

Adolescent Males' Experiences With Physical Activity

by

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Abstract

The benefits of long-term physical activity (PA) lead to a sense of well-being that may be developed and nurtured over the formative years, developing strong, healthy individuals who are positive contributors to society. However, youth participation in PA declines in the adolescent years (ParticipACTION, 2020). Due to lower PA rates among female adolescents (ParticipACTION, 2020), research has focused on female participation. As such, less is known on what influences adolescent males and their participation in PA. Additionally, the sedentary behaviour of adolescent males is increasing in concern and the impact of this behaviour on their health (Michael et al., 2020). To address this gap in understanding regarding the low levels of PA among adolescent males and the strategies to help address it, the purpose of the study was to identify and understand the factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA. Using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Alase, 2017) twelve Grade 9 male students from one junior high school participated in semi-structured interviews. Following a socio-ecological framework, the following five levels were used to support the development of the interview guide, frame the data for interpretation, and suggest interventions across the multi-layers: (1) Intrapersonal, (2) Interpersonal, (3) Institutional, (4) Community, and (5) Policy (Sallis & Owen, 2015). Using six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016), themes were created within each of the socio-ecological levels. The findings suggest that adolescent males are influenced by their early experiences that will either hinder further participation, or provide the confidence to continue engaging in PA. Adolescent males identified influential factors such as choosing the activity they enjoy with their friends in a space that allows for competition and growth at their skill level.

The factors that participants' identified as influencing their engagement in PA are important to broaden the understanding for those who work with adolescent males and to better align programs to enhance their experiences.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Wendy Jean Jennings. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project name “Adolescent Males’ Experiences with Physical Activity”, Study ID: Pro00089866, Dec. 6, 2019.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

My Husband, Shane: There are no words to describe what your support and confidence in me throughout this entire experience have meant.

My boys, Stefan, Brandon and Devon: Yours are the voices I hear for inspiration, motivation and support.

My Mom: your strength knows no limits.

Love you all more than popcorn!

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Prologue

Prior to providing a rationale for the study, I want to explain why I became interested in researching adolescent males and what influences their participation in physical activity (PA). As a classroom teacher and multi-sport coach I began thinking about how different my experiences with PA were from the athletes and students I work with. My early active experiences involved multi-level factors that have influenced my continued participation in PA. I believe it is the very essence of movement that keeps me grounded in a physical, mental, social and emotional state of well-being. The neighbourhood was my playground along with participating in team and individual sports throughout my life. My mom supported and encouraged her four children to pursue PA and recognized the need in each of us to be active. Now, as an 88-year-old avid walker, her encouragement and support of PA extends to her grandchildren. I share the importance of finding your own path with my students as I stress that one's health, interests and desires define well-being. My own journey with PA and well-being has continued with involvement in the ever-challenging world of teaching, coaching, and the enjoyment of being a sideline parent. My husband and I met on a volleyball court, and our lives have evolved and revolved around PA. As parents of three boys, it was always important to create a balance between PA and nurturing their social-emotional growth.

Coaching and teaching have shown me that adolescents are not familiar with the concept of well-being and nurturing the whole person. PA is often connected to skill level and being good or bad at a particular sport. Allowing children to play provides opportunity for growth, not only physically, but also mentally, emotionally and socially. Well-intentioned adults inject their solutions to childhood issues. I believe the change in

play and the controlled settings which children of the 21st century are molded is a factor that has created an unhealthy environment for our youth. My multi-sport coaching experiences ranged from 4 – 17 year olds, and both male and female athletes. I began to notice a change in adolescent males' attitudes and behaviours a few years ago. Those I coached were missing practices, their attitudes towards improvement and self-confidence were negative, and working hard for the sheer enjoyment of the game was waning. I started hearing Grade 9 boys at school saying they quit a team, or were no longer in dance class. When I asked why they quit, they'd shrug their shoulders and have nothing to say. When I asked what activity they were replacing it with, they said they weren't. Their participation in physical education (PE) class was mediocre at best, and their approach to PA in general was not positive. The young athletes I was coaching were displaying a different attitude in club sports, showing up late to practice, and expending less effort into their activity. I wanted to know what factors were influencing their decisions to participate and were they multi-leveled and intersecting with each other?

The importance of this research is the ability to share the experiences of a population that has not been widely heard from and identify factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA. The significance of understanding what is happening with adolescent males will assist in creating programming that can inspire and encourage activity in a wide range of areas, and address issues that may have been overlooked. While my research interest may have started on a personal level, my concern for the males I coach and teach is growing. While my own boys are active and continue to push me to be involved in PA, I wonder what will happen to adolescent males if we

don't place an emphasis on valuing the whole child, recognize the factors influencing their experiences, and encourage healthy habits that lead to a life of well-being.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The limited understanding of the factors that influence adolescent males and their experiences with physical activity (PA) inspired this study. While there is some concern for the decline of PA in *all* adolescents, much of the research is focused on the declining participation of females and seeks strategies to increase their activity levels. The focus on PA participation among female adolescents is likely attributed to PA participation being lower in female adolescents in comparison to male adolescents (Clark et al., 2011; Findlay et al., 2009; Gibbons, 2014; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; ParticipACTION, 2020; Telford et al., 2016; van Daalen, 2005). For example, the ParticipACTION 2020 report card indicated that 17% of adolescent females aged 12 – 17 met the recommended 60 minutes per day of PA, while 43% of male adolescents met the recommendations. Although, both female and male adolescents fall short of meeting the recommended guidelines, most of the research has focused on understanding the low levels of PA among female youth. Reasons for low PA participation in adolescent females have included, boredom, emphasis on competition, feelings of inadequacy, peer comments, the public nature of physical education (PE), and overall lack of enjoyment (Gibbons, 2014; Robinson, 2013; van Daalen, 2005; Wang & Liu, 2007). According to Clark et al. (2011) adolescent girls emphasized deciding their own criteria for participation in an activity and expressed interest in participating in activities based on the kinesthetic process and not the competitive focus led to a more meaningful experience. Further, Ladwig et al. (2017) proposed the notion that positive experiences and enjoyment will enhance participation and prolong activity levels. When individuals are able to choose the intensity and

duration of their PA, as opposed to a prescribed set of guidelines, the experiences are more pleasurable (Ladwig et al., 2017). In addition, motivational factors for adolescent females, such as choice in activity and intensity level, or boys being separated from girls to avoid comments about their bodies or inability to perform certain skills, were factors that hinder participation and interfere with the desire to be active (Allison et al., 2005; Clark et al., 2011; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). According to Telford et al. (2016), by the age of 8 there are developmental differences in body mass, eye-hand coordination and fitness already present between the genders. Recognizing these pre-pubescent differences supports the girls' suggestions in previous studies to separate the males and females in PA, particularly when physical performance is a focus (Allison et al., 2005; Clark et al., 2011; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Telford et al., 2016). An increased understanding of factors influencing adolescent females' experiences in PA has led to overdue changes in PA programming (Clarke et al., 2011; Gibbons, 2014).

The focus on adolescent females and the surrounding issues they face with PA is important, however there is a gap in understanding the low levels of PA among male adolescents and the strategies to help address it. Further analysis of adolescent PA participation shows that while the number of adolescent males participating in PA is greater than adolescent females, both are experiencing a decline. When comparing the PA of youth over time using the age categories of 5-11 years old to 12-17 years old, female participation drops from 33% to 17% and male participation from 60% to 43% (ParticipACTION, 2020); highlighting a significant drop in both genders as they age. The CANPLAY study (the Canadian Physical Activity Levels Among Youth) showed the

decline in adolescent males' participation in PA is greater than that of the adolescent females. The most recent study conducted in 2014-2016 by CANPLAY used pedometers to measure daily steps (CFLRI, 2022). The results showed that female' steps went from 11,556 daily steps at age 5 to 10 and decreased to 8995 steps per day at age 15 to 19 (CFLRI, 2022). The difference is a decline in 2561 steps per day from 5 to 10 years of age to 15 to 19 years of age. In comparison, males went from 13,107 daily steps at age 5 to 10 and declined to 10,222 steps per day at age 15 to 19 (CFLRI, 2022). The difference is a decline in 2885 steps per day for this age range. The data shows that while females do take fewer daily steps, there is a greater decline for males, which is cause for concern.

In addition to the low and declining PA among adolescent males, sedentary behaviour within this demographic is of concern (Michael et al., 2020). According to Lau et al. (2018) males are five times more likely than females to develop video gaming habits that are problematic. The prevalence of video game usage in male youth in grades 7-12 has increased from 9.4% in 2009 to 12.5% in 2015 (Lau et al., 2018). For comparison, the female statistics in the same grade range showed an increase from 3% in 2009 to 5% in 2015 (Lau et al., 2018). While both adolescent males and adolescent females increased their engagement in video games, adolescent males display a greater increase in comparison to females. Behaviours that are symptomatic of problematic video gaming include, impulsivity, aggression and hostility, along with internalizing symptoms such as depressive mood, social anxiety or social inhibition (Lau et al., 2018).

Additionally, adolescent males are 23% more likely to experience feelings of sadness and hopelessness than adolescent females when they are not physically active (Michael et al., 2020). Lau et al. (2018) noted that adolescent males use video gaming as a coping

strategy when they are experiencing mental health issues. By designing their own favourable virtual reality character adolescent males are able to construct an online image that is more significant than they feel about their real self (Lau et al., 2018). Therefore, as indicated by Michael et al. (2020) the effects of insufficient PA and sedentary behaviour, such as time spent playing video games, are prevalent among male adolescents.

Although limited, research has shown adolescent males do not tend to share their concerns of incompetence, displeasure or discomfort towards PA participation like their female counterparts; rather keeping their feelings hidden (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; MacDonald, 2005). Feelings of displeasure and discomfort are connected to self-worth and well-being, and may determine motivation and initiative in approaching new PA opportunities. Gerdin and Larsson (2018) suggested further research is necessary to understand what adolescent males find pleasurable when participating in PA. Similarly, Tischler and McCaughy (2011) recommended further research to understand boys and masculinity, and inquire into how males express themselves in PA. Additionally, the ParticipACTION (2020) report card identified that future research is needed in the many factors that influence youth experiences and how these factors have impacted participation in PA. While this suggestion is based on all youth, purposeful discussions with adolescent males can shed light on what they are experiencing and the factors that have affected their decisions to participate in PA. As a result, information that can impact how we plan and deliver programming may positively influence PA experiences for adolescent males. Research has addressed what is influencing adolescent females and the decline in PA participation (e.g. Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Corr et al., 2019), therefore it is important to understand what is influencing PA and adolescent males.

1.2 Statement of Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of the study was to identify and understand the factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA. To achieve this purpose, one central question guided this work: What factors influence adolescent males' experiences with physical activity? Through this research the voices of several adolescent males will be heard, placing a focus on what factors influence their experiences with PA. Programming and planning may be based on the identified factors that will encourage those individuals who have reduced their participation in PA, as well as have an understanding of those factors that have helped to maintain engagement. Providing an understanding of adolescent males PA experiences may inspire change to future programming in the various contexts adolescent males engage in PA.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The intent of the literature review is to provide an overview of the importance of PA and factors that influence experiences with PA among adolescents. Specifically, this section will highlight research on developing the whole child, the benefits of PA and the importance of early experiences. Within the final two sections, research on adolescent participation in PA is highlighted. While limited, the literature review concludes with a focus on adolescent males and what research has stated are perceived barriers and facilitators to adolescent males' participation in PA.

2.1 Developing the Whole Child

Whole child education is an approach to working with the individual and all aspects of their being: social, emotional, mental and physical (Kilborn, 2016; Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010; Morse & Allensworth, 2015; Noddings, 2005; Rasberry et al., 2015; Slade & Griffith, 2013). It is important to attend to each of these aspects and find a balance so one is not emphasized to the detriment of another (Kilborn, 2016). To acknowledge that youth are whole persons and “not mere collections of attributes, some to be addressed in one place and others to be addressed elsewhere” (Noddings, 2005, p. 5) recognizes the array of factors that assist in the growth of a child, including the home environment, community, school, friends and the individuals themselves (Morse & Allensworth, 2015; Veugelers & Schwartz, 2010). Supporting the whole child can enhance the well-being of an individual and provide positive outcomes in many areas leading to self-directed, well-adjusted contributors in society (Kilborn, 2016; Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010).

