lower levels of obesity, and enhanced academic performance, while psychological benefits include greater confidence in one's abilities to achieve goals and success, interest in tasks and increased enjoyment of activities (Egger et al., 2019; Lubans et al., 2010). Furthermore, children were more likely to meet the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day when they participated in physical education for at least two days per week (Swain, 2006). According to the current curriculum for high school physical education in Saskatchewan, classes are designed to "provide opportunities for students to develop positive attitudes toward active living, to gain self-confidence as skillful movers, and to promote personal, social, cultural and environmental growth and appreciation" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 1). The Saskatchewan physical education curriculum also emphasizes the importance of developing physical literacy in physical education classes. Physical literacy has recently been identified as an important factor for sustained participation in physical activity throughout life (Cairney et al., 2019). At its core, physical literacy refers to an individual's competence in movement skills, confidence/motivation, social participation and positive affect (i.e., fun, happiness, enjoyment) (Cairney et al., 2019). An increase in one component of physical literacy can stimulate an increase in the next component, and the next, thus creating a cycle of improvement (Cairney et

al., 2019). Providing students with the opportunity to develop their physical literacy skills in physical education classes may promote greater participation and engagement in physical education activities and unstructured physical activity outside of school (Cairney et al., 2019; Young, 2020).

1.2.4 Engagement in physical education. While physical education can provide many benefits for children and youth, there is a need to increase our understanding of the potential mechanisms that affect engagement in physical education classes (Doolittle, 2016; Jachyra, 2014; Tanaka et al., 2018). As students age from their junior high school years into later high school years, their positive attitudes towards physical education are often seen to decline (Subramaniam & Silverman, 2007). Previous research in the field of physical education has been conducted with the intent to explain why these negative attitudes towards physical education exist and why some students try to avoid certain activities, or even avoid physical education entirely (Portman, 1995; Tischler & McCaughy, 2011; Warde, 2006). One possible reason for these negative feelings towards physical education is students' perceived level of athletic ability or skills (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Portman, 1995). Students who were less skilled, as measured by their ability to perform fundamental movement skills, were less likely to engage in certain activities to avoid potential failure and embarrassment (Kerner et al., 2018; Portman, 1995). In other words, students would rather avoid learning and participating in the activity to hide their lack of skill. Furthermore, Carlson (1995) and Kerner et al. (2018) suggested that some students in junior high school felt alienated in the gymnasium and wished they did not have to take physical education as it displayed their body to their peers. Body image can have a powerful effect on participation as body dissatisfaction can dissuade students from

participating in activities that showcase their body or coordination (Dion et al., 2016; Jachyra 2016). Students who feel that their bodies are too fat or too thin when compared to the valorised, normative or ideal body shape of their peers tend to create excuses to avoid engagement in physical education (i.e., long water breaks or purposely forgetting their shoes) (Jachyra 2016). However, the experiences of highly skilled young men who possess a muscular, normative/ideal body shape and display tendencies of toughness, competitiveness and will-to-win tend to display high levels of enjoyment and participation in physical education activities (Jachyra 2014, 2016; Kehler, 2004). Highly skilled young men who were picked first in activities were more likely to experience increased pride and high self-esteem, which can cause very powerful, long-lasting effects on attitude and behaviour towards physical education and physical activity (Ladwig et al., 2018).

Much of the previous research in student participation and engagement within physical education has focused on the experiences of girls and young women (Gibbons, 2009; Robbins et al., 2003; Mitchell, 2015). This is no surprise as girls and young women often report lower levels of enjoyment, participation and perceived competence in physical education when compared to boys and young men (Cairney, 2012; Johnson, 2015). Previous research has highlighted how participating in physical activity does not correspond with traditional ideologies of femininity and how young women feel as if the skills learned in physical education are disinteresting or useless in later life (Cockburn & Clark, 2002; Gibbons, 2009; Hill, 2015). Reasons for disengagement among girls and young women are often attributed to a combination of psychological, social and environmental barriers (Mitchell, 2015). Robbins et al. (2003) notes that psychological barriers primarily exist as feelings of self-consciousness and a lack of

motivation to participate in physical activity. Self-consciousness was primarily found when girls experienced low levels of perceived competence in physical education (Inchley et al., 2011; Institute of Youth Sport 1999). Environmental barriers to the participation of girls in physical education classes, include factors such as discomfort with sharing change rooms, showers, or other facilities with classmates (Mitchell, 2015). Social barriers that negatively impact participation frequently stem from attitudes or perceptions of oneself in relation to their peers. Female peers can be seen as both supporting and scrutinizing within a physical education class as some girls support and encourage physical education and others female peers scrutinize abilities, bodies and appearances (Mitchell, 2015). When girls are not encouraging towards their female peers, it is often detrimental to engagement in physical education (Mitchell, 2012).

While girls and young women have predominantly been the target population for most of the research regarding engagement in physical education, there has been some previous research focused on understanding boys' experiences in physical education. Several studies have reported that body image, as well as how boys display masculinity, are major contributors in determining a boy's attitude towards physical education (Davidson, 2000; Jachyra, 2014, 2016). For many boys, issues with body image and masculinity practices occur before and after physical education class time. Atkinson & Kehler (2010) and Jachyra (2016) describe the physical education change room as an unprotected, unregulated, adult-free zone where dominant boys have an opportunity to bully/abuse marginalized boys for their body shape or masculine inadequacies. Boys who possess a smaller or underdeveloped body shape, compared to the bodies of their classmates, were susceptible to verbal or physical harassment. The boys who experienced this harassment often had a body that contradicted the masculine standard,

demanding in a physical education class (i.e., muscular build, athleticism, physical size) (Davidson, 2000). For non-dominant/marginalized boys, consistent exposure to degrading social conditions before, during and after physical education class had a fundamental role in body dissatisfaction and reported negative experiences in physical education (Jachyra 2016).

The relationships boys had with their physical education teachers also played a role in their engagement as previous research suggested that boys who have negative attitudes towards their teachers did not like physical education (Davison, 2000; Ladwig, 2018; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Boys who had negative experiences in physical education reported the class as a “horrible experience” (Davison, 2000, p.260) due to the actions and behaviours of their physical education teachers. Public mockery, favouritism, bullying and spiritual/emotional/physical abuse were all noted as common factors that certain boys with negative experiences had to endure from their physical education teachers (Davison, 2000; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). These boys were typically overweight, unathletic, or displayed some type of physical or mental impairment (Davison, 2000; Ladwig 2008). When boys experienced any of the previously mentioned negative behaviours or actions from their physical education teachers, they displayed increased anxiety towards their physique and movement competencies and frequently tried to avoid participation and sit out of class activities (Carlson, 1995 Ladwig, 2018). The tendency for these boys to sit out of class and develop apathy towards physical education was not because they were lazy or unmotivated, but because they were victims of repeated experiences of abuse and degradation (Jachyra, 2016).

While there is a prevailing belief that issues with body image, body dissatisfaction and the actions and behaviours of physical education teachers may have a notable effect on boys’

attitudes towards physical education, little is known about how these factors affect engagement in physical education classes. There is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding what specific aspects encourage or hinder engagement in physical education, among boys. However, previous research has determined that boys' attitudes and experiences in physical education may be impacted by the form of masculinity they display (Jachyra, 2014; Atkinson & Kehler 2012).

1.2.5 Competition in physical education. Competition is a ubiquitous aspect of physical education and can be defined as a situation or environment where one or more individuals are trying to win something or succeed over someone else (Aggerholm et al., 2018; Layne, 2014; Piper, 2014). Although competitive sport has existed for thousands of years, it was not until the mid 1900s that competitive sports became common practice in Canadian physical education class curricula (Singleton, 2003). On top of traditional competitive sports, game-centered activities that result in win/lose outcomes are also popular in physical education (Duncan & Kern, 2020). Whether it be games of capture the flag, relay races or elimination games; activities that produce winners and losers are typically competitive in nature.

An increased focus on competition and heightened competitiveness in physical education has been the result of several factors. Historically, competition has been intertwined with physical education for centuries. The origins of competitive sport dates back thousands of years to the early Spartans in ancient Rome, who would use competitive sport to prepare for war and for the Olympics, which originated in Greece (Freeman, 1997; Piper, 2014). During the Spartans' competitions (which included footraces, wrestling, chariot races, boxing and pentathlon) and the Olympic Games, individuals would compete against each other for the

chance at heroic recognition from their country (Freeman, 1997). In Canada, competitive sport was noted as an extra-curricular activity in schools until the 1940s, when sport became a part of the curriculum (Kirk, 2002; Morrow, 2012). Siedentop (1994) noted that the addition of sport to the physical education curriculum in Canada provided additional opportunities to be competent, enthusiastic sportspeople that “possess sufficient skills to participate in games satisfactorily, can understand and execute strategies appropriate to the complexity of play, and are knowledgeable games players” (p. 4). The decision to incorporate sport into the curriculum in the early 1940s stemmed from the growing popularity of using sport as a way to stay physically active and develop physical literacy skills (Cairney, 2019) and from the collaborative social learning opportunities it provided (Wallhead & O’Sullivan, 2005).

The competitive nature in physical education classes may also stem from physical education teachers’ perceptions of competition, as many come from athletic or sporting backgrounds and usually continue their athletic involvement by becoming coaches on school sports teams (Duncan & Kern, 2020). These teachers’ previous experiences and beliefs about sport can lead them to think that their students should value competition as much as they do (Duncan & Kern, 2020). An over-emphasis of competition during a physical education class can instill a negative culture that highlights winners and losers by pitting students versus other students (Aggerholm et al., 2018).

Another contributing factor to an emphasis on competition in physical education may come from the attitudes and actions of parents (Glass & Tabatsky, 2014). Gray (2011) found that due to fears of safety, some parents limited free and unstructured play in neighbourhoods, and instead registered their children in organized community sport. Since intense competition

is highly valued in competitive sport, more students become more competitively driven and interested in competitive games and sports in their physical education classes. This trend has been growing over the past two generations and has become more prevalent in the last 15 to 20 years (Glass & Trabatsky, 2014). Although competition has always been a part of physical education, the focus of parents on providing competitive sport opportunities for their children may contribute to the valuing of pitting students against other students and highlighting winners and losers in physical education classes (Aggerholm et al., 2018).

Participating in competitive activities in physical education can result in both positive and negative experiences for students. The benefits of competition can be intrinsic and come in the form of satisfaction or gratification, following success in class activities or games (Bernstein et al., 2011; Layne, 2014). Opportunities for competition in physical education can also instill valuable life skills such as working well with others, and developing dedication, determination and perseverance (Layne, 2014). Incorporating competitive activities, sports and games into high school physical education classes can be advantageous to students' engagement if the environment does not pit individuals against each other (Beni, 2017). However, there may be a need for an improved balance between the emphasis of cooperative and competitive learning environments in physical education (Duncan & Kern, 2020). While both cooperative and competitive learning environments are present in physical education classes, previous research has suggested that physical education teachers may focus too heavily on competitive activities/philosophies with not enough focus on cooperative activities/philosophies (Bernstein et al., 2011; Tauer & Harackiewicz, 2004). On one hand, emphasizing competition in high school physical education may contribute to the development of hard-working young people who

invite challenge and win and lose with grace. However, an intense focus on competition may also create individuals who are obsessed with winning and view other people as obstacles standing in their way of victory or success (Piper, 2014).

Just as competition can be intrinsically beneficial to students, previous research has suggested that participating in competitive activities and sports during physical education classes can be intrinsically negative as well (Drewe, 1998). When unhealthy competition (unfair teams, low participation, arguing among students, lopsided outcomes) is present in physical education classes, some students (usually students who dislike competition or who reside on the losing team) are likely to feel dejected, angry and left out (Duncan & Kern, 2020). Generally, competition divides students into winners and losers, where the success of some students comes from the failures of others. Drewe (1998) argued that when competition is viewed simply as winning and losing, it is a limited conceptualization of the term, because it does not consider the meaning of competition, which is to “strive together” (p. 6). If competition is practiced as striving together (i.e., multiple students competing together, towards a common goal), students are then able to achieve a level of excellence that they could not have achieved on their own (Aggerholm et al., 2018; Drewe, 1998).

1.2.6 Hegemonic masculinity in physical education classes. Within physical education, there are traditional codes of masculinity that have become culturally accepted as normative in Western culture (Kehler, 2004; Connell 1996). These codes typically represent socially acceptable behaviours and physical qualities within a male physical education context (i.e., physicality, muscularity) and often define which masculinity form is most dominant in each physical education class (Kehler, 2004). Hegemonic (dominant) masculinity is the term used to

describe the specific form(s) of masculinity that is associated with power and privilege within a certain cultural setting (Connell, 1996). Dominant or valorized forms of masculinity are understood as the patterns of practice (actions, not just an identity or set of expectations) that allow men to dominate over women and other men who do not participate in these same practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Historically, all-boys physical education classes have been identified as spaces where masculinity practices are intensified as the environment is often where boys 'learn, embrace, embody, or are damaged by particular codes of dominant [hegemonic] masculinity' (Atkinson & Kehler 2012, p. 166). Connell (2005) suggested that dominant and marginalized masculinities are not recognized as equal within a cultural environment as certain masculinities are highly valued, and others are not. For example, in modern Western culture, homosexual masculinities or the masculinities of disempowered ethnic minorities are socially marginalized while masculinities that resemble toughness or competitiveness (e.g., sporting figures) are perceived as dominant in all physical activity, physical education and sport related settings (Connell, 1996). Boys who display hypermasculine qualities such as aggression, competitiveness and bravery are frequently awarded dominant status amongst their peers, thus marginalizing and excluding others (Mooney & Hickey, 2012). Furthermore, Mooney & Hickey (2012) explain that in Western cultures, boys who were awarded dominant status in their physical education class felt a sense of belonging within a physical education context, while marginalized boys felt they did not belong in the eyes of their peers and themselves.

Feelings of exclusion and not belonging can present challenges for boys and as a result they may become willing to change how they enact their own masculinity practices (Kehler,

2004). In other words, boys who do not naturally display the dominant characteristics of hegemonic masculinity will often try to impersonate students who do, to avoid being marginalized for demonstrating a different form of masculinity than their peers (Swain, 2006). The concept of hegemonic masculinity is viewed as normative in society, as it embodies the “most honored way of being a man” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832), but statistically, only few boys display this form of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In fact, most males tend to enact opposing forms of masculinity, but when compared to the highly desired hegemonic form, their masculinity form is classified as subordinate (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 1996).

Previous research by Connell (1982) states that a ‘hierarchy of forms of masculinity’ (p. 96) is perpetuated throughout schools, and boys are aware of how more dominant forms of masculinity align with status and privilege. The more a boy enacts the qualities and practices consistent with hegemonic masculinity practices, the higher position they will accrue on the hierarchical ladder within their physical education class (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). The position that a boy holds within the hierarchy of physical education can be attributed to several different physical factors such as strength, speed, muscularity, fitness and athleticism (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Most commonly, social position is awarded to the young men who display a muscular body type. Kehler (2004) states that muscularity and size are imperative to hegemonic masculinity as “not being huge [obese] but being bigger” (p.103) is encouraged. Physical size and muscularity are essential to how boys compare one another to each other, thus, further supporting the notion that boys are aware of their hierarchical position amongst their peers, in physical education (Kehler, 2004). Additionally, participation in

school/extracurricular sport is seen to hold considerable power in determining which boys display hegemonic masculinity (Jachyra, 2014). Boys who participate in extracurricular sports that embody the same qualities and strategies frequently employed or present in physical education classes are more likely to dominate over boys who had little experience in these sports (Jachyra, 2014, 2016). This domination is a result of some students already possessing a 'feel for the game' from previous opportunities to practice the skills involved in many activities throughout physical education class (Bourdieu, 1990; Jachyra, 2014). The extracurricular/school sports that produce the highest level of dominance are usually competitive in nature and use many of the movement and tactical aspects (such as throwing/catching/kicking/shooting a ball) present within activities of a physical education program (Jachyra, 2014). Some examples of these sports include hockey, football, rugby and basketball. Furthermore, boys who participate in these sports are frequently praised by their classmates and teachers for their competitive drive, hardworking mindset and athleticism (Kehler, 2004; Jachyra 2014).