To place the child at the centre of a program, either within the school system or in

a community setting is a holistic view of working with individuals (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010; Morse & Allensworth, 2015; Noddings, 2005; Rasberry et al., 2015). Within diverse learning communities the many life experiences the children have encountered should drive those who engage with youth to value their backgrounds (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010; Noddings, 2005). Approaching children from a whole-child perspective fosters an environment that provides safe, healthy, engaging and supportive learning (Noddings, 2005; Rasberry et al., 2015). When working with children it is important to consider the different rates of physical, mental, emotional and social development occurs at a pace that is unique to each individual (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010). Therefore, when working with children it is important to recognize them as individuals and not follow the same step-by-step program for all (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010). Developing all aspects of the individual promotes an overall sense of well-being (Findlay & Bowker, 2007; Findlay et al., 2009; Zepke, 2013) that recognizes the body and mind work together (Ellsworth, 2005; Kilborn, 2016). Nurturing the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of the whole child leads to a sense of balance that the individuals will begin to recognize as habits form over their life (Ellsworth, 2005; Kilborn, 2016).

According to Zepke (2013) providing one definition of well-being has been difficult. For the purpose of this study, the definition of well-being is drawn from Kilborn (2016) and the belief that the mind, body and spirit do not operate in isolation of each other. The way an individual lives their life that leads them to a sense of peace and balance within themselves, is their path to well-being. For example, a gentle walk that leads to a quiet session of reading twice a week may fulfill one individual, while another

individual requires an intense bike ride and a dinner with a large group of people on a daily basis. The goal of all who work with adolescents should be to help guide them to their own definition and path of well-being (Kilborn, 2016; Zepke, 2013). Promoting PA in youth has shown to have benefits that contribute to the health and well-being of the whole person, supporting the need for understanding what influences adolescents.

2.2 Benefits of Physical Activity

The benefits of PA have been widely researched and continue to highlight the link between movement and health. Healthy habits are formed over the span of a lifetime, and begin to develop in the early stages of one's life (Hallal et al., 2006; Kilborn, 2016; Warburton & Bredin, 2016; Warburton & Bredin, 2017). When children are involved in active play, they are increasing their range of motion, coordination, balance and flexibility (Yogman et al., 2018). Developing motor skills at a young age creates a foundation of skills that promote an active lifestyle (Yogman et al., 2018). If youth are encouraged to engage in PA activity over the course of their formative years, they will build a strong "musculoskeletal fitness that encompasses muscular strength, muscular endurance, muscular power, flexibility, and back fitness" (Warburton & Bredin, 2016, p. 499). Additionally, this movement has positive influences on cardiovascular health and weight management (Ferguson & Power, 2014; Hills et al., 2014; Veugelers & Schwartz, 2010; Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Early engagement in routine PA develops a commitment to a lifetime of well-being that also benefits the individual socially and emotionally (Findlay & Bowker, 2007; Jakobsson, 2014; Kilborn, 2016; Martins et al., 2018; Rasberry et al., 2015; Yogman et al., 2018).

There are further benefits to engaging in PA that are pertinent to youth beyond the physical benefits. Academic performance, dealing with stress related issues, and negative social behaviours were all affected positively by an increase in PA (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010; Rasberry et al., 2015; Slade & Griffith, 2013; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008). Youth experience a decrease in depression, fatigue, anxiety, and feel an improvement in self-confidence and self-esteem with routine PA (Hallal et al., 2006; Hills et al., 2014; McEvoy et al., 2016; Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Research has shown that a positive active environment, one that recognizes individual preferences, encourages a sense of belonging that may decrease the anxiety and depression that some youth experience (Dassanayake et al., 2017; Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010). In order to help our youth find a balance within themselves, addressing the social emotional aspect of the whole alongside the physical is imperative (Kilborn, 2016). As such, it is important to understand the effects of early experiences have on developing the whole child, how these experiences impact the development of the mind and body, and the factors that may affect continued engagement in PA.

2.3 The Impact of Early Experiences in Physical Activity

The early experiences of our youth, particularly the years prior to adolescence, help to determine future participation in PA (Hills et al., 2014; Martins et al., 2018; Spence et al., 2004; Telford et al., 2016; Yogman et al., 2018). The relationships youth have with those in PA settings can have a long lasting impact on how individuals feel about themselves and their participation in PA. Parental support and shared family experiences help to instill habits that create a better attitude towards continued levels of PA (Martins et al., 2018; Yogman et al., 2018). Early experiences with PA, such as being

called lazy or forced to do something that produces fear, such as jumping in a pool, may have a negative impact on future participation in PA and a sense of well-being (Gleddie & Schaefer, 2014; Martins et al., 2018; Telford et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence youth experiences to assist in promoting healthy habits and long-term health benefits.

The early years should be enriched with play, allowing children the freedom to move and learn their limitations and strengths (Ellsworth, 2005; Paley, 2008; Yogman et al., 2018). According to Yogman et al. (2018), the definition of play is, “an activity that is intrinsically motivated, entails active engagement, and results in joyful discovery” (p. 2). Play is voluntary, it may involve physical movement, contain elements of make believe or imagination, and may be with or without others (Yogman et al., 2018). The various activities that children create indoors and outdoors help them to develop social skills, build a tolerance for pain through the many bumps and bruises they may receive from climbing and falling, and solve disputes without constant adult supervision (Ellsworth, 2005; Yogman et al., 2018). Children may begin to acknowledge a diversity in skills, and that each person has strengths and weaknesses (Paley, 2008). Learning to accept that some activities are more difficult than others and embracing failure may be learned through unstructured, voluntary play (Yogman et al., 2018). The various experiences young people have through play help to prepare them for future endeavors by building a sense of resiliency (Paley, 2008). The play space of young children is important for enhancing and developing skills that are pro-social and have the ability to interact effectively with others (Yogman et al., 2018).

The benefits of play span across the physical, mental, social and psychological spectrums. As Yogman et al. (2018) state, “play is not frivolous; it is brain building” (p. 5). The act of playing can reduce the stress levels in individuals allowing movement and creativity to simply happen (Yogman et al., 2018). The creative play of a young child inspires imagination and curiosity, and these experiences are also important for developing a young person’s sense of well-being (Paley, 1986; Paley, 2008; Yogman et al., 2018). When an individual has a favourable outlook on life, they feel competent in what they are doing, they demonstrate resilience, and have positive emotional feelings (Ferguson & Power, 2014; Kilborn, 2016). These indicators are part of a dynamic state that is reached when an individual experiences the mind, body and spirit working together (Kilborn, 2016). Participation in PA has a direct impact on well-being and the experiences youth have in their early years may determine their future activity levels (Clement, 2010; Gleddie & Schaefer, 2014; Telford et al., 2016; Zepke, 2013).

2.4 Adolescent Participation in Physical Activity

Research has shown that PA levels in children decline as they reach adolescence (ParticipACTION, 2020). It is important to understand the reasons for this decline in order to make adjustments to help improve PA participation in youth. This section highlights factors that influence adolescents’ experiences with PA.

The relationships adolescents form with others are instrumental in their commitment to PA (Jakobsson, 2014; Martins et al., 2018; McEvoy et al., 2016; Munk & Agergaard, 2018). Positive experiences with family, such as swimming or bike riding, inspired adolescents to continue being active (Martins et al., 2018; McEvoy et al., 2016). While family support is important, as parents are typically responsible for registration

and transportation to activities, adolescents place a higher emphasis on time spent with friends (Martins et al., 2018; McEvoy et al., 2016). The ability to participate in PA with friends provides the social connections that adolescent's desire. The sense of belonging and encouragement adolescents receive from their social group is imperative to continued participation in PA (Humbert et al., 2008; Martins et al., 2018; McEvoy et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2010; Munk & Agergaard, 2018) and aids in the continued development of the whole child (Morse & Allensworth, 2015; Rasberry et al., 2015). Adolescents described having fun with their friends through learning new skills and engaging in organized and non-organized games (Findlay & Bowker, 2007; Moore et al., 2010). Adolescent participation in PA showed a decline when friends were not physically active (Gyurcsik et al., 2006; Jakobsson, 2014; Martins et al., 2018) or when feelings of incompetence were experienced (Findlay & Bowker, 2007; Gyurcsik et al., 2006; Martins et al., 2018).

A deterrent to participation in PA for adolescents was their perceived competence in an activity. Additionally, peer acceptance, and the ability to perform or compete with other adolescents were deterrents to participation in PA (Bernstein et al., 2011; Munk & Agergaard, 2018). If they perceived their skill level to be less than others due to comments that were made or other actions such as being chosen last to join a game, adolescents would not continue engaging in the activity (Jakobsson, 2014; Martins et al., 2018). Leaving an activity or avoiding PA altogether is a choice adolescents make when they feel they are unable to engage at the level they feel comfortable. The importance of allowing adolescents a choice in how they are involved in PA is important to a lifelong commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

Adolescents are seeking a sense of control and independence, therefore, when they are given the opportunity to choose what PA they are participating in, it leads to a sense of autonomy (Jakobsson, 2014; Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010; Strommer et al., 2021). This sense of autonomy presents the opportunity to engage in what they feel competent in engaging in, and what they feel will provide the most enjoyment (Jakobsson, 2014; Wallhead & Ntoumanis, 2004). Adolescents may be motivated to participate in PA through officiating, coaching, taking care of the equipment, or playing the game, but the choice would stem from what they find most meaningful and what they feel most comfortable engaging in (Jakobsson, 2014; McEvoy et al., 2016). Adolescents find meaning in different ways within a PA experience through social interactions, challenging activities, fun, and personally relevant learning (Beni et al., 2017). However, it is important to understand what these experiences mean for adolescents and to determine the best approach to provide meaningful PA (Beni et al., 2017). Adolescents have shown less boredom, felt supported by their peers, and expressed an interest in future participation when they have input into the type of PA they are involved in (Wallhead & Ntoumanis, 2004). As Jakobsson (2014) stated:

if young people consider their participation to be comprehensible (they understand the logic of sports), manageable (they can do what is required and they accept the conditions and rules), and meaningful (they want to be a part of it), it is more likely that they will participate longer. (p. 241)

The continued engagement in PA appears to lie in the ability for adolescents to have some control in what they are participating in. The independence to decide where and

when they would be active was hindered by community factors that influenced adolescents' ability to remain engaged.

Community factors often contribute to the decline in adolescents' participation in PA (McEvoy et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2010). The socioeconomic status (SES) of families played a role in the decision for parents to register their adolescents' in PA (McEvoy et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2010; Sulz et al., 2022). Those students who are from a low-income family have less opportunity to participate in PA due the cost of enrolment that may be nearly \$1000.00 annually per child on sport (Sulz et al., 2022). Within a school setting, the cost to participate in a sport may be a deterrent for students from low-income families as fees are applied to offset costs of referees, tournaments, uniforms and travel (Sulz et al., 2022). Furthermore, those living in a rural setting may be hindered by the lack of accessibility or the choices available to participate in PA (Moore et al., 2010). In previous studies, parents commented their children would utilize basketball courts or other playing fields, however these were not available amidst all the farmland (McEvoy et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2010). Due to the lack of availability of facilities and PA options, families living in rural communities may be required to commute to the urban areas to increase their PA opportunities (Moore et al., 2010). The additional cost of gas when added to the registration fees for the PA contributed to the decision to not participate. The families with a lower SES in urban centres also faced constraints when wanting to be involved in PA (Martins et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2010). Examples are the expense associated with using different venues, the cost of gas driving across town to get their child to the PA, and the additional costs if the family had more than one child involved in PA (Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2010). Adolescents' choices to

participate in PA were reduced when their family was unable to afford the fees associated with participation.

Additionally, concern for the safety of youth in some community settings was considered a factor in adolescent participation in PA (McEvoy et al., 2016; Tannehill et al., 2015). Adolescents may avoid areas that are perceived as less safe, even if it is their only available space for PA (McEvoy et al., 2016). Parental rules put in place to assure their child's safety, such as curfews and restrictions on where they are permitted to play create barriers for participation in PA (Moore et al., 2010).

Adolescents' ability to participate in PA changes as their responsibilities change. A lack of time due to family commitments, such as caring for siblings becomes a larger issue for older individuals (Allison et al., 2005; Humbert et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2010). Some adolescents are required to have a job to contribute to household finances, and other families placed little value on PA (Allison et al., 2005; Humbert et al., 2008). The time spent studying replaces the time adolescents may be involved in PA as concerns to achieve acceptable grades to be prepared for high school increase (Tannehill et al., 2015). The time commitment that is expected to be involved in some PA was too much for some adolescents to participate (Tannehill et al., 2015).

Research has shown an overall decline in PA in adolescents (ParticipACTION, 2020), and has identified some of the factors that are influencing adolescent participation (Beni et al., 2017; Findlay & Bowker, 2007). However, much of the research has focused on adolescent females (e.g., Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Clark et al., 2011; Corr et al., 2019) and improving programing to encourage participation. Insight into what factors are

influencing adolescent males' experiences with PA will provide important information to understanding possible deterrents and motivators for continuing activity levels.