Masculinities, as well as gender identities, are constantly reaffirmed in society by publicly displaying acts (i.e., athleticism, aggression, competitiveness) that adhere to the cultural norms that determine and differentiate masculinity from femininity (Connell, 1996; Kehler 2004). In a physical education environment, demonstrating acts of athleticism, aggression and competitiveness are deemed masculine, while characteristics of gracefulness, non-aggressiveness and aesthetics/appearance are deemed feminine (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Klomsten et al., 2005; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). However, sociologists have argued that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed/unidimensional concept, but instead, a more fluid and dynamic conceptualization of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Kimmel,

1994). In other words, older characteristics of hegemonic masculinity can be replaced by newer characteristics depending on the cultural/societal norms of the time. As well, the culturally accepted hegemonic masculinity practices in one class may resemble slightly different characteristics than the valorized hegemonic masculinity practices in another class. Thus, there resides a potential struggle for hegemony in each physical education class as every individual may campaign for their own form of masculinity to be socially recognized as hegemonic.

1.2.7 Resistance to femininity/homosexuality. As we continue to understand the components of hegemonic masculinity within the physical education space, it is also important to mention femininity as the counterpart to masculinity. Gerdin (1996) argues that the scrutiny boys receive for deviating from the conventional forms of hegemonic masculinity in physical education stems from the culture of physical education itself, as it is a site in which conventional femininities and masculinities are constantly reproduced. For boys, portraying characteristics of femininity are shown to be associated with marginalization and subordination in physical education classes (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). For example, boys who embody physical characteristics of femininity (i.e., soft/frail bodies) or choose to participate in activities deemed 'feminine' (i.e., dance and gymnastics) are often labeled as 'wimps', 'sissies' and 'victims' (Griffin, 1985; Parker, 1996; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). These labels and slurs are used to depict a deviancy from heterosexual norms and are often used in peer mockery or teacher antagonism towards boys who display qualities of femininity (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Consequently, effeminophobia (the fear of portraying feminine or womanliness, and the identifying traits that associate with femininity (Kama, 2005)) has become increasingly prevalent within Western culture and can be seen frequently within physical education classes

(Kama, 2005; Kama, 2014). As a result, it is common for some boys to mask how they truly express their form of masculinity, in an attempt 'fit in' amongst their peers (Jachyra, 2014). Boys who embody the competitive, aggressive and violent characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are more likely to reign dominant in a physical education setting; especially when the physical education class is primarily sport based (Parker, 1996; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). These dominant boys tend to report a greater enjoyment of physical education class, experience less ridicule from their peers and teachers, receive more opportunities to practice their skills in physical education (i.e., more repetitions, time with the ball and time on the playing field) and participate more often in class activities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gerdin, 1994; Jachyra, 2014; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011).

1.2.8 Capital. Capital can be described as any resource (economic, social, or cultural) that is commonly acknowledged as valuable in a social environment or culture (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, in any given setting there is a particular kind of capital, which holds the ultimate form of power or value. The likelihood of achieving dominance in an environment can be determined by one's degree of capital, as capital is closely associated with power and privilege (Bourdieu, 1985; Jachyra, 2014). Research by Shilling (2004) suggested that the human body is an important form of physical capital as value is commonly placed on the size, shape and appearance of one's body. The 'natural features' of the body determine everyone's degree of physical capital and can aid in the acquisition of social, cultural and material resources (Shilling, 2004). Furthermore, the accumulation of physical capital naturally produces social hierarchies and inequalities as some forms of physical capital are highly valued, while others are not (Shilling 2004). For example, research by Redelius & Hay (2009) and Shilling (2004)

suggested that in a physical education or physical activity setting, having a “performing body” (p. 287) (i.e., physical fitness and movement competence) and excelling in sports were two valuable ways of obtaining physical capital. As a result, students who participated in sport and displayed a ‘performing body’, were awarded dominant status by their peers and teachers; while students who lacked these dominant traits were marginalized (Jachyra, 2014; Shilling, 2004). When the concept of capital is specifically applied to the experiences of individuals, their social position, engagement and (in)visible bodies in a physical education setting, it can be identified as ‘physical cultural capital’ (Jachyra, 2014).

1.2.9 Physical cultural capital. The concept of physical cultural capital is a theoretical elaboration of Bourdieu’s (1988) and Shilling’s (1992, 2004, 2012) analysis of how physical capital relates to a boy’s sporting and physical education experiences. In his work understanding adolescent boys’ experiences within physical education, Patrick Jachyra, a researcher from the University of Toronto, developed the theoretical concept of physical cultural capital as a way of explaining engagement or lack thereof, in physical education among boys transitioning to their final year of mandatory physical education in Ontario (Canada) (Jachyra, 2014). Jachyra’s theory of physical cultural capital stemmed from research conducted with 15 adolescent boys, aged 12 to 14 years old, in Grade 8 (Jachyra, 2014). These boys attended a private single-gender elementary school (kindergarten to Grade 8), and primarily came from families with upper-middle to high incomes (Jachyra, 2014). In his work, Jachyra was situated as a participant observer, and acted as an assistant physical education teacher in the class. He spent six months observing, interviewing and developing relationships with the Grade 8 boys, with a focus on understanding their experiences with engagement in physical education

(Jachyra, 2014). The findings of his research indicated that there was a notable divide between dominant and non-dominant boys in the class that significantly influenced how these boys enjoyed and socially experienced physical education (Jachyra, 2014). Using this information, Jachyra theorized that disengagement and withdrawal in physical education stemmed from non-dominant boys' perpetual struggle to gain physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014).

Jachyra's (2014) theory of physical cultural capital suggests that adolescent boys are fully aware of the social worth of their bodies and physical abilities. Not only were adolescent boys aware of their own abilities, but they also constantly compared their own physical stature and skill to other boys in their physical education class, thus, consciously creating a social hierarchy within the class. Jachyra (2014) also noted that the boys in his study actively tried to embody the forms of physical capital that "bear the highest rate of exchange in [physical education]" (Jachyra, 2014, p.47), such as a muscular body type, competitive drive and aggression. Jachyra reported that the boys in his study tried to exemplify these accepted forms of physical capital to elevate themselves on the social hierarchy in physical education.

Jachyra (2014) reported that two forms of physical cultural capital (high physical cultural capital and low physical cultural capital) were present in the physical education classes he studied. The boys who subscribed to the traditional ideologies of a *good* student in physical education (participated in extracurricular sports, displayed hard working attitudes, portrayed high levels of physical fitness) or the desired expressions of gender (competitive, rugged masculinity, warrior type mentality) were afforded 'high' physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014). The ability to accrue 'high' physical cultural capital was also increased when these boys participated in extra-curricular sports like hockey, as these individuals had a significantly

greater chance to develop certain skills (i.e., using a long handled implement, shooting/passing a puck, offensive/defensive strategies) that align with many activities in physical education (Jachyra, 2014). Boys who displayed 'high' physical cultural capital not only excelled in most activities during physical education classes, they were also seen to participate more in class, compared to boys who displayed 'low' physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014). Alternatively, boys who did not conform to the same ideologies, practices, physicality and gender expressions as boys with 'high' physical cultural capital were afforded 'low' physical cultural capital. Exemplifying low physical cultural capital signifies that the individual displayed deficiencies in the "'desired' form(s) of capital... naturalized in [physical education]" (Jachyra, 2014, p. 47). Boys who held 'low' physical cultural capital displayed lower levels of self-confidence, did not enjoy competition and did not demonstrate a will-to-win (Jachyra, 2014). These boys were also found to display lower levels of participation in physical education, when compared to boys with 'high' physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014). Subsequently, boys who displayed low physical cultural capital were shown to be marginalized (physically, socially and symbolically) for demonstrating the 'wrong' expressions of hegemonic masculinity (as determined by traditional practices in physical education) (Jachyra, 2014). Boys with 'low' physical cultural capital reported experiences of physical/verbal abuse from peers and teachers, as well as feelings humiliation as they were picked last for activities and received less opportunity to participate in physical education class (Jachyra, 2014).

It is apparent that adolescent boys are consciously aware of the 'social worth' of their own bodies, as well as their positioning within the social hierarchy of their physical education class (Jachyra, 2014; Shilling, 2004). Jachyra (2014) also determined that there was a liminal

space in between 'high' and 'low' physical cultural capital where negotiation and fluctuation can occur. Within this liminal space, boys attempted to enhance their social position from subordination towards positions of dominance in physical education (Jachyra, 2014). Accruing higher positions of dominance can be attained by observing the practices of dominant students in the class and conforming to the conventional hegemonic practices of the physical education class (i.e., participating in a masculine sport such as football or hockey) (Bourdieu, 2001; Jachyra, 2014; Warde, 2006). Boys who succeed in obtaining dominance and social position within their physical education class often possess 'high' physical cultural capital.

1.3 Purpose

The objective of this study was to gather information, retrospectively, from male-identifying university students regarding their experiences in high school physical education classes. From the information collected, participants' previous experiences in physical education were explored, with the intention to understand what factors influenced their engagement in their physical education classes. The guiding questions for this study were:

1. What are the factors that affected engagement in the participants' physical education classes?
2. Was physical cultural capital present in the physical education experiences of participants?

Chapter 2

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Positionality as a researcher. It is important for qualitative researchers to continually reflect on their position as a researcher and the ways in which their approach to life and research may shape the study (Creswell, 2003). I approached this research with the perspective of social constructivism, guided by the belief that there are multiple realities that are socially constructed (Hatch, 2002). This perspective suggests that one's gender is learned, shaped and defined by their social engagements with the people, media and institutions that surround them. Because these factors can exist in almost infinite combinations, the realities of gender for young people must extend beyond the hegemonic gender roles commonly presented. Gender is indeed a complex part of our identity, and as such, I think that individuals should have the opportunity to enact their individuality and gender practices in a safe, comfortable environment.

The design of this study was influenced by a social constructivist perspective as it adheres to a worldview that seeks to understand the world, as well as provide meanings that are varied and multiple, leading to a complexity of views, rather than a narrow vision of a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2007). This research study aligned with a social constructivist perspective, as it relied as much as possible on the participants' recollections of past experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2007).

My interest in the topic of gender and masculinity practices in physical education stems from my own prior experiences in physical education and team sport, as well as my experiences coaching several different sports at a range of competitive levels. Due to my background in

Kinesiology and my experiences as an athlete, my assumptions were that physical education and sport are critical entry points to developing physical literacy skills and important social and life skills. However, based on my experiences, I was aware of inequitable practices in my physical education classes. In my life, I have noticed that sometimes students and teachers struggle to see beyond what is deemed *normal*, particularly in terms of gender, masculinity, sexuality and body image. As a result, groups of people are put into marginalized positions in sport, physical activity and life. This can occur when individuals do not possess the body shape, physical appearance or level of fitness, desired by their friends, family, teachers, coaches or the media (Blond, 2008; Kehler, 2004). I wonder what young people could learn and achieve if diverse gender expressions and masculinity practices that promote equality, inclusion and respect in a physical education or physical activity setting were encouraged more often? Shaped by my own lived experiences, I have beliefs regarding the purpose and benefits of physical education. During my time in high school, I had the opportunity to participate in an elective physical education class that provided opportunities for students to go into the community and try different games, activities and sports. These activities included curling, lawn bowling, rock climbing, fencing and water polo; for many students this was their first experience with these activities. A personal belief of mine is that it is important for an individual to participate in many different activities so that they may be physically active for life. Physical education gave me the opportunity to move my body throughout the school day and exposed me to a vast number of new sports and activities, many of which I never thought I would try (and enjoy). In high school, I was an early-maturing, athletic, young white man who conformed to stereotypical norms of masculinity. I participated in multiple school sports such as basketball,

volleyball and track and field. Due to my participation in basketball (a highly valorized sport at my high school), my athleticism and my aptitude and love for physical education, I held high physical cultural capital in my physical education classes. My multiple identities as a man, student, coach, researcher and friend have influenced every aspect of this thesis from the development of research questions through to the results and discussion.

The purpose of this research was to provide participants opportunities to talk about their previous experiences in physical education. In this study, the participants included ten male-identifying university students from the University of Saskatchewan who all agreed to share their thoughts and experiences in high school physical education. I gained many insights from the participants in this study, and the understanding that I present in this thesis is my own and has been collectively shaped by the shared experiences of the participants and myself.

2.1.2 Qualitative research. Creswell (2007) defined qualitative research as “...an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem” (p.15). Qualitative research prioritizes participant perspectives, and in qualitative inquiry, the researcher acts as the main instrument for data-gathering (Hatch, 2002). As such, qualitative researchers can ask broad questions that provide participants with opportunities to describe and explain their experiences on their own terms, allowing important issues and research questions to emerge (Creswell, 2003; Hatch, 2002).

Gender and masculinity are two complex phenomena that are impacted by a myriad of social influences, making it important to respect the different understandings that people may have on these phenomena. To address the research questions in this study, I chose to use a qualitative research method, that provided participants opportunities to reflect upon their own

experiences of physical education class and the role that gender and masculinity practices played within that environment.

2.1.3 Qualitative description. Qualitative description has been identified as an important method for gaining insight into the who, what and where of events or experiences from participants (Kim et al., 2017). It is most often used when information is directly required from the individuals experiencing the phenomenon under focus (Bradshaw et al., 2017). Therefore, qualitative description was used to address my research questions as it not only provided a broad insight into a particular phenomenon, but also an opportunity for participants to describe their experiences and perceptions (Sandelowski, 2010). More specifically, a qualitative description design recognizes the subjective nature of the issues within physical education and the different experiences of the participants. In a qualitative description method, the findings are presented in a way that closely resembles the initial research questions (Doyle et al., 2019). Flexibility was an important feature of qualitative description that I used to obtain rich data and produce a comprehensive representation of the data through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis (Kim et al., 2017). A flexible design allowed data collection and analysis to be iterative, as I could respond to participants' responses and adapt the analytic process if new insights arose throughout the study (Bradshaw et al., 2017).

2.2 Procedures

2.2.1 Participant recruitment. The participant recruitment process began with me emailing the instructors of three first year classes at the University of Saskatchewan, to ask for their permission to speak to their classes about my study (see Appendix C). With the permission of the instructors in three first year University of Saskatchewan classes (see table 2.1), students

were informed about the opportunity to participate in this study. The two sections of KIN 122 were introduced to the study through a short in-person presentation that I gave prior to the start of their class. The same presentation was also given to the students in KIN 146 but was delivered virtually. In the presentation I outlined the study, as well as the expected responsibilities of each participant. Next, my email address was provided to every student in the three classes and students who identified as male were asked to contact me if they were interested in participating in the study. I then gave the students a few days to contact me, and also asked the professors of each of the three classes to remind the students of the study in the days following my presentation to the class. When a participant expressed interest in participating in the study, I sent them a link to an initial survey.