2.5 Adolescent Male Participation in Physical Activity

Based on statistics, adolescent males participate in PA at higher rates compared to female adolescents however, their participation also declines during the adolescent years (females 33% to 17% and males 60% to 43%) (ParticipACTION, 2020). Understanding the factors that facilitate or discourage adolescent males' decisions to participate in PA is important to fill the gap that exists in current research. With this information, programming may be adjusted and implemented that could help reduce the decline in PA participation for adolescent males. Although research specifically examining PA experiences among adolescent males is limited, this section highlights factors that have been identified as influencing their engagement in PA.

Research has identified stereotypes as a factor that contributes to the experiences of adolescent males with PA. The stereotypical male continues to be shown in the movies and magazines in the 21st century. While one would hope these generalizations had been dispelled, Disney is an example of the exploitation of such stereotypical male characters that are created to exemplify the tall, buff, square chinned specimens of athletic excellence (Gillam & Wooden, 2008; Grogan & Richards, 2002; Klein, 1990; Picker & Sun, 2002). More recent Pixar movies are attempting to create a new model of the stories of the unbreakable, unstoppable prince that are found in libraries and bookstores (Gillam & Wooden, 2008). These images that are portrayed in movies and are then displayed on different forms of merchandise, become habit-forming behaviours due to continual exposure (Gillam & Wooden, 2008; Klein, 1990; Picker & Sun, 2002).

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2022) the definition of masculine is, “having qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a man”. There is no one way to be male, or to be masculine, however the dominant narrative of society is often difficult for an adolescent male to stand up against (Sax, 2016; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Masculinity and femininity have been shown along a continuum of very feminine on one end through to very masculine on the other end (MacDonald, 2005; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). The unfortunate reality is when a male is inclined towards the more feminine end of the spectrum, and the behaviours he exhibits do not fit with the stereotypical expectations of society, he may be on the receiving end of ridicule, humiliation, and physical violence from other males (Jachyra, 2016; MacDonald, 2005; Sax, 2016; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011).

Similarly, when the appearance of adolescent males’ bodies is critiqued, participation in PA wavers (Grogan & Richards, 2002; Jachyra, 2016). Peers often judge the ability to participate in PA by the physical attributes of adolescent males (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Jachyra, 2016; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). To be considered competent in PA, adolescent males are expected to be fast, fit and muscular (Jachyra, 2016). The males’ description of their own bodies as machines, and the more skilled and masculine they were would place them in a higher social order, align with the description of the stereotypical male (Allison et al., 2005; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Klein, 1990; McEvoy et al., 2016; Munk & Agergaard, 2018). The males who were considered less than, exhibited attributes that were considered weak, the wrong body shape, less coordinated and more subdued (Jachyra, 2016; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). This judgment is based on looks and whether or not the body type of the individual will be

able to perform the task at hand (Allison et al., 2005; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Jachyra, 2016). Those considered less than were bullied in the locker room, a non-adult zone where the dominant athletes set the rules (Jachyra, 2016). Comments about ‘man boobs’, shaming because of height, weight or general size led to body dissatisfaction and ultimately self-harm (Jachyra, 2016). While conversations about negative comments leading to body image issues have been discussed with females in mind, (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; van Daalen, 2005), it has not been a popular topic for males. Research on adolescent males and females is showing some overlapping factors influencing their PA engagement. Such factors are perceived competence, influence of friends and body image (Bernstein et al., 2011; Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Corr et al., 2019; Jachyra, 2016). Recognizing that these factors may potentially be a source of embarrassment for adolescent males is important when facilitating their PA opportunities.

The adolescent males’ concern about the public aspect of PA, and having to perform different skills or tasks in front of peers as a deterrent to participation was similar to what adolescent females have expressed (Allison et al., 2005; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Gibbons, 2014; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Jachyra, 2016; van Daalen, 2005). The physical display of competence was a factor for those males who do not consider themselves sporty, or athletic (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Jachyra, 2016). To admit that catching a basketball or being hit with a dodge ball hurts, is not a comment adolescent males want to verbalize (Allison et al., 2005; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Jachyra, 2016; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Another factor identified by adolescent males is they did not like sweating, as this adds to discomfort afterwards and the embarrassment of body odor or physical signs of exertion (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018). The stereotypical

image of the adolescent male athlete has become a barrier in the PA world, discouraging a population of individuals from healthy, active options, and leaving them feeling humiliated and with an unhealthy body image.

The growing importance of academics and certain marks required for admission to post-secondary institutions also influences adolescent males' activity levels (Allison et al., 2005; Koh et al., 2017). The additional time that was required for studying prevented engagement in PA (Koh et al., 2017). Family responsibilities took precedent over the individuals' interest in pursuing community PA programming, and leisure time was spent on electronics (Koh et al., 2017). Furthermore, a factor that may be viewed as both facilitator and barrier is the exercise history of the individual. Adolescent males who had positive experiences with PA during their youth were more likely to continue their activity levels as opposed to those that had a less-favourable past (Koh et al., 2017). When those who have been involved in the highly competitive sporting world decide to leave, it is imperative for them to transition to a less-competitive atmosphere. When this type of programming is not offered, some adolescent males are rebelling against PA, and becoming inactive, and adopting 'anti-jock' or anti-gym/anti-exercise attitudes (Jachyra, 2016, p. 122). Few instructors are recognizing the surrounding issues of non-verbal interactions, dominant versus non-dominant athletes, and facilitator influence (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Jachyra, 2016; Klein, 1990). The competitive environment of the PA setting can dissuade adolescent males from continuing activity levels. With this in mind, it would be beneficial to promote alternative programming for adolescent males that encourages PA that is meaningful for them.

The intent of the literature review was to gain an understanding of what research has shown about the factors that are influencing adolescents', particularly males' experiences with PA. Adolescent males' participation in PA is declining (ParticipACTION, 2020), and research has indicated they may be replacing the active time with sedentary behaviours (Lau et al., 2018; Michael et al., 2020). As stated, adolescent males are at a higher risk for developing problematic video gaming behaviours, with the possibility of developing impulsivity, aggression and hostility, depression and social anxiety (Lau et al., 2018). While limited, research has identified such factors as the impact of stereotypes (Jachyra, 2016), negative self-concept (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018) and scheduling conflicts (Koh et al., 2017) as factors influencing adolescent males participation in PA. To gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing adolescent males and the interactions between them requires further investigation. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to identify and understand the factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA.

Chapter 3: Method

3.1 Research Paradigm and Theoretical Perspective

In considering a research method for my study, I wanted to choose one that allowed participants to speak freely about their lived experiences. Guided by qualitative methods, the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of a phenomenon by utilizing students' own account of their PA experiences. Paradigms, or as Creswell (2014) and Taylor and Medina (2013) refer to as one's worldview, are the basic set of beliefs that guide action. The philosophical orientation that a researcher brings to a study, based on experiences in various disciplines, research experience and beliefs held will determine one's approach to research (Creswell, 2014). The study followed a social constructivist worldview, believing that individuals look for understanding in their world that may be complex and varied as opposed to narrow and simplistic (Creswell, 2014). Relying heavily on the participants' view of the situation being investigated, open-ended questions were asked to encourage discussions involving interactions with others, the experiences in their life settings and how the participants describe these experiences (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). A relativist ontological view, one that believes in multiple realities and multiple truths, was placed on the study. To present a question and have a conversation with the participant allowed for the sharing of ideas and experiences that may be different from person to person, as well with the individual themselves (Mayan, 2009). These multiple realities and multiple truths are what created rich data. Paired with a subjectivist epistemology, the researcher and participant work together as co-creators to understand the experiences (Mayan, 2009). As a result, the relationship between one participant and the researcher may differ from other participants,

constructing a richer understanding of the factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA.

3.2 Research Design

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was utilized to explore the experiences of adolescent males with PA. IPA is a qualitative research approach that aims to provide detailed examinations of lived experiences of a phenomenon as described by participants (Alase, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2015; Sundler et al., 2019). IPA is built on three theoretical underpinnings using phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiographic approaches (Noon, 2018; Tuffour, 2017). Phenomenology studies how people describe their experiences through their senses, and how these senses are transformed into consciousness (Noon, 2018; Tuffour, 2017). To help the researcher understand their lived experiences, the participants describe how they engaged with the phenomenon in their own words, through the interview process. Hermeneutics is the “practice or art of interpretation” (Noon, 2018, p. 75). Therefore, as the participant is describing their experiences, at times pausing and searching for their own understanding, the interviewer is trying to interpret the participants' understanding of the phenomenon in question (Noon, 2018; Tuffour, 2017). When conducting IPA research, it is important for the researcher to try to bracket, or set aside, their own previous knowledge of the phenomenon and detach themselves from their own history (Tuffour, 2017). It is recognized that the ability of the researcher to separate their own preconceptions from the participants' responses may influence their interpretation of the participants' experiences (Noon, 2018). It is also noted that while it may not be possible to capture exact experiences of individuals', the objective is to interpret the views of individuals as close

as possible (Noon, 2018). Engaging in an idiographic commitment is one that values in-depth examinations of each individual and their experiences prior to moving on to the next case (Noon, 2018; Tuffour, 2017). The approach allows for the data to be carefully interpreted and to gain an understanding of participants' thoughts, beliefs and behaviours through their story (Noon, 2018; Tuffour, 2017).

IPA was suited for this study of adolescent males and their relationship with PA as it recognizes the value of lived experiences while allowing the time to acknowledge and interpret each individual as their own case, prior to identifying general themes. Using a qualitative lens, IPA research design and a socio-ecological framework, the following central question was asked to ascertain the information: What factors have influenced adolescent males' experiences with PA?

3.3 Theoretical Framework

In order to identify factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA, McLeroy's ecological model was utilized in this study (McLeroy et al., 1988). The framework was used within this research to: (1) develop the interview questions, (2) frame the data for analysis, and (3) suggest program interventions across the multi-levels. The ecological framework has its origins in behavioral and social sciences and focuses on the interaction between an individual and their physical and social environment (McLeroy et al., 1988; Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009; Sallis & Owen, 2015). Specifically, a socio-ecological framework, as used in the study, acknowledges the relationship between the personal and environmental factors and how these interactions influence behaviour (Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009; Sallis & Owen, 2015). Furthermore, when understanding behaviours and what influences them, one can implement meaningful

interventions that have an impact in more than one area of interaction (McLeroy et al., 1988; Moore et al., 2010; Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009; Sallis & Owen, 2015). The following perspectives on health behaviours highlight and explain the flexibility of the socio-ecological framework (Sallis & Owen, 2015). The goal is to utilize the lessons observed from health research and apply them to PA.

1. There are multiple levels of influence on health behaviours. Within the levels intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy, there are factors that can influence behaviour. The influences the physical environment or sociocultural factors have may cross into the different levels, such as intrapersonal and community.
2. Environmental contexts are significant determinants of health behaviours. It is important to look at the actual situations that an individual is in, including the social and physical environment. There may be constraints or expectations within certain settings, which may affect behaviours. The PA environment may be an uncomfortable space for some individuals. This is important knowledge for the facilitator as past experiences may have been negative and these memories continue to affect future participation.
3. Influences on behaviours interact across levels. The interactions between the levels gives a deeper understanding of what is being questioned, however, it does not decipher which factor is most important. An example would be the student who participates in a health option at school because their parents have started a workout program. It is difficult to determine which is the greater influence or motivator.

4. Ecological models should be behaviour specific. The results are best when identifying a specific behaviour, such as promoting jogging or in this case, what has influenced experiences with PA.
5. Multilevel interventions should be most effective in changing behaviours. It is important to experience influences at all levels in order for interventions to be long term. If the goal is to encourage adolescents to eat more fruits and vegetables, it is not enough to have these available in the local convenience store, but to adjust pricing and work with the community to initiate a change in eating habits that will encourage lifelong behaviours. Temporary changes occur when there are not the same supports in place across the different levels. An ecological framework's broader applications have been questioned, as interventions have not been widely applied to the institution, community or policy factors, but tend to apply to the interpersonal and intrapersonal categories (Sallis & Owen, 2015).

The flexibility of the ecological framework allows for an in depth look at the various layers that may affect decision-making based on different interactions (Gyurcsik et al., 2006; Holt et al., 2008; Moore et al., 2010; Pratt et al., 2015; Sallis & Owen, 2015). In determining the influencing factors, a multi-pronged approach to interventions may be applied to programming for adolescent males and encourage engagement in PA.