2.2.2 Participants. In a qualitative description design, a “participant is selected from the population the researcher wishes to engage in the study” (Parse, 2001, p.59). Therefore, it is important that each participant has requisite knowledge and experiences of the phenomena being studied (Bradshaw et al., 2017). In this study, all participants identified as male and were enrolled in one of two first year Kinesiology classes at the University of Saskatchewan. Two of the first year Kinesiology classes were the same course (KIN 122: Social Behavioural Foundations of Physical Activity) but divided into two sections. This course focused on the behavioural aspects of physical activity and the social psychology of sport. KIN 122 is a required course for first year Kinesiology students and only Kinesiology students were enrolled in this section (Section A). The other section of KIN 122 was comprised of students not enrolled in the College of Kinesiology (Section B). The other Kinesiology course (KIN 146: Physical Activity and School Aged Children and Youth) was only open to students enrolled in the College of Education

who were preparing to teach elementary and middle years students. This course focused on understanding the role physical activity plays in the health and wellbeing of school aged children and youth.

Table 2.1 – Kinesiology course description

Course	Description	Enrollment
KIN 122 (Section A)	Social Behavioural Foundations of Physical Activity.	A required course for first year College of Kinesiology students.
KIN 122 (Section B)	Social Behavioural Foundations of Physical Activity.	An elective course for non-College of Kinesiology students.
KIN 146	Physical Activity and School Aged Children and Youth	A required first year course for College of Education students preparing to teach elementary and middle years students.

To contextualize the research findings of this qualitative descriptive study focused on male university students' experiences in high school physical education, it is important to introduce the participants. By introducing the participants, the diversities and similarities between each participant's physical education experiences are illustrated in Table 2.2 below. As well, the groundwork can then be laid out to provide some context for each participant's

narratives. The participants answered background questions regarding their perception of their physical ability level in high school, if their high school was in a rural or urban community and their enjoyment of their physical education experiences on a 1-10 scale. All participants in the study were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Table 2.2 – Participant demographics

Participant pseudonym	Attended high school in urban or rural area	Self-perceived physical ability level	Class selected from	Enjoyment rating of physical education (1-10 scale)
Mike	Urban	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section B)	10
Jason	Rural	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section A)	9.5
Charlie	Urban	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section A)	7
Clark	Rural	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section A)	8.5
Ben	Urban	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section A)	10
Francis	Rural	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section A)	7.5
Peter	Urban	High physical ability	KIN 146	3
Oscar	Rural	High physical ability	KIN 146	10
Ethan	Rural	High physical ability	KIN 146	10
Robbie	Urban	High physical ability	KIN 122 (Section A)	8

2.3 Data Collection

2.3.1 Phase One: Initial survey. Phase One of data collection began with my visits to the three classes described above. I introduced the study and students who were interested were asked to email me. Once I received an email from a student expressing their interest I sent each potential participant an initial survey, as well as a consent form (see Appendix A). This initial

survey (see Appendix B) contained questions that asked (a) where the participant attended high school; (b) the size of their high school; (c) their final grade in physical education; (d) if their physical education classes were coed or single gender; (e) if they continued to take physical education classes after it institutionally became non-mandatory in Saskatchewan and; (f) a rating scale that asked all participants to rank their enjoyment of their physical education experiences (1 – lowest enjoyment; 10 – highest enjoyment). This initial survey was delivered through survey monkey [<https://www.surveymonkey.com>] and was used to purposefully sample participants, based on purposeful sampling criteria designed to provide a rich sample for this study. The first criteria was regarding the participants' gender identity. Each participant needed to have identified as male while attending high school. The second criteria was participation in high school physical education in Canada. The third criteria required participants to have graduated from a Canadian high school in the last five years. Lastly, the fourth criteria was that participants must have completed at least two credits of high school physical education. From the three Kinesiology classes I recruited from, 11 students expressed an interest in being participants in the study. Of these 11 students, 10 fit the purposeful sampling criteria and were selected to be participants in the study. I chose to include every participant who volunteered and fit the criteria of the study due to their unique experiences discussed in their initial survey. All of the 10 participants perceived themselves as highly skilled.

2.3.2 Phase Two: Individual interviews

2.3.2.1 Retrospective research. Collecting data retrospectively involves strategies that investigate or are focused upon the participants' pasts to explain the present (i.e., the outcome of interest has already occurred at the time of the study) (Salkind, 2010). Retrospective

research is advantageous as it allows enough time for participants to be emotionally distanced from events that were negative or difficult to discuss during interviews immediately following the experience (Haegele & Zhu, 2017). Additionally, retrospective studies allow research to take place after the participants' experiences have been completed, removing the possibility of the researcher interfering with the experience as an outsider (Haegele & Zhu, 2017).

Retrospective data collection has been noted as an excellent way to understand previous experiences in educational research, such as experiences with disability, exclusion, life skill development, bullying, physical activity and physical education (Andreou et al., 2021; Cooper & Nickerson, 2013; Haegele & Zhu, 2017; Kendellen & Camire, 2015; Ladwig et al., 2018). For example, Andreou et al. (2021) investigated childhood bullying/victimization at school and the long-term effects it may have on young adulthood by administering a retrospective questionnaire to 400 university students from one university in Greece. This questionnaire asked participants questions about their previous experiences with bullying in school. The participants' responses revealed that victims of school bullying reported mild levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in young adulthood (Andreou et al., 2021). Similarly, research by Ladwig et al. (2018) investigated the previous physical education experiences of 1028 Americans (18-45 years old). This retrospective study aimed to gather first-hand accounts, stories and memories associated with positive and negative physical education experiences (Ladwig et al., 2018). Results indicated that retrospective reports of previous physical education enjoyment were significantly related to life-long enjoyment of physical activity (Ladwig et al., 2018).

2.3.2.2 Semi structured interviews. Once Phase One of data collection had concluded, Phase Two of data collection began. Conducting individual interviews allowed me to better comprehend the explicit understandings of participants as they related to their experiences in physical education (Buch & Staller, 2014). By conducting interviews with the participants, I was able to better understand their multiple points of view and gain context, or explanations regarding the unique culture of each participant's physical education class. Stake (1995) suggests that in qualitative research, "each interviewee is expected to have unique experiences [and] special stories to tell" (p.65). To fully understand these experiences and to explore the "descriptions and perceptions" (p.64) of each participant respectively, a semi-structured interview was used as it gave me the autonomy to modify existing questions, pose follow up questions, and allowed the interview to proceed in directions not previously considered (Segal, 2006; Stake, 1995). To ensure that no questions were missed and that each interview ran smoothly, an interview guide was created for use during each interview (see Appendix E). The interview guide was developed to focus on the research questions and reflect current gaps in the research. The guide consisted of two parts: one for each interview. Part one was used in the first interview and the second part was developed once the first round of interviews concluded. The second part of the interview guide was created after analyzing the first round of interviews and determining what questions still needed to be answered. Each part was piloted among several of my male-identifying friends to ensure that the questions were understood and any prompts that were needed were noted and added to the guide. The conversations with participants were all directed by the interview guide, and utilizing the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, I was able to ask follow up questions and alter specific questions from

the interview guide (Segal, 2006). Direct quotes from the participants appear in the document and referenced in the following manner: (the participant's pseudonym written as a full name or first initial, followed by the Interview number).

I conducted two virtual semi structured individual interviews with each participant. These interviews were approximately two weeks apart and all interviews were conducted using the video conferencing platform 'Zoom' [<https://zoom.us>]. The first round of interviews were focused on getting to know the participants and asking broad questions to understand the culture of their physical education classes. I was interested in discovering whether each student enjoyed their physical education experiences and if they regularly participated in class activities. The second round of interviews allowed me to follow up on topics raised in the first interviews and pursue two new lines of inquiry. For instance, the second interviews were more specifically targeted on understanding if physical cultural capital was present in the participants' physical education classes, as well as gaining insight into their relationships with their physical education teachers. I was interested in understanding if these two factors (physical cultural capital and relationships with their teachers) significantly affected the participants' experiences in their physical education classes, so the second round of interview questions were focused on understanding these factors in greater detail. Asking follow up questions ensured that the participants fully explained their experiences and that no vital information was missed.

The influence of gender as an interviewer in qualitative research regarding masculinity or sensitive information was considered during this research project as the gender of the researcher can have a significant effect on the participants' willingness to share their thoughts

and experiences (Davis et al., 2010; Sallee & Harris, 2011; Vollmer et al., 2021). In previous research exploring male identifying university students' experiences with masculinity, the gender of the interviewer significantly affected the participants' responses to interview questions (Sallee & Harris, 2011). For example, in the Sallee & Harris (2011) study, when participants were asked about gender norms or masculinity norms, the male participants were more comfortable with the male interviewer and used more coarse language in their responses. When interviewed by a female interviewer, these same male participants were more reserved and spoke in more restrained and often academic terms (Sallee & Harris, 2011). When interviewing the participants in my study, I noticed their comfortability with me right away and noted that the language they used in their responses resembled the coarse language the male participants used in Sallee & Harris' (2011) interviews. Since I, and all 10 participants identified as male and were similar ages, I found I was able to build rapport with the participants very quickly. As a result, I feel that the data obtained during the semi-structured interviews was particularly rich and descriptive.

2.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis began upon the initiation of the study and was ongoing and iterative throughout the entire research process (Creswell, 2007). A fundamental feature of qualitative research is reflexive iteration. Srivastava & Hopwood (2009) suggested that reflexive iteration was the "key to sparking insight and developing meaning" in qualitative research (p.2). To ensure the data analysis process remained iterative, I regularly read about new topics that arose during data collection and kept a research journal to record critical reflections and thoughts as they emerged.

To thoroughly analyze and identify patterns in the data, as well as illustrate which patterns and themes were important to the phenomenon under study, a thematic approach to analysis was implemented (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Daly et al., 1997). Joffe (2011) states that the result of a thematic analysis should highlight the most prevalent meanings in the dataset. Additionally, semi-structured interviews tend to be at the root of thematic research as open-ended responses are frequently analyzed thematically (Joffe, 2011).

All interviews were recorded on the Zoom platform. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by me and a research assistant. Once all recordings were transcribed, they were inputted into the computer software, NVivo (NVivo, version 12). NVivo was chosen as a tool for data analysis as it provides a reliable platform for organizing qualitative data (such as interview questions and responses) for analysis. After the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo, I read through every response and coded the data. NVivo allowed me to make analytical notes and memos throughout. Memoing occurred throughout the entire analysis process and consisted of reflective notes that summarized my thoughts while analyzing the data. Memos were used to make connections and think critically about what the data was telling me.

The analysis of the interviews was conducted using Attride-Stirling's (2001) *Steps in Analyses Employing Thematic Networks*. Each step is listed and described below, highlighting how it was used to analyze the data in this study.

Step 1: Code Material.

Rigorous initial coding was important for the retrieval of data for subsequent analysis steps (Attride-Stirling, 2001). First, I read through every transcript to make sense of the data. As I read through the data, I assigned codes to each of the participants' responses. These codes

were labels that I used to summarize chunks or lines of data. Each code was either a single word or short sentence that summarized the data it encompassed. NVivo collected lines of data under each code while leaving the initial transcript intact. Coding the data first, allowed for easy retrieval of data assigned to each code and helped me determine which transcript the data came from throughout the entire analysis process. Every line of data was given a code, however some codes were broader than others and encompassed hundreds of lines of data. To avoid constantly searching through large amounts of data in these codes, sub-coding was used to thin out the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This allowed me to break apart larger codes such as “attitudes towards physical education” into sub-codes such as “excitement towards physical education,” “competitive drive” and “self-confidence.” This was a useful strategy, as many memos ended up informing themes in the next steps of analysis.

Step 2: Identifying Themes.

The next step in data analysis was identifying basic themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). These basic themes were very broad and came directly from the data. Each theme was generated based on overarching ideas that were seen to encompass sections of coded material. Attride-Stirling (2001) described Basic Themes as “simple, premise characteristics of the data, and on their own say very little about the text or group of texts as a whole” (p.389). Some of the Basic Themes identified in this step were “social status,” “masculinity,” “leaders,” “followers” and “popularity.” These basic themes were typed on a separate document in preparation for step three.

Step 3: Constructing Thematic Networks.

Attride-Stirling (2001) states that thematic networks “aim to explore the understanding of an issue or the signification of an idea, rather than to reconcile conflicting definitions of a problem” (p.387). Additionally, thematic networks facilitate the structuring of themes in thematic analysis and create a “web-like network” that visually demonstrates the connectedness of the themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Once all the codes were grouped into basic themes in step two, I began grouping these basic themes further into “organizing themes.” Organizing themes gather the main ideas proposed by several basic themes and together, identify an underlying broader theme (Attride-Stirling, 2001). For instance, basic themes such as “social status,” “masculinity,” “leaders” “followers” and “popularity” were grouped together to make the organizing theme, “Hierarchy.” This step reduced the data into a more manageable organizing theme that summarized the data. Once a few organizing themes are identified, they can be grouped together once again to make one main “global theme.” The global theme is the “core” of a thematic network and “encompasses the principal metaphors in the data as a whole” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.389). I grouped the organizing theme “Hierarchy” with three other organizing themes, “Body type,” “Competition” and “Participation in football or hockey,” to make the overarching global theme, “Physical Cultural Capital.” I then completed this process two more times, and following analysis, was left with three global themes, “Physical Cultural Capital,” “The Physical Education Teacher: Him and His Football Boys” and “Us and Them.” As multiple global themes exist in this study, there will also be multiple thematic networks as a separate

“web-like” network is needed to show the development of each global theme (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Step 4: Describing and Exploring the Thematic Networks.

The purpose of this step was to explore the thematic networks by describing each network in detail. To accomplish this, I constructed a detailed mind-map displaying how all basic themes linked to the overarching Global Themes in the data (see Appendix F). Each Global Theme was at the center of the mind-map with numerous thematic networks stemming from them. To support the relatedness of each thematic network to the global theme, I attached segments of text from the initial transcripts under each thematic network.

Step 5: Summarizing Thematic Networks.

This step looked to summarize the global themes that began to emerge in the description of the thematic networks and begin to make explicit the patterns emerging in the exploration (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Additionally, Attride-Stirling (2001) suggested presenting thematic networks to someone outside of the research team to receive second opinions and new ideas. To accomplish this, I presented my thematic networks to a critical friend.

Using a critical friend is a common strategy for ensuring trustworthiness during data collection (Kornbluh, 2015). The individual who acted as my critical friend completed a Kinesiology degree and was a second year student in the College of Education. This student had previous experience with teaching boys and young men the importance of being physically active and was completing his internship at a high school. First, my critical friend read my proposal document and read through the transcripts from all the interviews. This step educated him on my research plans and how the participants responded to my research questions. Once

my critical friend had read through the interview transcripts, I presented my themes and made sure he was familiar with them. Throughout the analysis process, he provided an outside perspective and asked questions that encouraged me to revisit and clarify certain themes. For example, using his knowledge of the high school physical education curriculum, he suggested that a young man's competitive prowess may not only stem from his upbringing or background in sport, but the emphasis of competition in many pedagogical practices. This suggestion forced me to revisit the concept on competition in physical education and further explore its origins.

Step 6: Interpret Patterns.

The goal of the sixth and final step was to return to the original research questions and address them with arguments taken from the patterns that emerged through data analysis. The key conceptual findings in the summaries of each thematic network were then pooled together into one cohesive story, presenting evidence to address each research question (Attride-Stirling, 2001). As I wrote, interpreted and further developed my three global themes, I always had my research questions present in the corner of my laptop screen. Constantly having my research questions present helped me relate my interpretations during analysis back to the main research questions. This strategy ensured my analysis did not stray from the questions it intended to answer.

2.5 Verification Procedures.

In qualitative research, it is important to incorporate several strategies to ensure rigour in the data and results (Creswell, 2007). Morse (2002) suggests that "Without rigour, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility" (p.14). In this study, verification procedures

ensured that trustworthiness and credibility were present throughout the entire research process. These procedures included the use of thick, rich description and a critical friend.

2.5.1 Thick, rich description. Detailed description “...can be an important provision for promoting credibility as it helps to convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them” (Shenton, 2004, p.69). To satisfy this verification procedure, an abundance of thick, rich description regarding the experiences the young men had in physical education, as well as sufficient contextual information regarding the culture of each specific physical education class is provided. As well, direct quotations and responses are included to maintain the voices of the participants. I acknowledge that the experiences my participants had in high school physical education may not be transferrable to the experiences of every reader. Further, it is up to the reader to determine whether these findings are transferable to their own contexts (Shenton, 2004). However, using thick, rich description may provide the reader with enough information that they may compare the participants’ experiences to their own in physical education.

2.5.2 Critical friend. Utilizing a critical friend was the next strategy for ensuring trustworthiness and rigor within the data collection process. The individual I used as my critical friend was the same individual discussed in the data analysis section. He had previous knowledge and experience within the focus of my research (i.e., physical education), but no exposure to the research setting (Foulger, 2010). On top of his experience and passion for working with boys and young men, I also chose this individual because his teaching career was just beginning. I perceived that having a critical friend in the early stages of their teaching career would be advantageous to this study as his own high school physical education

experiences were recent and he would be extremely familiar with the pre service education of teachers (from the perspective of a university student). The role of the critical friend is to provide alternate perspectives and protection against bias (Foulger, 2010). I invited my critical friend to offer opposing ideas, encouragement and monitor the study through a different lens (Appleton, 2011). As all my committee members are staff from the College of Kinesiology, I thought it was of great value to enlist someone who was doing their internship (four month student teaching placement) in a high school physical education class.

Chapter 3

3.1 Results and Discussion

Within this chapter, I present and discuss the results of the study. Woven throughout three themes, I will shed light on the two questions that guided this study: (1) What are the factors that affected engagement in the participants' physical education classes and (2) Was physical cultural capital present in the physical education experiences of the participants. The overall objective of the study was to gather information, retrospectively, from male-identifying university students regarding their experiences in their high school physical education classes. From the information collected, each student's previous experiences in physical education were explored, with the intention to understand what factors influenced their level of engagement in their physical education classes. In this study, engagement in physical education refers to how often and to what extent students choose to participate in their physical education classes (Jachyra, 2014). To address the objective of the study, and the specific the research questions, the results are presented with the discussion woven throughout.

The first theme *Us and Them*, begins with a discussion of the culture of the participants' physical education classes and the distinction between social groups, identified and discussed by the participants. In this theme I will illustrate the culture in the participants' physical education classes to put further findings and discussion into context. The second theme, *The Physical Education Teacher: 'Him and His Football Boys'*, examines the impact the physical education teacher has had on young mens' experiences in physical education. Finally, the third theme entitled *Physical Cultural Capital*, provides an in-depth exploration into the theory of

physical cultural capital and its presence in the participants' high school physical education experiences.

3.1.1 "Us and Them"

"I had friends who would loathe going to fricken gym class. They'd say I don't want to go. It was never the ones who participated in class, it was always the ones who didn't, the 'gamers', the guys who didn't do anything."

(Francis, I 1)

This theme discusses the culture within the participants' physical education classes and their identification of two distinct groups of students, *Us* and *Them*. The participants in my study perceived themselves to be highly skilled and reported enjoying physical education, thus the term *Us* was used by all the participants to describe themselves, as well as the other young men who excelled and enjoyed physical education in their classes. After listening to the participants describe the young men grouped in the *Us* category, I came to realize that the students being described met the criteria for being *dominant young men* as they displayed athleticism, skill, hardworking attitudes and an enjoyment and passion for physical education (Connell, 2005; Jachyra, 2014). The term *Them* referred to the young men whom the participants described as less skilled or who did not excel or enjoy physical education in each participant's classes. The quote above describes this separation in the participants' classes by highlighting that some young men enjoyed and participated in physical education, and some did not.

When I began speaking to the participants about their previous experiences in physical education, it quickly became evident that many of them enjoyed physical education and

excelled in most class activities. They often spoke of their successes in physical education and their love of participating in competitive activities with their friends and classmates. When Oscar was asked why he enjoyed physical education he explained that the competitive activities and games were what made him to fall in love with the class. Oscar described his enjoyment by saying, “the other guys in the class were super fun and always made it competitive no matter what we were doing. Sometimes things became a bit personal, but we tried to keep it between the lines”(O, I 1). Similarly, Peter mentioned that he was always eager to participate, show his skills and be competitive:

I was always excited to go [to physical education class] because I knew that I would be able to perform and show my skills. I was a very active person and I loved competition so any game stuff, no matter what sport it was, I was always all in. (P, I 1)

Hearing multiple participants explain that the competitive nature of physical education was the aspect they enjoyed most about the class, made me wonder if the opportunity to compete with others may have increased their participation and engagement. I decided to address this by asking follow up questions about the participants’ experiences with competition and how it affected their experiences. When I asked all participants if they would still enjoy physical education if competitive activities were removed completely from the class, almost all of them reported that their participation could have decreased substantially. Furthermore, most of the participants stated that if activities and sports that emphasized competition were removed from their physical education classes, they would have not enrolled in physical education when it became an elective course in grade eleven. Ethan explained, “Personally if you would’ve taken [competitive activities] away, I would’ve been like ‘man this is not good at all’. Might take

that spare next year you know?" (E, I 2). Relationships between competitive activities and participation have been identified in previous research and suggested that among dominant boys, competition, domination and winning were driving factors that encouraged engagement in physical education (Jachyra, 2014). Competitive activities can be meaningful to students and provide positive experiences when implemented correctly (Aggerholm et al., 2018). Physical education teachers have the opportunity to provide appropriate competitive situations that can enable students to experience long-lasting positive outcomes. These outcomes include learning to work with others, improving performance, participating in a festive activity, developing dedication, discipline, and perseverance and having fun (Bergmann, 1998; Oslin, 2004). This too was evident in my study as the young men who reported high participation in class activities also had a love for competition. However, past research has also argued that competition in physical education activities divides boys based on their physical abilities (Swain, 2006). Knowing that competition had the potential to increase or promote the division amongst boys in a physical education setting (Warde, 2006), I found it imperative to also ask the participants for their thoughts on how competition may have affected the students in their classes who were less skilled or less dominant with regards to their physical abilities. Thus, I asked the participants to think about the young men in their physical education classes who may have been less skilled and less competitive than themselves and their friends. Some participants explained that looking back, they now realized that these young men had very different experiences than theirs. In my conversations with Oscar, he stated that his physical education classes in Grades 11 and 12 were very competitive, regardless of the activity they were doing

each day. Despite his love of intense competition, Oscar explained that many young men in his class did not share his same competitive drive.

It was just a competitive sense of nature and definitely not everyone was dialed in all the time. I think there were guys who dropped out of the class because of how competitive me and my friends were, and we made it unfun for them. (O, I 1)

Similarly, Jason explained that when activities would become overly competitive, some students would remove themselves from the situation to avoid any contact or roughhousing:

There were a couple of the kids in it [physical education class] that were kind of like pansies I guess you could call them, but I don't know, they were just really hesitant and like often times if there's any kind of battle going on they'd be the first ones to get out of there, like there were a couple fights in my gym class, usually just between us friends, but we'd still get mad enough to scrap or whatever, but they'd most times be the ones getting out of there getting the teacher, kind of like more cautious I guess. (J, I 1)

The nature and significance of competitive games and activities in the participants' classes reflect the history of physical education where competition and physical training were emphasized in physical education classes to develop the fitness and physical skills of dominant young men for war (Morrow, 2012; Verville et al., 2015). In Jason's experiences, when an environment shifted from a non-competitive environment to a competitive environment, the dominant students in the class were more likely to participate and the non-dominant students were less likely to participate. These findings are supported by research from Bourdieu (1997), Jachyra (2014, 2016) and Wadre (2006), who determined that when exposed to more aggressive, competitive or violent activities, dominant boys tend to engage more often than

non-dominant boys. Tischler & McCaughtry (2011) explained that when physical education teachers emphasized competition and aggression in their classes, they inevitably privileged boys who enjoyed competition and whose skills aligned with competitive activities. When activities in physical education classes become competitive, it is often difficult for boys who do not enjoy competition to contribute to their team's success in ways that were valued by their peers and the physical education teacher (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). My study reflects similar results as it is apparent that the competitive nature of class activities made the class unenjoyable and led to disengagement for many of the young men in Jason and Oscar's classes who did not enjoy competition. However, referring to the beginning of this section, competition is not inherently negative as it can incite participation for those who enjoy competition (Jachyra, 2014). It is the onus of the physical education teacher to manage competition in the class so that every student can enjoy participating in class activities, no matter their attitudes towards competition.

Once I became aware that participants classified one group as *Us* and one group as *Them*, I began noting all the terms and labels the participants used to describe the students in their physical education classes who displayed low levels of enjoyment and engagement. Interestingly, *Us* and *Them* were not the only labels used when participants spoke of young men in the different group. Labels or slurs such as "pansies," "music kids," "gamers," "stoners" and "pylons" were frequently used when the participants in this study described the students in their classes who were less skilled or less inclined to engage in their physical education class. These findings are similar to the work of Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011; Griffin, 1985; and Parker, 1996, who determined that labels and slurs are often directed towards boys who did not

display masculine norms, such as athleticism, strength, speed and aggressiveness. Labels and slurs were used by dominant boys to marginalize other boys, creating a divide between subgroups (dominant and marginalized) and confirming in the eyes of their peers that they were the dominant group in the class (Kehler, 2004; Tischler and McCaughtry, 2011).

3.1.1.1 The Role of Sport

When discussing the activities they participated in during their physical education classes and those offered in the extracurricular program or in the community, the participants reported that sports that required aggression, physicality and mental toughness were considered more 'masculine' than sports that did not have these requirements. Francis and Ben explained that hockey and football were considered very masculine sports at their school and that the young men who played on the high school football team or community hockey teams held a high social status amongst their peers. Francis stated that "if you were a part of those sports [football and hockey] you would be considered a higher rank than others" (F, I 2). Conversely, Ben indicated that participation in volleyball and badminton was seen as "less masculine" (B, I 2) among the young men in his class as "no one goes to watch dudes play volleyball" (B, I 2) (illuding to volleyball being a *girls sport*). The young men who participated in these 'masculine' sports frequently dominated in games and class activities as most of the activities were sport based and required many of the physical skills that these young men were already familiar with from their participation in hockey or football. Young men who participated in masculine extracurricular sports had already learned the fundamental skills and tactical aspects of activities such as hockey (skating and stick handling) or football (throwing, catching

and running) (Jachyra, 2014). They also had already developed a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990). For example, Ethan remarked:

The hockey players they're just so well rounded across everything, they were always up at the top... I think across all different spots, like we'd do handball, pickleball, tennis, badminton, we'd do football, soccer, basketball, snowshoeing. If they weren't the top, they were like top five to top three in kind of everything. They maybe weren't best in everything, but I think they were the most consistent, and I think those hockey players were probably more physically literate. (E, I 2)

With a greater familiarity of basic movement patterns, spatial awareness and offensive/defensive strategy, as well as more time outside of physical education class to practice skills such as throwing, catching, or manipulating equipment, the young men who played on the school football or a community hockey teams had greater success in most physical education class activities. As these young men routinely showed domination and success in any class activities or games, it was apparent that their social status significantly increased when compared to their peers in physical education.

Once I discovered that the participants attributed different levels of masculinity and social status to certain sports, I was interested in determining which sports were deemed most masculine and least masculine. It was clear that team sports, especially hockey and football, were considered highly masculine sports, while badminton, volleyball and track and field were less masculine. Recalling my own experiences in high school, I anticipated basketball to be another highly valorized sport at the participants' schools. However, the participants in my study described basketball as being less masculine than football and hockey. I also expected

that other physical or combative sports like boxing, wrestling, or kick boxing would be discussed and participation in these sports valued. However, these sports were not reported by the participants' to be valued or masculine. Peter explained that he played on the high school volleyball team and that the volleyball season was at the same time as the football season. During his physical education classes, he was not only made fun of by his peers about playing a *girls sport*, he was also shamed by his physical education teacher (who happened to be the head coach of the football team). "I definitely felt ridicule especially from like coaches. They would see me playing volleyball and be like 'you're not playing for the football team, you're not as good as our football players'" (P, I 2).

However, students who played on the school football team or played hockey in the community were praised by many of their peers, and in some cases, given preferential treatment by their physical education teachers. Mike, a participant who did not play hockey or football, explained that at his school the football players were praised more than most students and given more leeway from teachers. Responses from Mike and Oscar discussed similar themes of favouritism stating that the football players could "get away with anything" (M, I 2) or "dog it on any given day" (O, I 2) without any consequences from the physical education teacher. Robbie explained that the culture at his high school idolized the football team by allocating much more time, resources and recognition to the football team:

There were like senior football pep rallies, and I remember welcome week, we had the Freshie (welcome week) game, and that was kind of our school's thing and I know many other high schools were like that too, they'll drive out the kids to the game and your student card will get you in free. (R, I 2)

This is not the first time that a hierarchy among sports has been recognized in physical education research. A study by Swain (2006) in England, investigating the central role of organized sport in junior high school, determined that football (soccer) was the most valorized sport to the students in the study and participation in this sport elevated their social status, amongst their peers. Like the responses from the participants in my study, Swain (2006) reported that simply being an athlete was not good enough; to achieve the highest social status, a student had to participate in the appropriate sport (in this case football). In the case of my study, young men who participated in either organized hockey or football had a higher social rank in the class. Of the young men who participated in organized hockey or football, the most skilled performers on the team reaped higher social rewards than the rest of the athletes on the teams. For example, Oscar explained that the girls at his school would always flock towards the “guys who score all the touchdowns” (O, I 2) to take pictures with them after the football games. It was reported by the participants in this study that simply participating in organized hockey or football appeared to have a significant effect on a young man’s social status compared to young men who did not participate in these sports entirely. It became apparent that a male athlete who rode the bench or played in a less competitive league, but still participated in one of the two valorized sports (hockey or football), was still rewarded dominant status over the young men who did not participate in these sports at all. “There were a few instances where the lower-level hockey guys were lower [on the social hierarchy of the class], but more just generally it was the hockey kids who were the higher [on the social hierarchy] than any other sport, regardless of what level they played at” (Charlie, I 2). It was apparent that mere participation in certain extra-curricular sports was enough for young men

to display dominance in their physical education classes, as well as elevate their social status amongst their peers.

3.1.2 The Physical Education Teacher: “Him and His Football Boys”

When the schedule came out, I saw the teacher’s name on it, so I dropped the class.

(Peter, I 1)

The second theme in this chapter discusses the impact of the participants’ physical education teachers on their experiences in high school physical education.