The following five levels from the socio-ecological model that influence behaviour were utilized: (1) intrapersonal level that includes characteristics of the individual such as knowledge of PA, self-concept, and skill level; (2) interpersonal level, includes the social network of the individual that may include parents, friends and

teammates; (3) institutional level, includes the school environment and the rules that are in the building, (4) community level includes the relationships the individual has with the various facilities within their community, as well as club teams or recreation centre programs, and the neighbourhoods and (5) policy level are the policies and laws that govern the community and province (McLeroy et al., 1988; Moore et al., 2010; Sallis & Owen, 2015). The socio-ecological framework is utilized specifically for health behaviours largely due to the adaptability of the framework, and the ability to apply interventions across the layers of the framework (Sallis & Owen, 2015). By determining which factors are influencing the experiences of adolescent males' and PA, and if there are interactions between these factors, there is a deeper understanding of why decisions are being made. Once it is understood where the adolescent males' influences are derived from, interventions and programs may be implemented that could have long-term benefits for participation in PA.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Consideration for the ethical well-being of the participants, the school, as well as myself as the researcher, were addressed prior to the start of the study and continued throughout each section of the research process (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). Once university and school board ethics were attained, I discussed the study with the administration at my school to share my interests and research intentions.

As the primary researcher, it was important to understand my position within this study. I am a physically active junior high Physical Education and Social Studies teacher, with many years of involvement as a multi-sport coach, within the community and school settings. This knowledge may have provided a safe and caring environment for some

participants, however it may also be cause for concern for others. I recognized this power dynamic, and that my reputation in the school as an athletic individual may have swayed their answers and led participants in a direction to please me. The careful wording of my recruitment session, as well as time granted to answer any questions, was important to clarify concerns.

I did not recruit any participants that I was teaching at the time of interviews or was involved in providing marks for in any courses I taught. I assured the participants there was no obligation on their part to participate, acknowledging the power dynamic that was present. The importance of anonymity and confidentiality was stressed and the participants knew they were free to end their participation in the study at any point. I assured the participants that my opinions were not important and my intent was to create a space for the participants to share their stories about PA. This was important to clarify, as they would be speaking to me about their experiences in different situations pertaining to PA. An event in their current class may trigger a memory or thought, and it was important to recognize I was not questioning the class they were registered in.

Ethical consideration was critical to consider for the teachers whose students' I interviewed. It was important to assure them I was not questioning their methods of teaching, and that teacher names were not important. As I elaborated on my study, I explained that I was curious about the factors that influence the individual's experiences with PA and not their PE teaching style. I also had similar conversations with the participants prior to their consent to participate in the study. I also reiterated the confidentiality of our conversations at the beginning of each interview, and assured the

students that our conversations were private. I reminded the students that their names were not being used in any part of the study, only their participant number.

As the researcher, my responsibilities were to provide a safe and caring environment for the participant, not only to ensure I attained valuable information but foremost ensuring the participant did not experience negative effects from the questioning. As educators and those who work with youth recognize, we are not always aware of what truly affects an individual. It was important to be mindful of the reaction that my questions and the ensuing conversations produced. I did not ask the participants to justify their reactions or their stories, acknowledging there was no one way to remember and memories are tied to emotion (Lewkowich, 2019). The topic of PA appears relatively harmless, however, as research has shown some of the experiences adolescent males have spoken about have raised awareness and concern on such topics as locker room issues, bullying and self-harm (Jachyra, 2016). I remained cognizant of the participants' body language and the words they chose to use for the safety of their emotional well-being (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). I was prepared to follow the protocols of the school should a situation be disclosed to me that had or could cause harm to one of our students.

The storage of the audio recording and digital files are on an encrypted computer, and passcodes are required for access. Hard copy documentation is kept at my home in a locked safe. This assures confidentiality and privacy.

3.5 Participants

The participants in this study are a convenient and purposeful sample based on age and gender and from the school where I currently teach. Prior knowledge of the

individuals' activity levels and competitiveness, such as active or not active, was not a consideration in recruitment because I was interested in the factors that have influenced their experiences with PA in general and not a specific level of PA. Therefore, the selection criterion for the participants in this study was that they identify as a grade 9 male and attended the school where I teach. Twelve participants volunteered to take part in my study. I previously taught eight of the twelve participants over their junior high years within Social Studies and/or PE courses but was not teaching any of the participants at the time of the study. I believe our prior experiences aided in the students agreeing to participate in my study because I was familiar to them, and our interactions had been positive.

3.5.1 Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment began in March 2020. The recruitment of individuals took place in the grade 9 male PE classes for two reasons: (1) the group was already separated from the females, and (2) I was able to reach a large number of potential participants at one time as each PE class had approximately 30 registered students. A four-step approach was followed in the recruitment phase. First, I approached the individual teacher who taught the grade 9 male PE classes and outlined the purpose of my study. During this meeting with the PE teacher, I requested a time to speak with their Grade 9 male PE classes. Second, I spoke to individual male PE classes and explained continued education, various areas of study, and what my interests are. Many of the students were aware of my continued studies, and this brief overview of post-graduate studies educated those who were unaware. I gave an explanation of how volunteer participation in my study would unfold. It was important to clarify the ethical consideration for these students so they

understood participation was not an obligation, participation in the study was not tied to grades, and to discuss any other concerns that arose. Additionally, it was important to explain the confidentiality of the interviews, and to assure the students that I was not sharing their responses with their teachers. I briefly explained current research trends focusing more on adolescent female participation, and that my focus is PA and Grade 9 males. Third, I sent the letters of consent and assent home to those individuals who were interested in participating in my study (Appendix B & C). Due to the fact the participants who were needed for my study were in Grade 9, parental consent was required prior to joining the study. It was important that the information presented to the parents and potential participants stressed confidentiality. The fourth step was the return of the consent and assent forms.

Recruitment of participants was interrupted by the COVID-19 restrictions and the move to online instruction for schools. As well, the university regulations for in-person interviews were changed to online platforms. Due to COVID-19, some of the individuals were recruited in person, and some were recruited online.

3.6 Data Generation

Each participant consented to participating in two interviews. As I am an inexperienced interviewer, allowing for a second interview was prudent had I missed pertinent information in the initial meeting as per IPA procedures (Alase, 2017). With this in mind, as part of my preparation for interviewing the participants, I conducted three pilot interviews with three non-participants. The pilot interviews provided me with feedback about the quality of the questions, the length of time for the interview and based on the depth of answers received if twelve participants were considered a reasonable

number to speak to before saturation of information was reached (Chenail, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). In addition, the pilot interviews helped me gain insight into how I conduct myself during the interview process in terms of how much I facilitated the discussion (Chenail, 2011; Mayan, 2009). The goal was to listen and allow the respondents' experiences to be shared and to ensure the questions were not leading or perceived as what I wanted to hear.

After the pilot interviews, data collection occurred from May 2020 to December 2020. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews that invited the respondents to reflect and engage in a relaxed conversation (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009; Noon, 2018; Sundler et al., 2019). The interviews were all conducted online using Google Meet and were held after school hours. The interviews ranged from 30 – 60 minutes for the first interview and 15 – 20 minutes for those that required a second interview. One interview was required for six participants, and a second interview was required for six participants. A second interview was requested when questions arose or clarification was needed after transcribing the first interview (Alase, 2017). For example, one participant touched on the fear of water in his first interview, however he did not elaborate at the time, and I had not probed further. During the second interview I asked him to delve deeper into his experiences and was able to learn about the impact of a Grandparent's comments.

Through guiding questions that were structured following the socio-ecological framework, and funneling from broader questions to more specific inquiry, participants spoke about their experiences with PA (Noon, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Probing questions that invited the participant to respond in the direction and depth he chose based on his memory of experiences with PA were utilized (see Appendix A) (Chenail, 2011;

Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Noon, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2015; Sundler et al., 2019; Tuffour, 2017). During each online Google Meet session, interviews were audio-recorded and notes were made as the participants explained their thoughts (Creswell, 2014).

The participants' names were not used to preserve their identity and in place the letter 'P' represented the participant, a number stating which participant they were in the study, and the interview number. For example, P1-2 represents participant number one and the second interview (Creswell, 2014; Moore et al, 2010; Xu & Storr, 2012).

3.7 Data Analysis

A six-step approach to thematic analysis was used to analyze the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016). Analysis began after the completion of the first interview and continued after the final interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009; Xu & Storr, 2012). Notes were made during the interview, including body language such as deep breathing and body posture. At the conclusion of each interview, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim. Phase 1 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide is to become familiar with the raw data that was gathered, as well as any notes made throughout each online session. The purpose behind doing this was to consider initial ideas for coding that would be reviewed in subsequent phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016). Once the interview was transcribed, the audio recording was listened to again to ensure there were no mistakes in the transcription (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016; Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009; Xu & Storr, 2012). Each voice gave inflection and emotion to the data emphasizing the importance of listening attentively and making note of any nuances. The interpretation of the data was guided by

interpretive phenomenological analysis, where the meanings of what the participants were sharing were created (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Each transcript was reread and ideas, for example fun while participating, or being with friends while engaged in PA, were circled with a pencil to be identified for further investigation in a later stage of analysis. During the rereading of the transcription, it was also decided if clarification of statements or elaboration of ideas were needed and then a second interview was requested. The second interview was transcribed at the conclusion of the Google Meet and followed the same steps as the first interview.

The second phase, generating initial codes, began the organizing of information into meaningful groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016). The process was started once all interviews and transcriptions were complete. A chart was created for each participant using the headings: question/topic; theme/main idea; quote to support the data. The data was read and then it was placed where it fit on the chart. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show photos of the chart. The chart can be read using the following example; the question/topic was why a participant left an activity, the theme/idea was his hectic schedule and not eating or sleeping properly, and there wasn't a quote that was considered valuable to put in the chart. However, the page number of the transcript was added for future reference.

Figure 1

Working Chart in Phase 2 of Analysis

Participant 11 (17)

Question or topic	theme/idea	quote
	gets annoyed	"sometimes they coach 30 + 30 ... p12 ✓
has telling a coach helped	-thinks they talk to them	p13 ✓
	may not notice it as much anymore	✓
	-appreciates the coach doing that	✓
	5 Star in back is a 'thing'	p12/13 ✓
Mals/ Enables me	no - doesn't really care	✓
	- have been girlie on his hockey team	"Sometimes the best pl on the t p12 ✓
Do you adjust how you play?	no - play as I normally do	p13 ✓

(W. Jennings, 2022)

Figure 2

Working Chart in Phase 2 of Analysis

Question topic	Theme idea	Quote	(15) P7
Poor experience	- bias towards some	✓ ✓	
	- rude comment	✓ ✓	
	- favouritism	✓ ✓	
	less motivating	✓	
	- concerned about doing something wrong	✓	
	- kids trying to play and enjoy the game, but	too strict too tough too hard on you plz	*
	Don't want to play high level - want to play low level for fun	✓ *	
	- it's ok to play at a lower level but	✓ ✓	
	- coaching like highest level is a deterrent	* ✓	

(W. Jennings, 2022)

Figure 3 shows the entire book of transcripts with the data flagged according to which category within the socio-ecological framework it fit. To determine which level of the socio-ecological framework the data entry belonged to, a coloured post-it note was placed on the chart, recognizing that data may fit into more than one category (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016; Sallis & Owen, 2015). A colour scheme was chosen for each ecological level: the intrapersonal level was yellow, the interpersonal level was purple, the institutional level was blue, the community level was orange, and the policy level was pink. Repeated ideas or beginnings of patterns were found using this technique of organizing the data. All data entries remained on these sheets, regardless of fitting into a pattern or theme. After the charts were completed the data was ready for phase 3.