3.1.2.1 Tool of Torture or an Instrument of Inspiration

Teachers play a central role in educational development and providing positive learning experiences for their students (Abildsnes et al., 2017; Jachyra, 2014; Ladwig, 2018; Redelius et al., 2009). When a teacher is competent, supportive and compassionate towards their students, they can have a very positive impact on their students’ lives (Redelius et al., 2009; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). The influence teachers have on their students’ experiences is best described by Ginott (1972), “As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration” (p.46). The impact that teachers had on the participants’ physical education experiences was evident in every conversation and it was clear that teachers played a major role in their participation and enjoyment of the class. When participants had teachers who were fair and encouraging, they reported that the teacher positively impacted their enjoyment and engagement in physical education. Furthermore, if the participants had a close relationship with their physical education teacher, their enjoyment and engagement in physical education also increased. Oscar, Robbie and Jason, all expressed admiration for their physical education teacher:

You're talking about a guy who I could text right now for anything, three years removed from high school, and he'd answer within a day. One of the most supportive guys I know. The reason I am who I am today. (Oscar, I 1)

I really think that it should be attributed to the teachers I had. I just had really great gym teachers who you could tell were caring people and actually wanted the best for their students, not just a guy who was there to coach the basketball team. (Robbie, I 1)

He was a really good teacher, he knew that us boys were going to be boys, like our friend group was just going to be boys, and he let us do our thing... He always tried to encourage everybody to get involved in the things but if they didn't, obviously he didn't push them either, so he was just kind of relaxed and chill about it. (Jason, I 1)

Each of these three participants shared vivid examples of how their experiences in physical education were positively affected by the actions of their teachers. Similarly, in a study by Pan (2014), that focused on students' relationships with their physical education teachers in high school, teacher-student relationships had a significant effect on students' motivation to learn and created a better learning atmosphere in their physical education classes. When there was a positive relationship between the student and the teacher that included constructive feedback, support and encouragement, students were more likely to enjoy and participate in the class (Baron, 2007; Ladwig, 2018; Pan, 2014).

Conversely, the actions of a physical education teacher can negatively impact a student's experiences. Davison (2000), Tischler & McCaughtry (2011) and Ladwig (2018)

determined that young men, who had negative relationships with their physical education teachers, were routinely antagonized, mocked and scolded by their teachers. In these studies, teachers often publicly humiliated young men who had low physical competence and skill by bringing attention to their physical appearances and mocking their physical abilities in front of the class. Alternatively, highly skilled and outgoing young men frequently attained higher marks and received the majority of their physical education teachers' positive attention (i.e., praise, feedback, conversation) (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). In high school physical education classes, highly skilled young men frequently displayed increased levels of confidence and enjoyment due to the extra support they received from their teacher (Cairney, 2019; Gerdin, 1994; Ladwig, 2018). Although some of the highly skilled participants in my study (Jason, Oscar, Robbie) reported that their physical education teacher greatly enhanced their enjoyment and experiences in physical education, this was not the case for all highly skilled students in my study. Charlie, Clark, Francis and Peter all self-identified as highly skilled students in their physical education classes, but when asked about their experiences in the class, each one explained that their physical education teacher had a negative impact on their enjoyment and participation in their physical education classes. For example, Charlie felt that his physical education teacher displayed preferential treatment towards the young women in his class:

My teacher was really biased (positively) towards the girls and gave out higher grades to them. In Grade 9 I was a little more physically gifted than other people. I'd be setting records for twelve-minute runs and other physical tests, but I had like a 75% in the class, but a girl who would just stand there or not even leave the changeroom for the first twenty minutes would have like a 95%. It wouldn't make any sense. (C, I 2)

Similarly, Francis mentioned that his physical education teacher also treated certain students differently than others. He described how his teacher was kinder to the students he was fonder of:

My teacher wasn't the best. Maybe not the nicest dude. That kind of made it a little iffy.... He kind of picks and chooses sometimes... It didn't even matter what you did but he'd have his favourites. (F, I 1)

(Jachyra, 2014) determined that advanced movement competencies, participation in sport and an athletic prowess, were often highly valued by physical education teachers. Though Charlie, Clark, Francis and Peter all demonstrated these characteristics, it is interesting to note that they all reported negative relationships with their physical education teachers. When asked about their participation and engagement in physical education, each of them explained that their teacher's actions had a negative effect on their desire to participate in class activities. It was clear that the teacher's behaviour had a significant impact on the participants' engagement in physical education varied, from dissuading participation in class activities to causing young men to drop the class, entirely. For example, Peter explained that physical education was one of his favourite subjects throughout elementary school and in grade nine and ten in high school. He emphasised his love for being competitive and constant desire to engage in class activities, until the actions of his grade eleven physical education teacher caused him to hate the class and withdraw from grade twelve physical education the following year. Peter described his relationship with his grade eleven physical education teacher as verbally abusive, and even physically abusive at times:

My teacher and I did not have a great relationship. It was almost like a bullying aspect that I felt. It was always verbal and then I remember we were doing a wrestling unit and my teacher was a big guy and I was like five foot six. We were playing this game where you would go on your knees and go back and forth across the gym and people in the middle would try to tackle you down. I was doing really good and no one could catch me or take me down, so he stopped the activity and takes me as his guy to show moves on and starts slamming me on the ground and throwing me like a ragdoll on the mat... after that day I was like screw this guy, he's a dick. That instantly made me not want to do the class anymore and I went and sat on the side for the rest of class. My head was hurting and everything was hurting and then the PE teacher got mad at me for not participating. I said, "what do you mean, you just threw me around to prove a point or something?"

(P, I 1)

Several studies that explored boys' experiences in elementary and high school physical education classes reported that boys often felt verbally and physically abused by their teachers (Davison, 2000; Jachyra, 2014; Kehler, 2004; Ladwig, 2018; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Davison (2000) determined that physical education can be "a breeding ground of aggression and brutality" (p. 260) and noted that the actions of some teachers could be viewed as an "emotional assault" (p. 260). In addition, when physical education teachers displayed abusive tendencies such as name calling, body shaming and public humiliation it resulted in disengagement and negative experiences for boys in physical education, especially among boys who display non-dominant masculinities (Beltran et al., 2012; Jachyra, 2014). In Peter's case, a year of abuse from his teacher not only resulted in decreased participation in class activities

during the year, it also resulted in him never enrolling in his previously mentioned “favourite class” (P, I 1) again.

The results of my study revealed key differences from previous findings with regards to preferential treatment from physical education teachers. Previous research states that boys who displayed dominant masculinity forms (i.e., strong, hardened, warrior type mentality), typically received more praise, admiration and attention from their physical education teachers, while non-dominant boys were more often subject to ridicule and public humiliation from their physical education teachers (Jachyra, 2014; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). At first, I expected all the young men in my study who felt they were highly skilled to report receiving more praise and attention from their physical education teachers than their less skilled peers. I also thought they would all have had a positive relationship with their teacher. However, the participants who reported negative experiences with their physical education teacher all reportedly excelled and were successful in class activities. Charlie, Clark, Francis and Peter all identified themselves as highly skilled and succeeded in most activities in their physical education classes. However, these four individuals discussed how their physical education teacher was the main reason for their negative experiences in physical education.

3.1.2.2 Playing Favourites

He had his favourites and you could tell.

(Francis, I 1)

Physical education teachers who favoured some students over others negatively impacted many participants' experiences. As previously noted, Charlie explained that his physical education teacher in grade nine favoured the girls in his class when marking

assignments and fitness tests. He expressed that this differential treatment deeply affected his outlook on physical education throughout his high school years. Similarly, Clark and Francis, felt that their physical education teacher favoured certain students over others. Clark explained that his physical education teacher did not like confrontation, so many times his teacher was afraid to tell certain students *no*. The favoured students were all highly skilled movers and all members of the school basketball team. Clark's teacher allowed these students to decide what activities the entire class would do each day, without the consent of other students in the class. Previous physical education research has determined that giving students the autonomy to pick their class activities was beneficial to sustained motivation and participation in class activities (Abildsnes et al., 2017; Prusak, 2004; Vallerand, 2001). However, Clark described that when the basketball players were the only students choosing the class activities each day, the young men who did not play on the basketball team participated less in these activities. The basketball players begged the teacher to play basketball every day, even though most of the students in the class (including Clark) did not enjoy playing basketball. However, since Clark's physical education teacher did not like confrontation, the class played basketball for the majority of classes in the semester. Likewise, Francis described his physical education teacher as "maybe not the nicest dude" (F, I 1), but he would be nicer to the girls and his favourite students in the class. Although these negative experiences were unique to each physical education teacher and the culture of each participant's physical education class, they all displayed a common theme of favouritism.

Many of the participants felt that their physical education teachers frequently favoured the students who were athletic, participated in all class activities and played on the school

football team. Jason and Ben both noted that in their physical education classes, their teachers favoured the students who were physically active and who frequently participated during class activities. “The boys that were active and took part in everything were definitely his favourites” (Jason, I 1). These students were favoured more often than the students who actively tried to avoid participation in physical education class activities by “faking an injury” (Jason, I 1) or lying about “forgetting their gym stuff” (Ben, I 1). In previous research regarding participation in physical education, lying about injuries, illnesses and forgetting their fitness gear were common behavioural tactics for students who wanted to avoid participation in class activities (Abildsnes et al., 2017; Carlson, 1995; O’Donavon & Kirk, 2007). When these students could not fool their teachers into letting them sit on the sidelines, they would try not to participate or participate at the bare minimum (Abildsnes et al., 2017). Jachyra (2014) suggested that when certain students were favoured or received more attention from their physical education teacher, a hierarchy formed within in the class between favoured students and those who were not favoured (Jachyra, 2014). This was apparent in my study as, in some cases, as certain participants spoke of instances in physical education where, because they played on their schools’ football teams, they were treated differently than other young men who did not play on these teams:

In Grade 9 and 10, the coach of my football team was the physical education teacher... I knew I had a good enough relationship with him where if I tried during the warmup and tried when he was looking, I could get away with dogging it on any given day. I don’t want to sit here and brag about anything but my family is a pretty big donator to the football team every year so I had that respect with him so I could get away with

anything... If I ever wanted to sit out of a pickle ball unit I could do that and not receive consequences from it. (Oscar, I 1)

Oscar described how a close relationship with his physical education teacher developed because his teacher was also the coach of the school football team, and his family were major donors to the football program. He seemed aware of the special privileges he received from his physical education teacher and routinely exercised these privileges when he felt like sitting out of certain activities. Similarly, Mike explained that his physical education teacher was also the high school football coach. Mike did not play football, and he described how his teacher would favour the football players in his classes. If a classmate of Mike's was one of the teacher's "football boys" (M, I 2), they would be able to get away with anything during class and received more praise from the teacher:

He had his favourites, very obvious ones too. They usually experienced a lot more encouragement and almost leeway in some ways too... He was maybe harder on the kids who weren't his favourites or just dismissive too like either harder on them or just ignored them. (M, I 2)

As I continued to ask the participants about their experiences with teacher favouritism, it became apparent that participation in football was more favourable to their physical education teachers than any other school sport. For example, Oscar and Peter both explained that football was the most valorized sport at their school, yielding the highest social status to its athletes. Additionally, both Oscar and Peter's physical education teachers were also the coaches of their schools' football teams. Since Oscar played on the football team, he explained that he was the recipient of special privileges from his physical education teacher. Peter, however, did not play

on the school football team and although he was a highly skilled athlete, he described how his physical education teacher routinely favoured the football players, more than the students who played other sports. Favouritism came in the form of respect and supportiveness in Peter's class for the students on the football team. He noted that his physical education teacher would give "his football boys" (P, I 2) verbal encouragement while frequently ridiculing him. Peter explained that while he played high level hockey outside of the school, his physical education teacher constantly told him that he was a "pylon" (P, I 1) since he didn't contribute to the school's sports teams and didn't play on the football team he coached. Peter's experiences suggest that the favouritism displayed by this teacher may not have only been towards student athletes, but specifically towards student athletes on the football team.

Football is considered an important contributor to masculinity construction and social worth among young men in high school, as it is highly celebrated by most students and staff (Connell, 1996; Steinfeldt, 2012; Swain, 2006). For three of the participants, specifically (Peter, Oscar and Mike), their physical education teachers also coached the school football team. All three participants reported that their physical education teachers publicly displayed favouritism towards the students who participated on the football team, and more frequently than athletes on any other team.

Physical education teachers hold a tremendous amount of power and influence on a young man's experiences in high school physical education (Beltran et al., 2012; Ginott, 1972; Jachyra, 2014; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). When positive favouritism was displayed towards certain participants, they felt more support, attention and respect compared to the rest of their classmates. According to many of the participants, the students who played football or who

displayed high participation in class activities were blatantly favoured by their physical education teachers. "School sport is not meant to be some kind of innocent pastime but is often used to create a 'top dog' model of masculinity which many boys try to aim for and live up to" (Salisbury, 1996, p. 205). In Peter, Oscar and Mike's classes, "top dog" status stemmed from playing on the football team and was further reinforced by their physical education teachers. The participants who played on the football team in high school had very positive experiences and relished the special bond they had with their physical education teachers. The participants who did not play on the football team, but played on other high school teams (volleyball, soccer, track and field), revealed that they felt less support and attention from their physical education teachers.

3.1.3 "Physical Cultural Capital"

Physical cultural capital is a theory developed by Canadian scholar Patrick Jachyra to understand and explain young mens' experiences with engagement in physical education (Jachyra, 2014). In Jachyra's (2014) landmark study, it was apparent that the more physical cultural capital a young man had, the more he engaged and enjoyed physical education. One of the research questions investigated in this study was if the theory of physical cultural capital was evident in the participants' previous experiences in high school physical education. To answer this question, I started each of the second round of interviews by explaining physical cultural capital to the participants before discussing if they felt it was present in their experiences. What I found was that not only was physical cultural capital present, but it was also a major factor in determining the participants' enjoyment and their subsequent participation in their previous physical education classes.

3.1.3.1 The Social Food Chain

You could definitely tell that there was a divide. There were the skilled people and the people who were just there because they had to be there.

(Ben, I 2)

All participants indicated that there was a notable divide between dominant young men (who embodied dominant masculinities and valorized physical traits) and non-dominant young men (who did not embody dominant masculinities or valorized physical traits) in their physical education classes. These characteristics significantly influenced how the participants enjoyed and socially experienced physical education in high school. It is theorized that disengagement and withdrawal from physical education may stem from the struggle of non-dominant boys to gain physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014). Throughout the interviews, I began to wonder what specific factors in each of the participants' experiences influenced the accrual of physical cultural capital in their physical education classes. Thus, I posed questions to the participants regarding the prevalence of physical cultural capital, or lack thereof, in their physical education classes.

Competition is an integral part of physical education as it provides an opportunity to work with others, improves performance and develops dedication, discipline and perseverance (Layne, 2014). When I spoke with the participants about physical cultural capital, many of them explained that being highly competitive and having a love for competition and game-like situations accrued high physical cultural capital in their classes. The higher a young man's competitive drive was in class activities, the more physical cultural capital he would accumulate in his physical education class. Competitive games and activities are common in high school

physical education (Swain, 2006), despite their unpopularity among low-skilled students (Carlson, 1995; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Warde, 2006). According to Swain (2006), boys who did not excel at sports usually displayed decreased enjoyment and participation in physical education activities when competitive sports were emphasized. Alternatively, highly skilled students thrived on competition and showed increased participation and enjoyment when competition was their physical education classes' focus (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Swain, 2006). Therefore, when competitive activities were emphasized in physical education classes, a hierarchical classroom structure was reproduced (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010) that widened the gap between competitive and non-competitive students. It appeared that this divide ultimately privileged a student like Peter, who enjoyed competition, and discouraged participation among the young men who disliked competition:

I love competition, I am very physically active, I participate in all this stuff that makes me love to do sports. Then on the flip side, other classmates that are in gym, especially in grade nine and ten when it's mandatory, you see those people who are not competitive, they don't enjoy pushing their body and stuff like that. Their attitude makes the class what it is, so if their attitude was bad, they obviously weren't getting the best marks in physical education. (P, I 2)

Knowing that a divide existed between highly competitive students and non-competitive students, I posed a question to the participants asking how they would feel if competition was completely removed from their physical education classes. Nearly every participant reported that their participation and enjoyment of the class would decrease:

If you took out the competitiveness there is nothing to work towards, if you're not going to win then what's the point of doing something you know? Doing something just to do something is sometimes the most boring thing ever. (Francis, I 2)

I'm a very competitive guy so I do not think I like would like it, like I'm competitive with everything I do... That was kind of like the other guys too, like the other guys with higher physical cultural capital, we were all competitive, so if you lost that [competition], then you lost my interest in physical education. (Charlie, I 2)

The results of my study suggest that accruing physical cultural capital can be thought of in terms of a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, were young men with high physical cultural capital, where competition and winning in physical education were very important. On the other end of the spectrum were the young men with low physical cultural capital who frequently shied away from competition. Young men who disliked competition were afforded low physical cultural capital. When asked about the non-competitive young men in his class, Jason remarked:

They're at the bottom of the group. They aren't competitive with some of the sports. That was a problem where in some of the sports settings, not everyone was involved. Like obviously in football, I know this is rude, but you wouldn't pass to the kid who wasn't going to run. (J, I 1)

Jason's comments suggested that the students in the class who disliked competition were left out of class activities by the highly competitive students. As a result, the non-competitive young men received fewer opportunities to participate in highly competitive games, as the more

competitive young men only passed or involved each other in the game, excluding the rest of the class.

Another factor that affected the accumulation of physical cultural capital for the participants in my study was participation in highly valued or prestigious sports. In Jachyra's (2014) work exploring the experiences of Grade 8 boys in physical education, he suggested that boys who participated in competitive sport like hockey, already demonstrated a competitive sporting prowess, hardworking attitude, preferred level of fitness, and a competence in the desired movement patterns that were also expected by teachers in physical education class. As noted in earlier themes, many of the values that were embedded in competitive hockey also aligned with the desired values of physical education (Jachyra, 2014). Since the boys in Jachyra's study who participated in hockey, had already learned and exhibited these desired values, they held high physical cultural capital in their physical education classes. From my research, I was aware that some sports afforded more physical cultural capital to their participants than others. Thus, I was interested in determining what sport(s) afforded the highest physical cultural capital in the participants' physical education classes. Once the participants were familiar with the theory of physical capital, I decided to ask them if participation in any extra-curricular or out-of-school sport(s) afforded high physical cultural capital, and if so, which sports afforded the most. What I discovered was that participation on the school football team or on a community hockey team afforded more physical cultural capital to a physical education student than any other sport. Ben explained that if you participated in football or hockey, you would be "considered a higher rank than others" (B, I 2) and were "seen as someone with skill" (B, I 2). Additionally, three participants (Ethan, Charlie

and Jason) described their hometowns as a “hockey town,” where playing hockey was engrained in the culture of their town. Ethan noted that at his school, the young men who played hockey were “all socially connected” (E, I 2) with each other as hockey was the most popular extracurricular sport in his town. He explained that these young men were always “at the top of the social food chain” (E, I 2) in his physical education class and were usually the most physically gifted athletes as well. Ethan’s comment about a “social food chain” (E, I 2) affirmed previous findings by Clark (2011), Jachyra (2014) and Shilling (2003), determined that young men were consciously aware that a hierarchy among students existed in their physical education classes and that each young man was aware of their position within the class. If a student was positioned near the top of the hierarchy in physical education, they would also possess high physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014). In my study, the opportunity to acquire physical cultural capital was amplified when an individual played on the school football team. The culture instilled in football, celebrated a rugged masculinity and a warrior type mentality, where boys were taught to be tough and never surrender (Jachyra, 2014; Kehler 2004). According to Ben, the football players at his school were usually “bigger, more powerful, had a higher drive and were more aggressive” (B, I 2). Many of the participants indicated that football was the most valorized sport at their school and that the football players held more physical cultural capital than athletes in other sports. For example, Robbie recalled a situation where one of the young men in his class played competitive soccer on a provincial team and made the senior volleyball team in his first year of high school. Robbie felt these two accomplishments were impressive and uncommon at his high school. However, since football was the most popular sport at Robbie’s school, playing high level soccer or volleyball was not celebrated or

appreciated nearly as much as when two of Robbie's other friends made the senior football team in Grade 10. Since football was the most masculine sport at Robbie's high school, the athletes who played football received higher physical cultural capital than athletes from any other sport. Football has many ties to masculinity in popular culture and in research (Jachyra, 2014; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). One popular societal stereotype of football player is the *powerful jock* who holds social dominion over the other students in their classes (Steinfeldt et al., 2012). This stereotype stemmed from similarities between societal male gender norms and the values instilled in the sport of football. For instance, according to Messner (2002) and Steinfeldt et al. (2012), football serves as a site where boys learned values and behaviours such as toughness, competitiveness, aggression and a will-to-win. These characteristics are culturally regarded aspects of masculinity and male gender norms. When I asked the participants in my study which sports they considered most masculine, almost every participant stated football. As Jachyra (2014) noted, boys who displayed dominant or hegemonic masculinities primarily had high physical cultural capital. Upon learning this information, it was no surprise that the young men who participated in football were afforded high physical cultural capital in many of the participants' physical education classes.

Another prevalent factor that influenced the accrual of physical cultural capital in the participants' physical education classes was a young man's somatotype or bodily physique. Historically, the male body has been recognized as a site of power, status and privilege and one of the earliest forms of physical capital (Bourdieu, 1981, 1997). For example, individuals who did not possess a muscular body type struggled with tasks involving manual labour and thus, relied on people with muscular performing bodies to carry out these tasks (Bourdieu, 1984).

Presently, individuals with athletic, performing bodies still benefit from their bodies in many different contexts (Jachyra, 2014; Kerner et al., 2018). In sport, athletes with strong, athletic bodies are highly valued and typically dominate more often than players with frail/soft bodies (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010; Shilling, 2012). This appears to be the case in physical education classes as well. In physical education classes, the body is constantly on display and acts as a significant resource for accumulating physical cultural capital (Davison, 2000; Jachyra, 2014; Kerner et al., 2018; Shilling, 2012). Many participants mentioned that body size, strength, fitness and physical literacy were all important physical attributes that influenced the accrument of physical cultural capital in their physical education classes. The participants explained that young men who displayed a muscular physique were more successful in most physical education class activities and displayed more confidence, when compared to the young men who had a higher percentage of body fat, were less muscular or unfit. In some cases, the young men who displayed high levels of fitness used physical education class as a chance to show off their skills:

I think one thing could be that I'm just really physically fit already and maybe part of me had that desire to show off a little bit, like this is my time to shine. I was terrible in math class, I'm not that confident there, but out here, this is where I'm going to show my dominance. (Ethan, I 2)

Alternatively, the young men in the participants' classes who displayed low levels of fitness, typically held low physical cultural capital, and had less of a desire to participate in physical education. These individuals were described by some participants as "the bigger boys who did

not get out of the house a whole lot” (F, I 2), or “the gamers” (F, I 2). These descriptors suggest that these students spent a large amount of their time being inactive at home.

3.1.3.2 Our Change Room

Changerooms are noted to be a point of concern in physical education literature (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010; Ladwig et al., 2018). At Charlie’s school, the young men had two identical change rooms available for them. They had full autonomy from the teacher to choose whichever change room they wanted to use each day. However, Charlie explained that each day, the same group of young men would change in one change room and the rest of the class would change in the other change room. In our conversation, he noted:

Charlie (C): The one that was closer would be the one where everyone who was uncomfortable would usually go then the other one (the one farther away) was where all the guys like us would go. We would go in there and it was comfortable, we’d sit and talk for five minutes before and after class. I genuinely liked the change room. The other one was definitely for the more uncomfortable kids.

Evan (E): You could pick whichever one you went to?

C: Yes.

E: Did the boys who excelled in physical education always change in one and the boys who didn’t excel in physical education change in the other one?

C: Yeah that’s usually how it would work out.

E: And it was just decided naturally?

C: Yeah, we'd show up for the first week of class then we just solidified that this was ours and this was yours but like it was an unspoken thing too.

E: Would you say that divide was a representation of the divide in your physical education class?

C: More or less, yeah. (C, I 2)

After learning that the students in Charlie's physical education class would, based on their level of comfort or skill, divide themselves into two separate change rooms; I realized that this division may be a physical representation of high physical cultural capital and low physical cultural capital in Charlie's physical education class. Jachyra (2014) suggests that boys are consciously aware of their own level of 'social worth' and how it measures up to their classmates. This awareness can be significantly heightened in the change room as boys often report feeling that their bodies were more often on display while changing their clothes and exposing their bodies to their classmates (Ladwig et al., 2018). Additionally, Kehler & Atkinson (2010) determined that boys who displayed dominant masculinities also displayed domination in the change room. As a result, some boys felt excluded from changing beside the dominant boys and were aware of their place in the change room (Jachyra, 2014; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). I began Charlie's second interview by describing the theory of physical cultural capital (as I did with each participant), so that he was familiar with the theory as we discussed his experiences in physical education. Later in the interview, Charlie suggested that physical cultural capital may have significantly affected which change room the young men in his class naturally gravitated towards:

C: I don't know if you remember last time, I was talking about how there was two change rooms. There was the one with more the I guess the higher [physical cultural capital] guys, and then I'd say the guys that didn't really show as many qualities, like who are not going to be our friends or anything like that really cause they're not like us. They definitely would have been in the other change room, like not really affiliated with us or anything like that.

E: So we just talked about physical cultural capital, the high and low. Do you think this theory was physically demonstrated in your school by the change rooms? One was high capital; one was low capital?

C: I'd say that's almost the perfect way to describe how that would have been, one change room for the higher capital one for the lower. (C, I 2)

According to Charlie, the young men who held high physical cultural capital would change in the locker room that Charlie occupied, while the young men who held low physical cultural capital would change in the other locker room. The students with high physical cultural capital did not verbally order the students with low physical cultural capital to change in the other locker room, however, Charlie mentioned that these young men were "not really affiliated with us" (C, I 2) and "were not going to be our friends" (C, I 2), further emphasizing the divide amongst the young men in his class. This is not the first occurrence of students separating amongst each other to change before physical education class. According to Jachyra (2016) and Kehler & Atkinson (2010), boys who expressed non-dominant masculinities or displayed low physical cultural capital were ostracised and regularly changed in the back/corners of the change room. Additionally, some students feared being teased when they stripped down or showered in front

of other students. It is assumed that a lack of privacy is not problematic for boys (Davison, 2000), so there is usually no recourse for the boys who may feel uncomfortable or unsafe in the change room or showers. To avoid humiliation and mockery, boys who feel uncomfortable in the change room either change quickly and leave or separate themselves from the dominant boys in the change room (Kehler & Atkinson 2013; Jachyra 2014). Francis explained that at his school, there was an open area as well as private stalls. He recalled that most of the young men in his class would change in the open area, but those who were uncomfortable with changing around the group, usually used the stalls to change. Conversely, Clark and Robbie explained that at their schools, there was only one main area in the locker room to change. They described that their locker room experiences in high school were annoying and sometimes frightening due to the behaviour of certain students in their classes. Robbie explained that some of the students in his physical education class would constantly roughhouse and mock people in the change room. For Robbie, these behaviours in the change room were his least favourite part of physical education and “insults and jokes in the locker room would make me feel uncomfortable sometimes” (R, I 1). Similarly, Clark mentioned that one of the young men in his physical education class who played high level hockey would arrogantly “strut” (C, I 1) around the locker room. He challenged the students who did not praise him by calling them out, teasing them and making them feel small. When asked how this student impacted Clark’s locker room experience, he explained that “It wasn’t a good atmosphere. It was like scary kind of” (C, I 1). Seemingly, when the option to change privately was not available in the participants’ change rooms, some of the participants reported uncomfortable experiences.

Charlie recalled that the occupants of both change rooms remained fairly consistent throughout the year, however I was interested in determining if during the school year, any students switched change rooms. When I asked about this, I learned that a few students did occasionally switch back and forth between change rooms. However, the timing of the switch was contingent on how willing they were to participate that day or what activity the class was doing. If the activity was a team activity or sport, these few students would usually gravitate towards Charlie's change room to better their chances of joining the same team as the students in that change room, instead of having to play against them:

They'd come for like the team sports, so like tchoukball, so for those team games we'd always make it fun so they come be in our group or whatever, but if we were just sitting there doing basketball training drills, they wouldn't really come affiliate themselves with us cause, they're just going do their own thing and get through the class. It was definitely more team sports that they'd come to ours... they'd hate to go against us I think and miss out on the fun. (C, I 2)

Charlie described the young men who would switch back and forth between change rooms as "frenemies" (C, I 2) of the young men who occupied Charlie's change room. Essentially, these young men would only be friendly and engage with the students in Charlie's change room when they wanted to be included in their group. When class activities were non-competitive, these students would go back to the other change room.

If the two change rooms at Charlie's school illustrated the separation between young men with high physical cultural capital and young men with low physical cultural capital, I thought it was essential to understand where the students who switched back and forth

between change rooms fit into the physical cultural capital scale. Charlie explained that one of the young men in his class who would routinely switch change rooms played hockey outside of school. In previous research, hockey has been classified as a masculine sport that emphasized societally desired gender norms (i.e., strong, rugged, warrior type mentalities) for its athletes (Davison, 2000; Gerdin, 1994; Jachyra, 2014; Kehler, 2004) and mere participation in the sport provided the young men in these studies with high physical cultural capital in their physical education classes. According to these preceding studies, the young man in Charlie's class should have possessed high physical cultural capital for his participation in competitive hockey and, therefore, should have occupied the change room alongside the other students with high physical cultural capital. However, Charlie informed me that although this student played hockey outside of school, he was "not very good at hockey" (C, I 2). Previous research by Connell (1995, 2000) discussed a "liminal" space existing between dominant and marginalized masculinities. This liminal space grouped boys who embodied some of the desired expressions of dominant masculinity (i.e., competitive, hardened, aggressive), but who lacked many of these masculine qualities as well (Swain, 2006). Additionally, these boys may have expressed some interest or participation in sport, however possessed low skill, compared to the dominant boys in their physical education classes (Swain, 2006). As such, the liminal space resides in between the dominant and marginalized categories of masculinity, similar to the intersection of a Venn diagram. Boys in this liminal space were labeled "wannabes" (Adler & Adler, 1998) and would often be seen hanging around the edges of the dominant group. These boys may have participated in sport and displayed several desirable sporting qualities such as perseverance, self-control and tactical awareness, but they did not possess enough of these sporting qualities

or skill to boost them into the dominant category (Swain, 2006). Similarly, the young man in Charlie's class who played hockey, but was not very skilled at it, seemed to also reside in this liminal space between high and low physical cultural capital. Through hockey, he accrued enough physical cultural capital to occasionally occupy the change room Charlie and the other young men with high physical cultural capital used but did not embody enough of the essential masculine qualities to remain in that change room for long.