Figure 3

Book of Transcripts



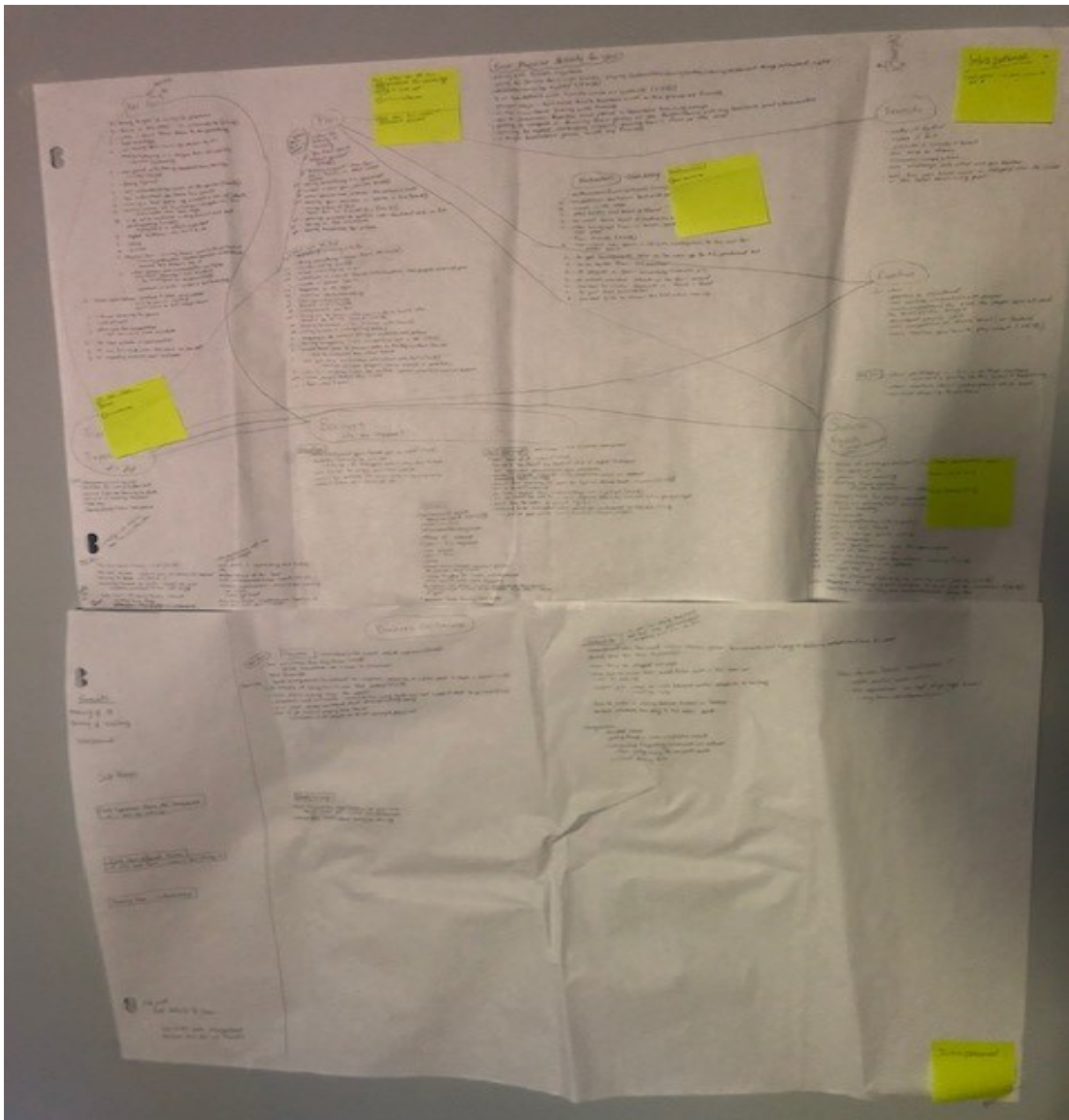
(W. Jennings, 2022)

Entering into Phase 3 allowed for deeper interpretation of the data and development of the themes. The recordings were listened to again while viewing the transcripts and comparing the charts of data. Hearing the participants' voices refreshed my memory and allowed for deeper understanding and placement of the data using the socio-ecological framework. Using intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community and policy as headings, the data was placed on large chart paper (Figure 4) to begin identifying themes within the socio-ecological framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this stage, all data continued to be analyzed and themes remained dynamic through the use of a mind-map (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016).

During phase 4, reviewing themes, the information was refined and those sub-themes that did not have enough data to support them, or appeared too large, were removed or broken into two different themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2106; Mayan, 2009; Xu & Storr, 2012). Recontextualizing the data allows for combining of concepts as well as organizing the data to determine what is significant data and what may not be as useful (Braun et al., 2016; Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009; Xu & Storr, 2012). As an example, the participants highlighted fun as being important for their engagement in PA. While this could be considered an influential factor, reconceptualizing this idea into a specific factor that led to fun was considered more useful data to work with. Such as, experiencing success was discussed as a factor influencing PA experiences. As a result of successful engagement in PA, the participants experienced fun. It was also important to determine how these themes relate to each other and to interpret the threads of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al, 2016; Creswell, 2014; Xu & Storr, 2012).

Figure 4

Mind Map Created in Phase 3 of Analysis



(W. Jennings, 2022)

In phase 5, the mind-map was filled out in a manner that the socio-ecological levels and themes were easily recognized. During this phase of analysis, defining and naming themes, it was important to continue to revise and define each section, completing a written, detailed analysis of each one (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al.,

2016). If the names of the themes were not concise and the content was not easily recognizable, I continued with the revision phase (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016). At this stage of analysis, I had discussions with my supervisor that proved beneficial to recontextualizing and ensuring the overarching themes were being identified.

The sixth and final stage, producing the report, tells the story of my study and convinces those who read it that my research has merit and validity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis of the data required a concise and logical account of the findings, and leaves no room for questioning the purpose of the research. While the analysis of the data is important, the story of the data and how it has become purposeful and meaningful information is imperative (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016). It is important to determine a good balance between data extracts and analytic commentary (Braun et al., 2016). Therefore, in addition to data analysis, I have embedded meaningful quotes from the participants to give the reader the sense they are hearing the students' voices and that their experiences shine through. Hearing the participants' voices in this story is important to the credibility of the findings.

3.8 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a qualitative study is an important process as it ensures the research that was conducted is accurate and valid (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). As the researcher I conducted the interviews, transcribed verbatim, and checked throughout the data generation and analysis stages for accuracy with the original recordings (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009; Strommer et al., 2021). As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), Creswell (2014), Mayan (2009) and Merriam (2009) I used various strategies to ensure the accuracy of my findings.

Within this study, five of Creswell's (2014) verification strategies were utilized to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The first strategy used was keeping notes of my experiences with participants and the interview sessions (Creswell, 2014; Mayan, 2009). These notes were not intended to be shared with committee members, but to provide reminders of interruptions during interviews, or comments that assisted in understanding the challenges and highlights of the experience (Mayan, 2009).

The second strategy used was triangulation, where themes are established based on perspectives from many sources (Creswell, 2014). Within this study, twelve participants shared their experiences with PA, providing rich descriptions that were then compared and crosschecked. As the data was being analyzed, converging themes from the various participants was being interpreted (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

The third verification strategy utilized was member checking. The students reviewed sections of the transcript to ensure I had not miscommunicated their intentions (Creswell, 2014). This was completed in two ways. Throughout the interview I would restate the information to the participant and he could clarify his statement at the time. This was particularly necessary when minor interruptions occurred due to a family member speaking to them or an Internet connection was lost. The second technique used to member check was asking for clarification on a statement during the second interview. There was information that was restated or clarified at this time by the participants.

The fourth verification strategy I used, as described by Creswell (2014), was that of rich, thick descriptions. My goal was to transport the reader into the discussion with the participants and to feel what the individuals have experienced. Meaningful quotes from the participants were used to allow the reader to hear their voices. Combining this

with many perspectives on a similar theme, such as the influence of early experiences, the reader may be able to visualize what was shared and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

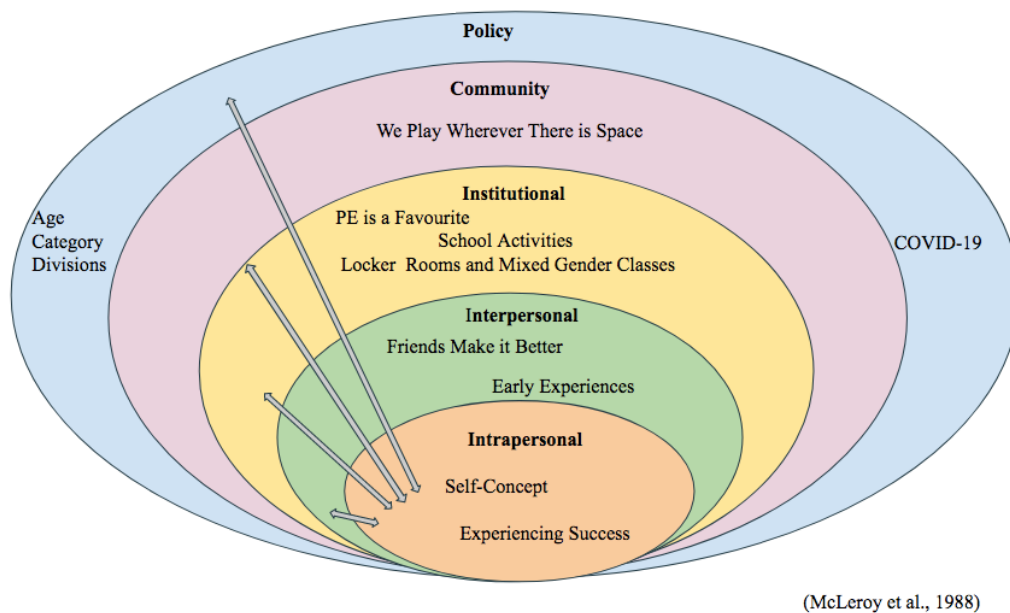
The fifth verification strategy utilized was reflexivity (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Reflexivity is “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the human as instrument” (Merriam, 2009). As a female athlete, coach and teacher I needed to be aware of the limitations of my experiences and my curiosity (Chenail, 2011). While I have had positive experiences throughout my life with PA, it was important not to make this assumption for participants in this study. It was important to recognize that participants may be critical of a setting I have worked within, and not take this personally. Continual reflection after the interview sessions was valuable to identify if there were comments that were conflicting for me to listen to. As an example, one participant spoke frankly and directly about the inability of females in certain PA. In order to properly process this information I took time to reflect on his perspective. Once I recognized my feelings, and removed myself from the comment, the ability to view his responses with fresh perspective was possible. The goal was to understand what factors have influenced adolescent males’ experiences with PA and if the responses I found are trusted, there is a greater chance that others will consider using the findings to create alternative practices to encourage movement for adolescent males.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of this study are based on the analysis and organization of the data using the five levels of the socio-ecological framework: (1) Intrapersonal, (2) Interpersonal, (3) Institutional, (4) Community and (5) Policy (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis & Owen, 2015). As Figure 5 illustrates, themes were constructed from the data within the ecological framework providing a multilevel perspective to PA experiences of adolescent males. The results provide insight into the factors that influenced the adolescent males experiences with PA and within the socio-ecological framework.

Figure 5

Socio-Ecological Model: Levels and Themes



Throughout the interview process the impact of reflecting on experiences with PA was noticeable. It was evident through participant responses that they were trying to find meaning in what they felt in order to put this into words. Participants spoke quickly and were on the edge of their seat when they were excited about their experience. When the

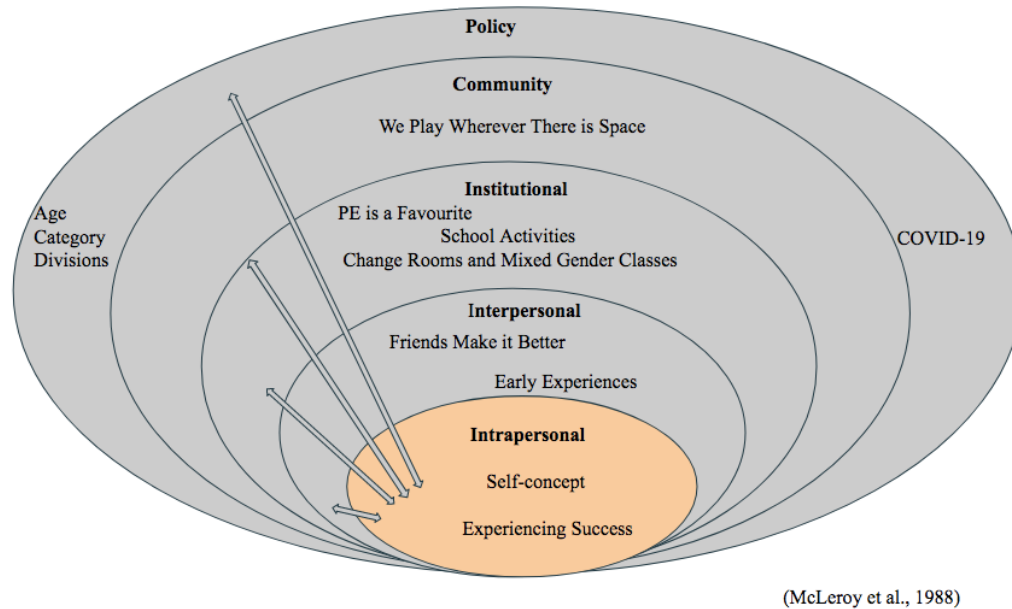
memory of the experience was less enjoyable, there was a delay of verbal responses, and obvious discomfort was shown through physical stretching of their limbs, squirming in their seats, drinking water, running their hand through their hair, and verbal dragging of the short 'u' sound. As the interviews progressed, these moments of discomfort would occur and as the interviewer, time was given for the participant to gather themselves, and continue at their pace. These deep feelings were a surprise for some of the students, as they would not often relate such emotions to PA. The next sections of this chapter will describe the results in each distinct level of the socio-ecological framework. In addition, interactions between the levels were found, and these will be shared in the discussion.