Throughout my conversations with the participants, it was clear that physical cultural capital was evident in each of their high school physical education classes and had a significant effect on their participation and enjoyment of the class. Resulting from these conversations, three key factors emerged and were explored with the intent to determine how a young man accumulated physical cultural capital in their physical education classes. Competition was an integral part of accruing high physical cultural capital, as many participants described that having a love for competition and game-like situations was what rewarded a young man with the most physical cultural capital in their class. Additionally, participation in competitive hockey or football also afforded young men with high physical cultural capital as many of the values that were infused in competitive hockey also aligned with the desired values of physical education (Jachyra, 2014). Finally, as the body was constantly on display in physical education, bodily physique and athleticism both acted as two significant resources for accumulating physical cultural capital (Jachyra, 2014). Alternatively, young men who failed to embody or conform to these factors were afforded low physical cultural capital and were actively marginalized.

3.1.4 Summary

Theme one in this chapter discussed the culture of the participants' physical education class and the distinction between distinct groups of students *Us* (the participants and other young men in their class who excelled and enjoyed physical education) and *Them* (the young men in the participants' classes who did not excel or enjoy physical education). The separation between groups was a result of several different factors in the participants' classes. Primarily, young men were divided based on their attitude towards competitiveness and whether they participated on the school football team or a community hockey team. The participants reported that young men who enjoyed competition participated more often in their physical education classes than young men who did not. Additionally, young men who participated in *masculine sports* such as hockey and football frequently dominated in their physical education classes as many of the activities were sport based and required certain physical skills that these young men possessed as a result of their participation in sport. Thus, a divide (*Us* and *Them*) was created between young men who were highly competitive or participated in football or hockey and students who did not enjoy competitive activities and who did not participate in the previously mentioned sports.

Theme two in this chapter examined the influence of the physical education teacher on the participants' experiences in physical education. The participants who had a positive relationship with their teachers enjoyed and participated in their physical education classes more often than the participants who did not like their teachers. In previous research regarding student-teacher relationships, highly skilled young men frequently displayed increased levels of confidence and enjoyment in physical education as they received the majority of their teachers'

positive attention (feedback, praise, support) (Cairney, 2019; Gerdin, 1994; Ladwig, 2018; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). However, in my study, there were multiple highly skilled participants who explained that their physical education teacher had a considerable negative affect on their enjoyment and participation in their physical education classes. Although these participants excelled in class activities and games, they described how their physical education teacher favoured certain students over others.

Lastly, theme three provided an in-depth exploration of physical cultural capital and its prevalence in each participant's physical education experiences. What I found was that physical cultural capital significantly influenced how the participants enjoyed and socially experienced physical education in high school. In the participants' classes, young men who enjoyed competition, played for the school football team or a hockey team in the community and had bodies that portrayed an athletic, muscular physique were afforded high physical cultural capital. The young men who displayed these qualities frequently dominated during class activities and displayed high levels of participation in physical education. Conversely, young men who shied away from competition, did not participate in football or hockey and who had more frail, soft or overweight body types displayed low physical cultural capital. These young men were marginalized and displayed low participation rates in their physical education classes.

Chapter 4

4.1 Conclusion

This qualitative descriptive study investigated the previous high school physical education experiences of a selected group of male-identifying university students. Specifically, I wanted to better understand these participants' experiences in physical education and explore the role that physical cultural capital may have played on their participation and engagement. While there is substantial amount of literature surrounding the experiences of girls and young women in physical education (Gibbons, 2009; Mitchell, 2015; Robbins et al., 2003), significantly less is known about the physical education experiences of boys and young men. Therefore, this study sought to add relevant information to a topic that has been largely overlooked in physical education research.

Participants' previous experiences in high school physical education classes were explored, with the intention to understand what factors influenced their engagement in their physical education classes. Specifically, my aim was to answer the following two research questions: (1) What are the factors that affected engagement in the participants' physical education classes? and 2) Was physical cultural capital present in the physical education experiences of participants? Since a gap in the literature exists regarding young mens' experiences in physical education, a qualitative descriptive study design was employed in this study, as this design provides an opportunity for participants to describe their experiences and perceptions in areas where little is known about a topic (Doyle, 2019; Sandelowski, 2010). To address these research questions, I recruited 10 male-identifying students from the University of Saskatchewan to participate in this study. Using semi-structured interviews, I discussed the

participants' physical education experiences with them and asked them to share their thoughts about their engagement in their physical education classes. Below, I will discuss how the findings from these interviews address each of the study's two guiding research questions.

The aim of the first research question was to explore the factors that affected engagement within each of the participants' physical education classes. What I found was that a multitude of factors both positively and negatively affected each participants' desire to participate in class activities. Although the participants' stories were unique to their own experiences, I identified several recurring factors in each interview. For instance, competition was frequently mentioned as a significant indicator for participation or lack thereof among the participants in this study. If activities or games were competitive or had a competitive focus, many of the participants enjoyed this and explained that their participation would increase. Participants frequently described their love for being aggressive and competing with their friends. Some noted that even when activities were not intended to be competitive, they would often change the rules or add physical contact or roughhousing to increase the competitiveness of the activity. However, the participants recalled that their desire for competition was not shared by all the students in their classes. Many of the participants recalled that when activities became overly competitive, there were some students who chose not to participate. These students frequently chose to sit on the sidelines and not involve themselves in the competitive activities. Another significant factor in determining participation and engagement was participation on a school football team or on a community hockey team. According to the participants, hockey and football were the most valorized sports at their schools. If a young man played on the school football team or a community hockey team, they frequently had

advanced basic movement patterns, spatial awareness and offensive/defensive strategy. Additionally, the young men who participated in these two sports had more opportunities outside of physical education class to practice skills such as throwing, catching, or manipulating equipment. Since the young men who played football and hockey already possessed these skills, they were more successful and more likely to participate during physical education class activities. Conversely, the young men in the participants' classes who did not play extracurricular football or hockey usually participated less and did not succeed in many class activities. The actions and attitudes of physical education teachers were another major factor influencing participant engagement. Participants who had a positive relationship with their physical education teachers, often described physical education as their favourite subject in high school and reported high participation and engagement in the class. However, several participants reported negative experiences in physical education and attributed these to how they were treated by their physical education teachers. These negative experiences arose from verbal/physical abuse and favouritism by their physical education teachers. Many of the participants in this study were aware that their teachers favoured certain students in their physical education classes. Some participants reported being the recipient of their teachers' favouritism and recalled that it increased their enjoyment and participation in their physical education classes. However, the participants who were not favoured by their physical education teachers reported negative experiences that resulted in decreased participation in class activities and even caused one of the participants to drop physical education entirely.

The second research question that guided this project focused on the theory of physical cultural capital and if this theory was present or actualized in the participants' physical

education classes or experiences. Questions specifically regarding physical cultural capital were discussed in the second round of interviews and findings suggest that physical cultural capital was indeed present in every participant's experiences. The findings showed that young men who enjoyed competition, participated in highly valued or masculine sports and possessed a muscular or athletic body type were afforded high physical cultural capital. The young men with high physical cultural capital, frequently dominated in class activities and displayed high levels of participation. Alternatively, students in the participants' classes who failed to embody or conform to the factors mentioned above, were afforded low physical cultural capital and this negatively impacted their participation in physical education classes.

4.1.1 Limitations and Strengths

A strength of this study was the information obtained that addressed several gaps in the research. This study gathered information, retrospectively, from male-identifying university students regarding their experiences in high school physical education classes and determined what factors influenced their engagement in the class. From the information gathered, I determined that physical cultural capital was present in every participant's physical education experience, and this significantly affected their engagement in class activities. To my knowledge, this is only the second study that has researched physical cultural capital in physical education classes and the role it plays in and participation and engagement among young men. In addition to my knowledge, this is the first study to identify physical cultural capital in high school physical education classes, as it previously has only been observed and discussed among boys in Grade 8 (Jachyra, 2014).

Another strength of this study was the diversity among participants. For example, no two participants attended the same high school and half of the participants attended high schools in rural communities and the other half attended high schools in urban centers. Thus, I was able to explore 10 different physical education experiences and could compare experiences from rural high schools to urban high schools. However, it is interesting to note that attending a rural or urban high school did not appear to impact participants' experiences.

While this study had strengths, there were also several limitations. The first and perhaps most important limitation in this study was the lack of diversity among the participants' experiences in physical education and their perceived skill levels. To select participants for this study, I used an initial survey to purposefully sample from three Kinesiology classes at the University of Saskatchewan. This survey asked questions regarding students' previous experiences in high school physical education. My goal was to select participants with a range of physical education experiences. I was hoping to involve participants who had both positive and negative experiences in their physical education classes. Although I was able to recruit some participants with negative physical education experiences, the majority of the participants in my study enjoyed and were highly engaged in their physical education classes. In addition to a lack of diversity in their enjoyment of physical education, all the participants described themselves as highly skilled and reported feelings of success in their physical education classes. The challenge to recruit participants who did not enjoy physical education may have come from their hesitation to talk about or relive past experiences in high school. For example, one student reached out to me after my presentation to his class and expressed his interest in the study; however, he told me that his experiences were so terrible and traumatic

in high school physical education that he did not want to discuss them with me. This student's situation made me wonder if there were other students who heard my presentation but did not want to relive or share their negative experiences. These findings run contrary to the findings of Strean et al., (2009) who conducted a retrospective study examining how teachers and coaches contributed to the enjoyment of physical education among elementary aged children. In Strean et al.'s study, he intended to recruit participants who had positive experiences in physical education, but instead, his participants all wanted to talk about their negative experiences in physical education. The desires of the participants in Strean et al., (2009) study to share their negative experiences, led me to believe that many of the participants I recruited for my study would also want to share their negative physical education experiences with me. However, I found that this was not the case for the participants in my study as most of them had very positive experiences in physical education. Another factor that may have limited my ability to recruit participants with a range of skill levels or who disliked physical education could have been the types of university classes I recruited from. I recruited participants from three first year Kinesiology classes. One of these classes was required for first year Kinesiology students, the second was an elective open to students from any college and the third was a required class for College of Education students. While two thirds of the potential participants were not Kinesiology students it is important to note that one third of these students chose to enrol in a Kinesiology class. Including first year classes from other Colleges in the recruitment process may have led to a more diverse group of participants.

The timing of this study was also an unfortunate limitation. My initial plan was to work with young men in one or two local high school physical education classes. I wanted to observe

and interview these young men to explore the factors that affected participation and engagement in physical education as well as the presence of physical cultural capital. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and health and safety protocols in Saskatchewan, researchers were not allowed into high schools during the time of this study. As a result, I shifted my participant focus to university students and designed a retrospective study to explore the research questions.

Another limitation created by the COVID-19 pandemic was that all interviews had to be done virtually. While many of these interviews ran seamlessly, the quality of some of the interviews suffered due to technical difficulties. As some of the participants had poor internet connections, the audio and visual feeds at times became choppy and delayed. These technical issues resulted in certain dialogue being inaudible and, therefore, impossible to transcribe. I felt the choppy picture also dehumanized some of the interviews and made them less personable than the ones that ran seamlessly. I found it more difficult to build rapport with the participants who had technical issues during their interviews as I could barely see their faces and constantly had to ask them to repeat themselves.

4.1.2 Recommendations for practice

To meet the diverse needs of young men in high school physical education, several recommendations are provided for practitioners looking to gain a deeper understanding of young men's experiences in their physical education classes. First, as I do not have a degree in Education, nor any formal teaching experience; I must acknowledge that my recommendations are idealized and from the perspective of an *outsider*. However, taking what I have learned

from the findings in this study, I offer the following recommendations for physical education teachers, as well as other practitioners.

It is important for teachers to recognize the power they possess over their students' experiences in physical education. Earlier in this thesis, I referred to the physical education teacher's ability to make their students' life "miserable or joyous" (Ginott, 1972, p.46). Students' attitudes towards physical education, competition and sport may differ from the views of their physical education teachers, so it is crucial for teachers to be aware of their own biases and how their biases may harm their students' experiences. According to several participants in this study, the behaviours of their teachers created negative experiences for them and others in their physical education classes. Accounts of biased marking and verbal and physical abuse were present in the participants' experiences and resulted in negative experiences in their physical education classes. One participant felt that his physical education teacher bullied him in front of his classmates and regularly made fun of him. The participants also recalled instances where their physical education teachers favoured certain students who played on the school football team. The participants who were favoured by their physical education teachers described positive experiences in physical education and spoke of the respect they felt from their physical education teacher. Alternatively, the participants who were not favoured reported negative experiences to the point of dropping the class. My recommendation for physical education teachers is to make sure they provide each of their students with the same amount of encouragement and respect and attention. It is important to create an environment where all students feel like they belong in their physical education classes, regardless of their skill level. The tools and skills learned in physical education can set

the stage for participation in lifelong physical activity (Tremblay et al., 2018). Thus, it is imperative that every student in a physical education class is given the opportunity to acquire these tools and skills, regardless of if they play on a school or community sport team. Additionally, when issues arise between teachers and students, I again recommend that teachers consider what a strong influence they have on their students' experiences. It is important to resolve and move past conflicts with students in a positive way, or risk the conflict growing larger. If the relationship between the physical education teacher and the student becomes negative, this study has shown the very powerful effects it can have on a student's enjoyment and engagement in class activities.

Competition is an integral part of physical education and provides an opportunity to work with others, improve performance and develop dedication, discipline and perseverance (Layne, 2014). Competition was a driving force for increasing participation in physical education classes among the participants in my study. However, competition was also identified by all the participants as the main reason why they perceived that many of their classmates did not enjoy physical education or did not participate in physical education. Additionally, some of the participants in my study explained how they would not include low skilled students in games as it lowered their team's chances of winning. I recognize that competition is necessary and, at times a beneficial aspect to physical education, however, I believe it is the responsibility of the teacher to create environments where competition may benefit all students, not just those who enjoy competitive activities. To manage competition, teachers could offer a range of competitive opportunities and allow their students to choose whether they want to participate in a competitive or non-competitive activity each day. For example, if an activity is highly

competitive, teachers could add a non-competitive option as well so the students can decide if they want to participate in the competitive activity or the non-competitive activity. This strategy may offer students who love competition, opportunities to participate as hard as they want, while providing non-competitive students with a safer, less competitive environment to participate. As well, teachers are encouraged to create competitive activities that emphasize collaboration and teamwork among students by working towards a common goal or competing against the clock. This strategy may help to address the negative consequences of competition where students are pitted against one another and where one student's successes are a result of another student's failures. The use of competition in class activities can be a very powerful tool that, when used correctly, can instill very powerful benefits; however, when used incorrectly, can quickly turn a student away from physical education. For teachers to fully understand the concept of competition, it is imperative that strategies to manage competition (like the ones stated above) be emphasized in pre-service education for physical education teachers. On top of these strategies, it is important for pre-service education to teach future teachers how their own biases regarding competition can have very powerful effects (positive and negative) on their students experiences. If physical education teachers are trained to manage or subdue their preconceptions of competition and are able to use competition as a positive tool in their lesson plans, they will create environments full of positive movement experiences for their students.

4.1.3 Recommendations for future research

The results of this study offer several recommendations for future research. The first recommendation would be to purposefully select participants with diverse physical education

experiences. In future studies, it would be beneficial to select participants with varied levels of enjoyment and skill in physical education. This way, a range of differing experiences would be represented. To further expand the findings of this study, it may be advantageous to sample from non-Kinesiology classes to diversify the participant pool.