4.1 Intrapersonal Level

Intrapersonal factors are those that describe the characteristics of the individual. This includes knowledge and attitude towards PA, behaviours, self-concept and perception of skill level (Boulton et al., 2017; McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis & Owen, 2015). Within the intrapersonal level, two themes were created from the data: (1) Self-concept and (2) Experiencing success (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Socio-Ecological Model: Intrapersonal Level and Themes



4.1.1 Theme 1: Self-Concept

Self-concept was seen as an influential factor for the adolescent males in this study. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2022) the definition of self-concept is, “the mental image one has of oneself.” Participants discussed how their self-concept influenced their experience with PA, including their skill level and if they perceived they had what was required to be involved in a movement environment. Additionally, participants self-concept included whether they felt they would fit into the context of the PA they were considering engaging in, based on body size as well as what was perceived others would say about them.

Throughout the interviews, participants discussed the internal chatter they engaged in prior to participating in PA. This self-talk highlighted the aspects of the PA

they perceived they were lacking in, therefore convincing themselves they were not good enough to belong in the PA environment. The anticipation of try outs was particularly difficult for the participants as they placed emphasis on what other athletes within the PA setting were able to do, and focused on their own deficiencies. This was evident, as one student created a dialogue of what he believed the others attending the tryouts would be saying about him. This is shown in the following excerpt:

Other people that would be trying out for the spot is a big thing for me. I would be scared to go try out for some of the stuff at school because of the people that were going and that I know are better than me and they'd be like, why is this kid here, he's terrible, he's not going to make it? So I would think, I'm good; I won't go and try out. (P3)

The ability to find areas of inadequacy in their competence in PA was evident throughout the interviews. Students appeared to be convincing themselves, or maybe myself, it was for the best they didn't attempt to make a sports team. One participant stated, "There are just certain sports I'm not good at. There's no point in trying out for the team because, if you know you're not going to make it, then you might as well not go out" (P12). The impact of the negative self-talk, and the detrimental comments the participants would say to themselves, inhibited their ability to attempt PA. When a student was asked if he played basketball he stated, "no, because I was a wimp" (P2), alluding to his self-concept. When prompted further he said, "I didn't have the confidence to go and try something new. I don't have any special tricks, and I can't go under my legs and behind my back. I can't do that" (P2-2). A further comment of negative self-concept hindering trying out for

a team was stated by this participant, “I don’t have the skill to do it, it’s scary to try out and others will tease me if I didn’t do well, so I didn’t do it” (P3).

When participants discussed remaining in an activity, their self-concept was a factor in their decision. The ability to contribute to the playing field was a consideration for the students choosing to remain in the PA. Participants made comparisons between themselves and others on the playing field, and did not recognize the competence within themselves for improvement. Participants questioned their ability to continue engaging in PA based on their confidence such as, “I did volleyball, but I was not the best at it, so I was like, do I really want to continue with this” (P12)?

Another student echoed that feeling:

In sports I feel either you can work harder or run faster to get ahead, but in soccer, I can’t do that. I can’t kick, and I’m really bad at catching and throwing footballs, it just infuriates me. If it’s in PE, I’ll do it but I won’t really try that hard because I don’t really like it. (P4)

Participants’ self-concept in PA was also related to their body size. Participants expressed their body size impacted their self-concept and their perceived ability to perform PA. While body sizes are changing throughout this stage of their lives, the individuals in this study felt their current body type negatively impacted their ability to perform. The self-concept and how the participants perceived they would measure up against others in the PA setting was a deterrent for involvement. This was evident when a participant stated, “I’d like to try rugby, but I feel like I’d get crushed because I’m kind of small and I’m scared I’d get destroyed” (P11). This student described the dissatisfaction with body size in detail:

I looked at myself and I said, I am way too skinny. Like really, everyone thinks that being skinny is nice, I say, you want to be buff not skinny. You want to have some muscle and you don't want to be all bone. I don't like having a layer of skin and your bones and veins are showing throughout your arm. If I fall I'll break my leg because I don't have any fat to protect me. (P2)

These negative self-concepts influenced participants' experiences with PA and were linked to the inability to participate due to negative self-talk about their skill level, unsuccessful attempts participating in PA, and body image.

Across the cases, the participants were able to provide more examples about a negative self-concept than a positive self-concept. However, when the participants' self-concept was positive it impacted their enjoyment of the activity and their participation increased. Participants stated that the choice to spend time engaged in PA was impacted by whether or not they believed their skill level was good enough to participate. When the participants felt positive about their ability, they expressed wanting to improve their skill set and viewed this as a challenge and made the experience more enjoyable. One student's positive experience was shared in the following quote:

I made the team, which made no sense to me, and then when I actually went to the districts and I came first, all of a sudden I was like, this is actually fun! I have done it every year in junior high because I want to go to the districts because I think it's amazingly fun, running against other people with the same skill. It's exhilarating! (P3)

The drive to be better was shared by another student:

The activities I'm more confident in I will definitely try more in them, like running as an example. I try a lot in running. There are a lot of fast people so it helps me set a goal. I say to myself, I need to catch up to them and it helps me try more. (P12)

The participants described the positive effects of PA and the benefits they felt when engaging in PA they enjoyed. Associated with a sense of well-being, participants sought out the adrenalin rush of competition and associated this with the enjoyment of an activity. The positive feelings attributed to being engaged in PA were also associated with their ability to be active and the sense of having the necessary skill level. This student shared the feelings he experienced when he was part of the junior high running team:

Running Room was fun this year. I'm sad that it ended but I had a lot of fun doing the race. It's just the fact that you get those endorphins going, and you can do anything. It really pumps up the body and makes you feel good. You're just thinking of good things and everything bad just disappears. When everything stops and you get the rush of relaxation in your entire body, that's why I love running, when you hit the end, I did it! (P3)

The reasons for engaging in PA are varied as participants recognized their own need to be active. As one participant stated, "I like being active because it helps me feel a little better, which helps my well-being, and it helps me feel more focused and relaxed. It makes me feel like I've improved in something" (P12).

The participants described a positive self-concept when they enjoyed the activity for the very essence of it being fun. Participating in PA for fun and enjoyment was a

common thread with the students. The enjoyment they felt enhanced their perceived self-concept as the participants engaged in different movement settings. One participant shared his experience:

I might not be the best at something, like bowling for instance, but if I hit a few pins I'm pretty proud of myself because 95% of the time it's in the gutter. So, ya, just performing to the best I can be, it feels good. (P3)

The need to be on teams in order to gain a positive self-concept was not important for some participants. The ability to be active, to enjoy what they were doing and to maintain a basic skill set was shared, as one student explained:

I only tried out for badminton; I didn't try out for other things. I'm interested but I know I'm not the best. I enjoy them but I know I can't compete. I just like doing them. And I find I get enough in gym that I don't need to do a ton more. (P11)

The relaxed play was important for building their self-concept, as there were no tryouts or someone marking them on their participation or skill level. The next section highlights the influence of experiencing success on participation levels of students in this study.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Experiencing Success

The second theme within the intrapersonal level was experiencing success while participating in PA. Although some examples of success were shared in the previous theme, the topic warrants its own section because the participants shared their experiences with success while involved in a particular PA and how this influenced their engagement. In the previous section the participants described their self-concept based on skill level and ability to perform. Participants described a feeling of accomplishment

when they enjoyed the PA they were engaged in. Students explained that their feelings of success were experienced through winning and performing at a level they believed contributed to the overall success of the team. One student described how he felt after winning a tournament, “It’s just so exciting and wonderful to feel, and you get to hold a trophy and it just feels really, really good. You feel really good about yourself” (P11). The following quotes demonstrate how the participants felt about their performance in PA, “I feel successful when I’m winning a game because it’s like the combination of hard work and success together” (P9) and “when I win or when I feel like I did a good job I feel successful” (P4).

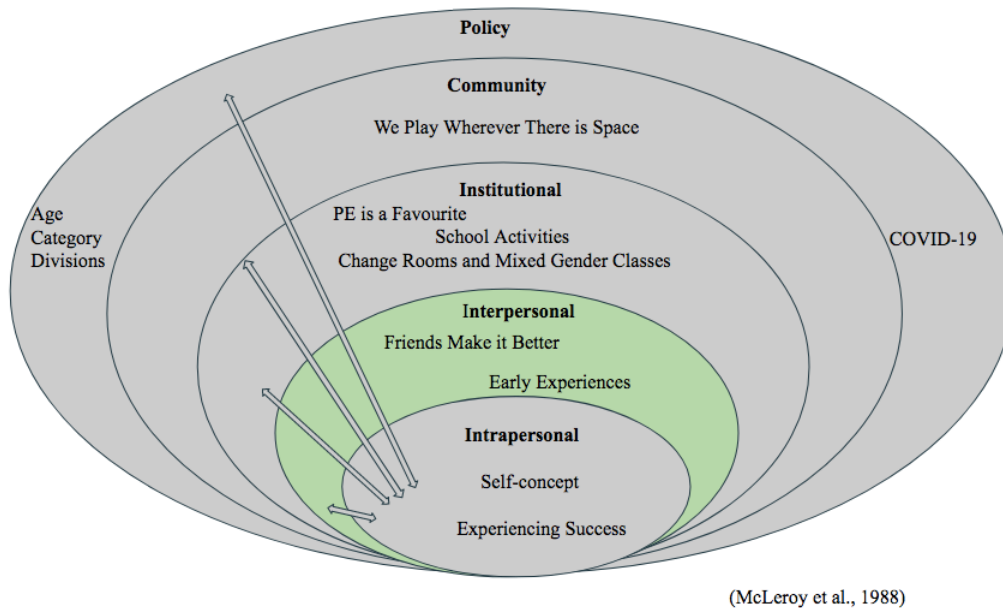
The students’ experiences were influenced by their self-concept and how successful they felt while engaged in PA. The next section describes the influence of relationships the participants engaged in with other individuals and how these interactions impacted their involvement in PA.

4.2 Interpersonal Level

The interpersonal level relates to social networks the participants have developed with family members, friends, teammates and coaches (Gyurcsik et al., 2006; McLeroy et al., 1988; Pratt et al., 2015). The two themes that emerged in this section were: (1) Early experiences and (2) Friends make it better, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Socio-Ecological Model: Interpersonal Level and Themes



4.2.1 Theme 1: Early Experiences

Early experiences speak to the developmental history of the individual and the knowledge and skills they acquire over time involving the social support systems of the individual (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis & Owen, 2015). Within the early experiences, two sub-themes were developed: (1) Family influences and (2) Early experiences with team sports.

4.2.1.1 Family Influences. The participants expressed that family members influenced their early experiences with PA. Within the interviews, participants described how their parents usually initiated the family activities that they engaged in as opposed to having to ask to be involved in PA. Participants recalled their earliest memories of PA

were as a family unit. This is shown in the following quote, “I think I was around 7 or 8 and I went biking a lot with my dad. We used to camp and we’d do hikes, even though I didn’t like them” (P3). The following quote echoes the previous statement:

My family took me to public skating when I was probably three. They took me to an outdoor rink and that’s where I learned to skate. I watched hockey on TV with my dad and I always wanted to do what they were doing. And so my dad kind of inspired me to do it. (P11)

The importance of exposure to various activities by the participants’ parents encouraged their continued engagement in PA. One participant explained:

My mom took me swimming when I was a baby, and she kept me in it up until now. I’ve done most of the swimming lessons and now I want to do the lifeguard course because I enjoy it and I’m good at it. (P11)

The influence of extended family was also shown to be influential on participants’ PA experiences. One participant discussed the positive impact his grandfather had on his involvement in PA, “My grandpa, he’s from England, and he’s a super soccer fan. I’d be watching his TV at 5:00 in the morning, sitting on his lap, and it just convinced me to try soccer” (P3).

According to the participants, the role of their parent during the early years was to expose them to as many opportunities as was feasible. This allowed the participants to experience various PA and develop a sense of what they enjoyed and wanted to continue involvement in. Parents enrolled the participants in their first PA, as this student stated, “My family influenced me a lot. I wouldn’t have tried out for half the teams if it weren’t for my family” (P4). Across the interviews, participants spoke about their early

involvement in the Timbits soccer program that their parents enrolled them in. The experiences on these teams gave the participants the tools they required to decide if they wanted to continue engagement in the PA. As this student shared, “I remember, like a lot of people did, their first time in a sport was Timbits soccer. A lot of people are introduced to sport by playing a really easy game like soccer” (P7). The participants reflected on the long-term influence of early experiences, and the influence of their parents. An example is in the following quote:

I’ve played soccer my entire life. I started playing little kids soccer, Timbits soccer at like age 4, and then played rep soccer until U12. My parents didn’t make me go to a specific sport. They told me I had to be active and do something. (P3)

In the intrapersonal level, participants expressed experiencing a sense of well-being, enjoyment and a positive self-concept as reasons why they continued engaging in PA. While some participants remained in a particular PA from a younger age, others used these experiences to launch into different activities. The family influence on participants was such that alternate PA was available to try when their interests changed. This student explained leaving soccer for another PA, “I just didn’t like it anymore, I didn’t like the style of it. My dad really likes hockey, and so he put me in it when I was little and I’ve just really liked it since” (P8). The comfort level of the participants to move to different PA speaks to the role of the parents in their early years as they build confidence and a positive self-concept. As shown in this quote:

I played soccer probably up until I was 7, and then I realized it was just swarm and kick and I didn’t enjoy it as much anymore. I played baseball from 7 until I

was 10. I wasn't great at it, but I liked it. When we moved here I found other things to do, like volunteering at the pool. I find that more enjoyable. (P11)

The advantage to being a member of an active family was described by the participants as a positive influence in their continued engagement in PA. The ability to head outdoors with a family member and be active, either in a friendly competitive manner with a sibling, or a parent sharing their knowledge of a sport, the participants expressed how this impacted their increased interest in PA. This student described two positive experiences with his family in the following quotes:

I guess having an active family has influenced me because I've always been competitive with my brother, so him being good at sports pushed me to try to beat him in some sports. Then having my parents always active they'll always encourage me to get out and do active things and they'll teach me new things all the time. Like just before this, my dad took me to the park to teach me a new drill in hockey with a soccer ball to represent the puck. So he's always encouraging me to do new things in sports. (P6-2)

This same student continued talking about his extended family and the influence of his grandparents when he visited them in BC. He stated:

We go and visit my grandma and grandpa and we always go in the bike park, and go on hikes. When we were younger we'd always go to the salmon spawning ground. We'd hike down to the Fraser River and watch them try to get up the waterfall. (P6-2)

Participants spoke of parents who were supportive while encouraging engagement in PA. The active parents brought family members closer together by setting an example

of continuing a PA regimen in later years. Students spoke about cheering for their parent during a 10 km fun run, or sitting in the stands watching them play hockey. Participants found the friendly competition between themselves and their siblings or a parent was fun, encouraged improvement in PA, and inspiration to remain active. This participant expressed the friendly rivalry within his family:

So, my dad has influenced me a lot. It's kind of competitive between him and me, so I want to beat him in a running race or something like that, so I use that for motivation. It's also with my brothers too, because as they start to grow up they're going to start getting bigger and faster so I want to keep active and make sure that I can stay ahead of them a little bit. (P12)

The participants enjoyed the activities they engaged in with their family members, and they were excited to speak about the variety of opportunities they shared with them.

Within the interviews, participants discussed the influence of non-active family members on their engagement in PA. Participants stated their parents' role was to enroll them in PA, pay for the PA, provide transportation and possibly attend their events. This student stated, "No, my parents aren't active. They always supported me and they let me pick the sports that I wanted to play. They let me go outside a lot" (P9). Another participant shared, "My mom, she didn't train me whatsoever but she was definitely the one who started me into basketball. My twin was the one who got me to think about signing up for the running club" (P2). The fact the family members were not active was not a deterrent for the participants in the study to continue their involvement in PA. As described by one student, "My parents tried to come to as many games as they could to encourage me. I did running for a while, and they've always tried their best to come and

watch, so I've always been motivated to keep going" (P1). The participants further explained that in spite of their parents' inactivity, they had developed other skills as a result. One student described his development:

I learned a lot of independence because everything that has to do with sports I had to learn it by myself. I work out by myself, and then when I'm on the field I cherish that time way more. I'm self-made, kind of. (P5-2)

When the student was prompted as to where he finds his motivation to keep going, he responded, "I have a goal and I want to go to college and get a scholarship" (P5). The ability to find the drive from within was echoed by another student, "I'm self-motivated to do stuff now because my family didn't do too much like running or anything like actual exercise" (P10).

Although most participants stated their family had a positive influence on their continued engagement in PA, one student was explicit about the negative impact of a family member. The student displayed physical discomfort within the interview while recalling time he spent with his grandmother. The fear of an activity has remained with him, as he ran his hands through his hair describing his experience, "I hated swimming lessons because I felt like I was going to drown. I'm kind of scared of water, and my parents wanted me to do it, so" (P4). When prompted about a specific incident that may have deterred him from enjoying swimming, he stated:

I just don't like water in general, and uh, (laughing nervously) just like, swimming. My grandma who's from the Philippines, she always told me stories like, 'don't go near the water!' because that's what her parents told her because

they didn't want her to drown, so now I don't know, I just didn't really like the water. (P4-2)

Participants described family experiences that influenced their engagement in PA. Within the interviews, students also shared their experiences as members of a sports team and the impact the individuals they interacted with had on their involvement in PA, as is highlighted in the next section.

4.2.1.2 Early Experiences with Team Sports. Early experiences with team sports were identified as having an impact on continued engagement in PA for participants in this study. While the participants were interacting with different individuals, such as a coach or another athlete, their focus was primarily on coaches. These interactions impacted their self-concept, a theme within the intrapersonal level, adding to the layering of the influences on their experiences.

The experiences participants described with coaches were both positive and negative in their influence on continued participation in PA. The various approaches of the coaches involving their philosophy about winning, losing, and treatment of the individuals were highlighted across the interviews. The participants expressed how different styles of coaching influenced their playing experiences. One participant briefly described their experience, "The coach was really mean and she was really strict and that's what made me really want to quit" (P4). The ability to have perspective, to understand the goals of the players with respect to skill development, winning and losing, and where they fit within a league was important for the individuals in the study.

The participants enjoyed the freedom to choose which level of PA they could enroll in, particularly if they were leaving a competitive setting and entering a

recreational one. When a coach lacked perspective, and struggled to understand the athletes' level of play and the goal of the individuals, it impacted their experiences. As one participant explained the coaching approach that suited him:

I think some of the best experiences with coaches are those who understand that I was never a Raiders player. I feel like if the coaches had accepted that, and realized that ya, I want my team to win, but at the same time, make it fun. Some coaches would make you skate the whole practice to teach you a lesson, but it was kind of pointless. It would make you not want to go to that practice. I remember coaches that incorporated the game play and everything else and also teach you while still being fun. (P7)

Another student echoed a similar experience:

In the competitive league, your coach is going to be on you, like he's going to be pulling out every mistake, and you have to have the right mindset to say, ok, let's do this, instead of saying, damn it why is he always on my case, I hate this guy, I'm going to leave. I had one coach in basketball and she was always on your case. Ya, she sucked but, she was like, have you ever had that parent that always yells at you when you do something good or bad? This coach was always on you, she actually broke me, and that was the one time I thought to myself, (taking a deep breath and getting emotional) I don't want to come back. (P2)

Furthermore, the participants spoke about favouritism linked to previous knowledge the coaches had of individuals, influencing their experiences with PA. Participants described when knowing a coach benefited them, such as when their parent was the coach or they had an in class experience with the teacher/coach. The familiarity

was comforting to the students, creating a more relaxed atmosphere for them to participate in. As well, participants expressed the influence of being unfamiliar with coaches and how their experience was impacted. The effect on one participant is shown in the following quote, “They have the connection with the coaches already, so they already know their skills, and it’s easier for them to get on the team. When you’re brand new they don’t know you and it’s harder” (P12). Another student explained his experience as a new player to the league:

I chose no hit, and there were two teams. What happened was the coaches chose kids they knew, so a kid that’s lower level than I am would get higher up, and since they won’t know me they wouldn’t pick me, and I’d get scooted down. But when my Dad and his friend were coaching and they picked me, it was a way better experience. (P11)

The influence of coaches was evident across the cases. Participants’ experiences with a coach and the philosophy of that individual impacted the decision for further engagement in PA.

A lack of exposure to PA in the early years developed as a factor that influenced participants’ decision to engage in PA at a later stage in their life. When faced with the opportunity to engage in a new PA that they had minimal experience in, participants found it intimidating to be competing against those individuals who have previous experience with the activity. Participants made an assumption based on their self-concept that they would not measure up because of their lack of early experience with a skill. Within the interviews, students expressed not understanding key terms without the previous knowledge in the PA. An example is setting a screen in basketball, and the

individual not understanding the nuances of the play. The steep learning curve was identified as a deterrent to beginning a new PA due to a lack of experience. One student shared his thoughts:

I've never played hockey and everybody here plays hockey, and it's kind of cultish almost how many people play hockey. But now, I could never start now because people start when they're four years old and it's like their livelihood. (P4)

The impact of the interactions the participants engaged in influenced their decisions to be involved in PA. The participants spoke about early experiences with family members, and team experiences specifically with coaches, as influential factors to their level of engagement in PA.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Friends Make it Better

The students described the importance of their friend group and how these interactions influenced their experiences with PA. Participants spoke about their friends and a comfort level they felt when they were engaged in PA with them, and how it made their experiences better. One of the participants described it as follows, "When you're playing with your friends, it's a comfort thing, you just talk when you're playing, you have the connection with them, they know your skills and it's just easier" (P12). To further support these connections with friends within the PA setting, participants expressed the importance of the support system that comes with friendship. One participant explained his struggle with anxiety and how his mindset would interfere with his ability to properly prepare himself for a race. The assistance of his friends in these moments was expressed in the quote:

I like friends that make me comfortable so when I'm waiting for my race, when I'm having a panic attack before it, I actually have someone to calm me down, so I stop freaking out, but if they weren't there I think I'd still go, it just would be a way worse experience. (P3)

The relationships and interactions with friends while involved in PA provided motivation that inspired students to be physically active. The friends were instrumental in encouraging participation in various PA, and making suggestions for the students to try out for different sports. The difficulty in trying new PA when previous experience was lacking was identified as a deterrent in the intrapersonal level by participants. When participants were encouraged by friends to try a new PA, the positive feelings associated with self-concept were inspired by the reassuring comments from friends. One student shared his thoughts:

I probably would have played flag rugby last year and this year, but I don't know if that's going to happen. But, ya, because my friend said, oh you're fast, you'll be good at it, and then I was like, ok, I'll try it out. (P8)

Another student shared the following excerpt:

I wasn't involved in rugby until grade 8. I had a lot more friends start it in grade 8 and some friends wanted me to do it, and I thought I would try it and it was really fun. I enjoyed doing the sport. (P3)

The comfort level and the sense of connection with the friend group inspired participants to look to their friends to engage in PA in their free time.

There were various activities the students stated they could engage in, such as video games, watching television or just hanging out. However these were overshadowed

by the ability to be with their friends in person and to be physically active. The connection between this level of the socio-ecological framework and the policy level is that the participants had been isolating and were unable to socialize with their friends, as per government restrictions for COVID-19. The participants spoke about their struggles with quarantine, and how they overcame this sense of boredom. The friends inspired movement and continued PA together:

We went on little bike rides, just went around the neighbourhood for like an hour, just because we wanted to because we were bored. It was nice to just do that, so I was on a scooter, he was on a bike and another friend was just on the long board.
(P3-2)

Another participant echoed similar feelings:

I'll just walk home from school if I want to with one of my friends or bike to school. I'll say, 'do you want to bike to school today', or on the weekends if I'm bored I'll go for a run or a bike ride with one of my friends, or we go play basketball. (P4)

The ability to meet up with friends because they were restless was inspiration for continued engagement in PA. Furthermore, the draw of friendly competition within their friend group also influenced the participants to engage in PA.

A common thread throughout the interviews was the variety of PA the friends were involved in and the competitive component that the students stated positively influenced their experiences. The competition added to their fun and enjoyment, which overlaps with the intrapersonal level and the feelings related to self-concept the participants reflected on. The ability to compete with each other in a safe atmosphere that

was free from evaluation by those not in the friend group was influential in maintaining a skill set as well as being physically active. Participants shared that challenging each other to be better and improving their ability was a fun way to spend their time with each other.