Physical cultural capital has been discussed as a determinant of engagement in physical education in one published study (Jachyra, 2014) and the current study. Both studies have involved boys and young men. As there is a paucity of research regarding the concept physical cultural capital, my second recommendation for future research is to determine if physical cultural capital may be present in the experiences of girls and young women. Although extensive research regarding the experiences of girls and young women in physical education has been conducted (Gibbons, 2009; Robbins et al., 2003; Mitchell, 2015), no research to date has explored the role that physical cultural capital may play in the physical education experiences of girls and young women. This could be explored as the desired forms of physical cultural capital may be completely different than the forms reported in this study. For example, a competitive prowess was an essential form of physical cultural capital in this study, however it may not be in the physical education experiences of young women.

Along with exploring physical cultural capital among girls and young women, research involving teachers' awareness of their influence on a student's level physical cultural capital could be very constructive to understanding physical education engagement. As physical education teachers play a fundamental role in their students' experiences in physical education (Abildsnes et al., 2017; Jachyra, 2014; Ladwig, 2018; Redelius et al., 2009), it would be important to know if or how teachers can affect the accrual of physical cultural capital. If

teachers become aware of the role they may play in the accrument of physical cultural capital, they may be able to help marginalized students attain high physical cultural capital through their teaching practices.

Another area in need of further investigation are the experiences of members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community who identified as male throughout their high school years. Overall, there is little research regarding the experiences of two-spirit or non-binary students in physical education and school sports. A study investigating two-spirit or non-binary students' experiences with participation and engagement may yield completely different results than this study as these individuals could have differing perceptions of masculine gender norms. Since displaying dominant masculinity traits were important for accruing high physical cultural capital among young men in physical education (Jachyra, 2014), these students may struggle to obtain high physical cultural capital. If accruing capital becomes difficult for these students, they may show a decrease in engagement in their physical education classes.

Finally, additional research is needed that explores physical cultural capital among boys in elementary school. Previous research by Jachrya (2014) has studied the experiences of boys in their final year of elementary school (Grade 8), however there is no research that investigates when physical cultural capital begins playing a role in boys' physical education experiences. As well, research involving boys in their early years of elementary school may provide insight into how young boys accrue physical cultural capital, and how educators may help their students accumulate physical cultural capital at a young age. Understanding physical cultural capital among boys at a young age may be advantageous as these boys tend to excel in physical education and have a powerful influence over other students in their classes (Jachyra,

2014). If boys with high physical cultural capital develop positive leadership skills at a young age, they may be able help boys with low physical cultural capital succeed in class activities. As well, elementary school is one of the first places where boys begin to develop and enact their various forms of masculinity (Kehler, 2004). Further research exploring masculinity and physical cultural capital in a positive light may be advantageous as such research may help to position hegemonic masculinity and physical cultural capital as positive personal characteristics. When attitudes and behaviours begin to perpetuate and reinforce destructive, stereotypical characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, all boys are negatively impacted. The results of this study suggest that displaying masculine characteristics and having high physical cultural capital may have a positive effect on engagement in physical education, thus boys should be offered opportunities to develop their physical cultural capital and display their masculinity positively.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Consent Form



Project Title: Exploring the Past: A Retrospective Look at the Experiences of Young Men in High School Physical Education Classes

Principal Investigator:

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INVITATION

We would like to ask for your assistance with a study that is being carried out by the College of Kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan. This project is designed to gain an understanding of the previous high school physical education experiences of male-identifying university students. We anticipate that the retrospective accounts of your previous physical education experiences may provide a unique insight for understanding engagement in high school physical education.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

Initial Survey

The project will occur in two phases. The first phase involves the completion of a one-time, brief online survey. The initial survey will take approximately five minutes and will ask questions regarding your high school physical education experience. At the end of the initial survey, you will have the option to indicate whether or not you would like to further participate in the second phase of the study. The second phase will involve two virtual interviews with the student researcher. These interviews will focus on further understanding your previous experiences in high school physical education.

Interviews

To better understand your perspective on the experiences you had during your time in high school physical education classes, I would like to talk to you twice over the course of data

collection (approximately two months). These interviews will take about 30-40 minutes and will occur virtually at a time that is convenient for you. With your permission, I will audio-record the interviews before transcribing them verbatim. Removing any possible identifiers such as your name, the school name, and all other mentioned names to ensure your identity remains confidential to those outside of the study. During these interviews, I will ask about your previous physical education experiences and seek your opinion on potential issues with participation and engagement. I may also seek your opinion and feelings about specific events observed during your classes. You can request that the interview be terminated at any point, refuse to answer a question, and you can also request the audio recording device be shut off at any point. After your interview, and prior to data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

The benefits likely to be gained through this research project are:

- A greater understanding of the factors affecting engagement in physical education among young men in high school.
- A greater understanding of the previous experiences and attitudes that male-identifying university students had towards physical education in high school.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The aggregate results from this project will be made available to the researchers and participants. The aggregate results may also appear in printed or published reports such as journal articles and may also be presented at conferences. The final report for this project will be given to you after the study is completed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. No identifying features will be associated with your interview including your name the school or any additional names mentioned. All information you provide will be considered confidential. If we choose to use a quote you have provided when we disseminate the results we will use a pseudonym and we will not use quotes that make you easily identifiable to those who do not already know about your participation in the study.

Access to interview data will be restricted to the Principal Researcher, Dr. Louise Humbert, and the student researcher, Evan Boechler. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Evan Boechler. After analysis of all data, Dr. Louise Humbert, College of Kinesiology, will assume responsibility for data storage for five years upon completion of the study.

In the future, when results of this study are disseminated there may be an opportunity for individual authorship on presentations and journal articles. If this opportunity arises, and you choose to be an author your name will be published.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty. If you decide to withdraw, the information you have shared with us will be withdrawn and deleted. Your right to withdraw from the study will apply until the data has been disseminated. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the principal investigator or the student researcher.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office: ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Having read the information above, you must decide if you are eligible to participate (a male or someone who identifies as male who has completed a minimum of six credits of high school physical education in Saskatchewan). If you are able and decide to participate, please click on “I agree” below. You may print a copy of this letter to keep.

Do you agree to take part in this study?

- I agree
- I disagree

APPENDIX B – Initial Survey



Link to Survey Monkey:

Thank you for participating in this study, focused on exploring the past high school physical education experiences of male-identifying university students.

Initial Survey

The questions included in this initial survey will all be regarding your experiences during high school physical education. Please choose the option that best describes your situation or write in your response when prompted.

- 1) Was the high school you were affiliated with located in a community with a population of:**
 - Less than ~5,000
 - Between ~5,000 – 10,000
 - Greater than ~10,000

- 2) How many students were in your school in grades 9 – 12 (high school).**
 - Less than 41
 - 41 – 85
 - 86 – 200
 - 201 – 450
 - Greater than 450

- 3) What was the last physical education class you took in high school?**
 - Wellness 10 (Physical Education 10) (grade 10)
 - Physical Education 20 (grade 11)
 - Physical Education 30 (grade 12)

- 4) Was your physical education class coed or single gender? (Note: if certain grades were coed and others were single gender, please indicate which grades below).**
 - Written response

- 5) What was your final grade in physical education (approximately)?**
 - Physical Education 9
 - <60%
 - 60% - 70%
 - 70% - 80%
 - 80% - 90%

- 90% - 100%
- Wellness 10 (Physical Education 10)
 - <60%
 - 60% - 70%
 - 70% - 80%
 - 80% - 90%
 - 90% - 100%
- Physical Education 20
 - Was not enrolled in Physical Education 20
 - <60%
 - 60% - 70%
 - 70% - 80%
 - 80% - 90%
 - 90% - 100%
- Physical Education 30
 - Was not enrolled in Physical Education 30
 - <60%
 - 60% - 70%
 - 70% - 80%
 - 80% - 90%
 - 90% - 100%

6) Did you continue to take physical education in grade 11 and 12?

- a. Yes
- b. No

7) What influenced your decision to enrol or not enrol in grade 11 and grade 12 physical education

- Written response

8) How would you rate your overall experience in high school physical education (1 – lowest enjoyment; 10 – highest enjoyment).

- Written response

Was one grade of physical education more enjoyable than another?

- Written response

Thank you for completing our initial survey! If you indicated "Yes" to participate further in the interview stage of the study, please follow this link to provide your preferred contact information:

APPENDIX C – Email to Instructors



Hello *instructor's name*,

My name is Evan Boechler and I am a Masters student in the College of Kinesiology. I am writing you today to ask for your assistance in recruiting participants for my research. The topic of my research is exploring young men's previous experiences in high school physical education.

I was wondering if I could visit your Kinesiology 121 class during the week of *insert dates here*. With your permission, I am looking to share a three to five minute presentation with your class regarding my research project. My hopes are to recruit male-identifying students from your class to participate in my study. If the week of *insert dates here* does not work for your class, another date can be arranged.

Interested students will be asked to contact me and you will have no further involvement in the recruitment process. In addition, you will not know who is participating in the study.

Thank you for considering my request.

If you could email me to let me know if this is possible, I would really appreciate it.

Regards,
Evan Boechler
MSc Student
College of Kinesiology
University of Saskatchewan
evan.boechler@usask.ca

APPENDIX D – Transcript Release Form



**Research Ethics Boards (Behavioural and Biomedical)
TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM**

Title: Exploring the Past: A Retrospective Look at the Experiences of Young Men in High School Physical Education Classes

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Evan Boechler (student researcher). I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Evan Boechler (student researcher) to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of researcher

APPENDIX E – Semi Structured Interview Guide

Exploring the Past: A Retrospective Look at the Experiences of Young Men in High School Physical Education Classes

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Participants

Part 1: First Semi-Structured Interview

Introduction: We really appreciate you participating in this interview because your experiences are very important to us. We will only take a short amount of time interviewing you today. Our goal today is to better understand your previous experiences in high school physical education.

Preamble:

- The purpose of this study is to get a better understanding of the experiences that young men have in physical education.
- I would like to ask you a few questions regarding your previous experiences in high school physical education.
- There are no wrong answers to these interview questions, I would just like to hear about your experiences.
- If there comes a question you do not wish to answer, this is perfectly fine, we can move on to the next question.
- Everything we talk about today will be kept completely confidential. My supervisor and I will be the only ones who see the experiences you share with me today. If there ever comes a time where you would like the recording turned off, just let me know.
- If you see me writing things down during the interview, I'm just writing down some thoughts or taking brief notes, I'm not ignoring you don't worry...
- Finally, if you have any questions throughout the interview process, please feel free to ask at any time.

Background Questions:

- 1) Where did you go to high school?
- 2) When did you graduate high school?
- 3) What college are you currently enrolled in?
 - What university degree are you currently pursuing?
- 4) When you were a high school student, did you participate in physical education classes?
 - What grades did you take physical education?

- 5) Did you participate in any school or non-school sports in high school?
- 6) Do you participate in any sport/physical activity now?
- 7) What is your favourite way to be physically active?
 - Competitive sports, recreational sports, lifting weights, running, biking, etc.
- 8) What is a typical week involving physical activity like for you?

Guiding Questions:

- 1) Thinking back to your physical education experience - How would you rank your enjoyment of physical education on a 1-10 scale?
 - Why did you choose this number?
- 2) What was your favourite aspect of physical education?
 - Why did you enjoy this aspect so much?
- 3) What was your least favourite aspect of physical education?
 - Why did you dislike this aspect so much?
- 4) Is there any part of physical education class that made you feel uncomfortable?
 - Why did it make you feel uncomfortable?
 - What would have made you feel more comfortable in that situation?
- 5) Do you feel that some students in your class enjoyed physical education more than others?
 - Why or why not?
- 6) Can you describe the type of boys who excelled in your physical education classes?
 - Picture one or two students from your grade 9 or 10 physical education class who you believed to excel.
 - How did they act during your physical education classes?
 - What did they look like?
- 7) Did you participate in physical education after it became non-mandatory in grade 11?
 - What made you continue/drop physical education?
- 8) Did you always participate in class activities?
 - Did you ever find ways not to participate? Why or why not?
- 9) Do you think your experiences in physical education influenced your physical activity in . . .
 - In high school?
 - Currently?

10) If there is one thing you could change about your physical education experience, what would it be?

Part 2: Second Semi-Structured Interview

1. Since the last time we spoke, have you thought at all about our conversation and has any new info or questions popped into your head? Maybe anything you forgot to say or thought about after the fact? It's okay if nothing has.
2. The focus of this interview is going to revolve around a theory developed by a researcher from the University of Toronto called physical cultural capital.
 - I'm going to give you a brief introduction to what capital is and what physical cultural capital is. I'm interested in seeing if this theory was present in your physical education classes or not.
 - The concept of capital refers to any resource (economic, social, or cultural) that is commonly acknowledged as valuable in a social environment or culture. In any given setting, there is a particular form of capital that holds the ultimate form of power or value (the easiest example of capital is money/land/or property, but can relate to many different things). Physical cultural capital is the theory I'm interested in and it's an elaboration of the concept of capital to show which form of capital holds the most power or value in physical education specifically. In physical education, studies have shown that the most valuable forms of physical cultural capital are factors such as: a muscular body type, competitive drive, athleticism, and participation in school or extracurricular sport or a specific sport.
 - There are two forms of physical cultural capital (high and low). The boys who subscribe to the traditional ideologies of a *good* student in physical education (displayed hard working attitudes, portrayed high levels of physical fitness) or the desired expressions of gender (rugged masculinity, or warrior type mentality) were afforded 'high' physical cultural capital. The boys who did not conform to the same ideologies, practices, physicality, and gender expressions as boys with 'high' physical cultural capital were afforded 'low' physical cultural capital. These boys displayed lower levels of self-confidence, did not enjoy competition, and did not demonstrate a will-to-win. It is theorized that physical cultural capital can be used to determine engagement in physical education as students who hold 'high' physical cultural capital were found to enjoy, engage, and succeed in physical education more often than boys with 'low' physical cultural capital.
 - So basically I am interested to see if you think this theory was present in your physical education classes or if it wasn't. Remember this is just a theory so it may not have applied to your class at all, I just want to hear your thoughts on if you may have experienced this phenomenon.

3. Do you think this theory was present in your physical education class?
4. What factor(s) do you think gave a student in your class the most physical cultural capital?
5. What factor(s) caused a student to have low physical cultural capital?
6. Did participation in certain school sports or outside of school sports produce more physical cultural capital than others? What sports produced the least? Why?
7. I know this is kind of a loaded question but what do you think it means to be boy?
 - What do you think the qualities of a boy are?
 - What happens when a boy does not resemble these qualities?
 - Are these qualities different when you grow up and become a man?
8. Would you say your physical education teacher was supportive?
9. Was he or she equally supportive with everyone in your class?
10. Did he or she have favourite students?
11. Did he or she treat them differently than the other students?
12. I'm going to say 3 words and I want you to tell me if any of them were present in your PE class, and if so, which was the most present: "humiliation, exclusion, favouritism."
13. Did you ever determine teams by picking captains?
 - Were you fine with that? Do you think others were fine with it?
14. Where would you usually get picked?
15. What would your class look like or feel like if it didn't include sports and instead your teachers taught activities like dance in class to get you guys to be active?
16. How would you feel if your PE teacher removed every bit of competitiveness from PE? How would your PE class have changed? How do you think it would have changed for others?
17. This question can extend outside of PE, but in your school specifically, how did you define who was popular and who was unpopular?

APPENDIX F – Thematic Network: Theme 3: “Physical Cultural Capital”