This student explained:

We are really competitive with each other. It's way more fun that way, like we challenge each other in different ways. It's like you're trying to push yourself to be better than them. Let's say you're playing basketball, and someone is good at basketball, you're like, I want to be better than them, so you're trying every game against them and you start to get better and better and then you're evenly matched, and then it's way more fun to play against them. (P12)

Participants stated their confidence was increased during these competitive sessions with friends and described how they were able to make mistakes, and not experience feelings of inadequacy. For example, one student stated:

With your friends, they know you, and if you slip or make a mistake, they laugh, not at you, but with you kind of thing, so that's normally why I'm more comfortable doing things with my friends. It's more fun and we challenge each other in different ways. (P12)

Additionally, a student commented on the ambience that playing with his friends creates:

It just brings the whole environment up and makes you practice even harder because I always get super competitive with my friends whenever we're playing basketball so it always makes me play better and try harder than if I were by myself. (P6)

As stated previously in the intrapersonal level, experiencing success is important to the participants while engaging in PA.

The feeling of success and how the participants created the experiences to be successful with their friends was influential in maintaining PA. Connecting to their self-concept within the intrapersonal level, participants also described the combined feelings of fun and comfort when they are with their friends and participating in PA. The participants described adjusting the rules of the PA to fit those who were playing, where they were playing and their level of abilities in order to produce successful results. One student explained his version of play, “Sometimes it’s by the rules, and it depends on the day. Sometimes it’s street basketball and not really organized, but usually there’s some rules but not as organized as regular sports would be” (P4-2). Another student confirmed the adjustment to play:

If we’re playing basketball, it’s on a driveway, normally we have certain three point lines, and ones that are out, and if we’re playing soccer it’s normally if it goes over the fence it’s out, so set up is boom, boom let’s go play! (P12)

Students described adjusting rules in a friendly game that would lead to success as well as keep the game moving along. The importance attached to feeling successful in what they were actively engaged in created a fun atmosphere, while practicing components of the sport. As shared by another student:

It’d just be like normal basketball, but it wouldn’t be all the fouls or technicals, like three in the key and stuff, it’d be a little more chill. It would be more casual and we’d play games like a three point contest or try to hit the most consecutive shots. (P7)

One participant described games having the “fundamentals of basketball still there, however the hoop height was set at 7’ so that everyone could dunk on it and have fun” (P8). As the participants explained, the success they created through adjusting rules and playing environments while engaging in PA with their friends contributed to their enjoyment and would lead to further participation.

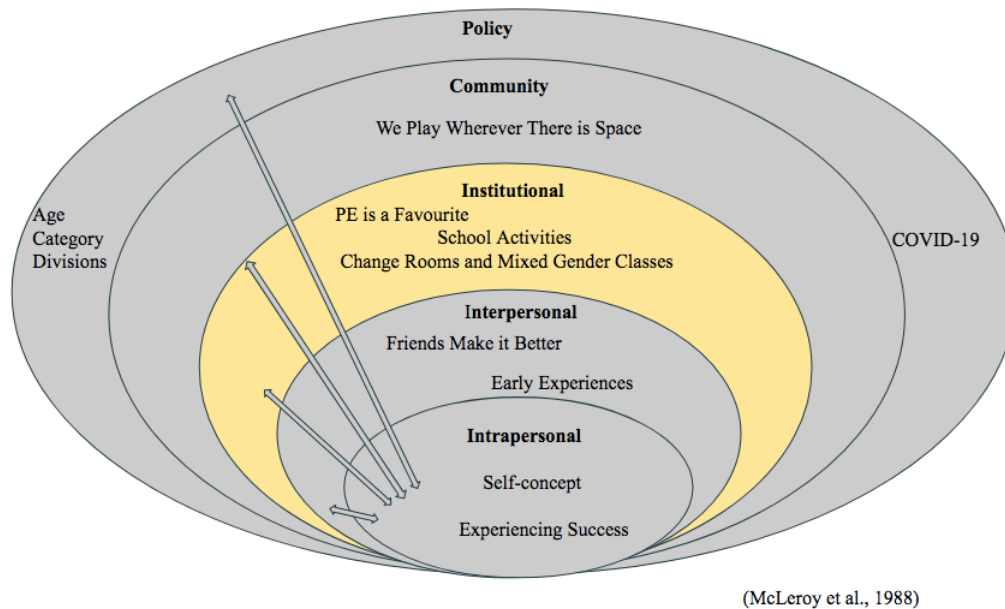
The factors the students highlighted that influenced their experiences with PA at the intrapersonal level provided a foundation for their continued involvement in the interpersonal level. Future involvement in PA was dependent on the participants’ early experiences involving family support, team experiences, as well as the importance of friends’ involvement in PA.

4.3 Institutional Level

The third level within the socio-ecological framework is the institutional level, and includes the social institutions where the participants follow formal and informal rules (McLeroy et al., 1988; Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009). In the study, the institution is the school setting where the students spend much of their time. The themes will enhance the understanding of the physical and social environment where the participants are expected to engage in PA. The themes created in the level were: (1) PE is a favourite, (2) School activities: teams, intramurals, and finding a balance and (3) Change rooms and mixed gender classes (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Socio-Ecological Model: Institutional Level and Themes



4.3.1 Theme 1: PE is a Favourite

The participants were eager to share their experiences from their PE class. The ability to engage in movement throughout the day impacted the well-being of the students. At the time of the interviews, COVID-19 guidelines for schools were in place and the regular routine of moving from class to class throughout the day was interrupted and the students were stationary. Students described PE class as “a good break in school because it takes your mind off things and gets your heart rate racing again, and it influenced me to try different sports” (P6). The participants expressed the difficulty of remaining in the same space the whole day, and how they looked forward to some type of movement break. One participant shared, “PE has increased my PA because you find new things that you like to do, and you get out of your desk for once and you get to go do something you like” (P8). The participants were thankful to be able to move in different spaces, whether

that was indoors or outdoors. The introduction to new PA played a large role in the enjoyment of PE class for the participants in the study.

PE class was used as a way to improve skills when participants felt they didn't have expansive previous experience, as well as the opportunity to try new PA in a safe space. Participants spoke about wanting to tryout for a team but didn't feel they had the skill set to compete with others trying out. PE class provided the opportunity to practice and improve their skills that boosted their confidence to attend tryouts. PE teachers would often encourage the students to try out for various sports, and helped them with their skill set. Students shared that the introduction to new activities led to the increase in their confidence to tryout for a school team. As one student explained:

I'd never touched a badminton racquet, but we had the badminton unit before tryouts and I felt way more comfortable and motivated to try out for that team because I understood the game and realized it's actually quite fun. I wouldn't have even considered trying out if I didn't play it in gym. (P7)

The participants also referred to experiences outside the PE setting where they were engaged in activities they had learnt in class.

The transfer of skills and knowledge broadened the participants PA environments, and the experiences were better when friends were in attendance. The ability of the students to learn a new game or activity in PE and then join their friends after school and try something different increased their engagement in PA as shown in the following excerpt, "I've tried new games and sports in PE that I have wanted to try out of school, that you can play with your friends that I normally would not have had the chance to" (P9). The exposure to different PA was a positive influence on the participants in the

study. The students described the PE class as a safe environment to attempt new skills. Additionally, having their friends with them provided the atmosphere participants described as being conducive to increased enjoyment.

The interactions with others in the PE class, such as those who do not regularly take part in PE, were discussed with participants. The participants enjoyed the activities that were offered in their PE class, however, it was recognized that not everyone enjoys PE. Youth in the study explained how non-participants, those students who chose to sit out, minimally participate, or did not try in an activity, influenced their experiences in PE class. Specifically, the participants explained that non-participants in PE class negatively impacted their in-class experience, as well as the PA they were engaged in. One student described the effect of non-participants:

You see kids that aren't as active and they're just sitting around and talking to people. I think you have to really push them into doing something or find something they like so they can play because it's not fun when there's a few kids on your team just sitting there and not participating. (P8)

Similar feelings were echoed by another student, "It's hard to make a gym class for everybody because some people are not really athletic and they have the worst attitude. They're always down on themselves and say things like, I can't do this because I just can't" (P4). On a number of occasions the participants spoke about having perspective within the PA setting. When participating in a PE class, the participants described perspective as understanding the environment is for learning, for fun, and a class you are being marked on. While engaging in PE with friends, participants shared they were competitive and trying to win within the parameters they had set out, as opposed to

playing in a competitive league where winning was often the goal. While engaged in a PE class, participants wanted to be able to compete and improve their skill level, however, the non-participants impacted their attempt to participate as one participant explained:

I know gym isn't a team you try out for or games everyone likes, and I try to help those who are not as good. But there are times I see someone just standing there and they're complaining about your team, but they're costing your team, because they just stand around and I find that a little frustrating. They should be putting in their best effort and trying. (P7)

As a result, the participants felt they were not receiving the best experience possible, as they were not engaging in the activity to the best of their ability based on others in the class.

When the participants were asked what could improve their experiences in PE to increase their participation during class the overwhelming answer was to give choice to the students. The participants spoke about having the choice given to them by their parents for the PA they were involved in outside the school setting, and felt this should be an option within the PE class. They also referred to being given the choice of competitive versus recreational leagues they were being enrolled in. The ability to have control over what PA they were engaged in was very important to the students within the study. The students felt that they would enjoy the power of choice themselves, however, they also believed it would assist those who were non-participants. To be given the opportunity to choose which PA the students could participate in during a PE class would allow separation to occur between those who were more competitive and interested in a particular activity, and those who engaged differently with PA. A student explained:

If the teacher just does the same sports constantly, then half the kids wouldn't want to participate. When we have the gym and you guys are like, hey do you want to play bench ball or do you want to play basketball, and stuff like that. Choice helps a lot and then they can get a say in what you do so that you're at least picking a sport that you enjoy more than the other. (P7)

Furthermore, students talked about building choice of PA into the structure of the class, and creating competitive and non-competitive sections. Some participants expressed that having the division created for them was a positive way to approach PE class. In doing so, students could experience success on their own terms, as the same student continued to share his thoughts:

I like when you guys split us up into the competitive and the not-as-competitive section because I feel like it's good for everybody. Or else, you're going to have people who play senior volleyball and those people who have never played in their life. I wouldn't enjoy it if I'd never played and there's someone who played senior volleyball and knew exactly how to play. I think success in those games and sports is competing amongst people that are about your skill level. (P7)

The participants expressed the impact the teachers' ability to identify the various groupings within a PE class had on their experience. Participants described how teachers approached those who actively participated and those who were less interested in PE.

One student shared a positive experience:

In football, he would take the less competitive people and put them on one side so they wouldn't be up against crazy football people who would just tank through you and then that would be no fun. He was supportive of the entire class, and he'd

make sure that everyone was actually having a fair attempt. He'd make rules that you had to pass to certain people, so they actually got a chance. I had (names a student) in my class, and we'd always give him the ball and if he missed we'd all be super supportive of him because the teacher told us to be nice to the people who may not be as skilled as you, and then everyone was having fun. Then if there were the brats he'd kick them out and they'd go run around the school, which was fun for us because then we didn't have to deal with them. (P3)

The student respected the teacher and the model he used to conduct a class with varying abilities while all individuals were participating. The positive experiences the participants had in PE built their confidence to engage in school activities, as shown in the next section. Furthermore, the decision to participate or not participate is contingent on the influences highlighted in the previous sections.

4.3.2 Theme 2: School Activities: Teams, Intramurals and Finding a Balance

The second theme that was constructed from the data within the institutional level is school activities that include the teams and the intramural program. Additionally, the participants discussed their difficulty in finding a balance while attempting to be involved in the school PA. Overlapping with the previous theme, PE is a favourite, the students expressed they were more confident to try out for a team when they had practiced a skill in PE. The participants spoke about the athletic teams and the positive self-concept they associated with being a member of a school team. One participant shared his thoughts, "When I knew I made the school badminton team and I knew I was part of that group, and I got to play with them, that was really special and fun for me" (P11). Another excited participant described his membership on a school team:

This year I made it on my first ever school team I ever did. First ever school team I was on the running team, I was on the A team, I was the fifth runner and we just did our trials to make it into the semi-finals and it was the most fun I ever had.

(P2)

While students enjoyed the team experience and the importance of the membership within the school setting, the school expectations weighed on them. The enjoyment of participating in the PA was influenced by the pressure to perform well, and to uphold the school's winning record. The students described feeling self-conscious playing in games as the audience, whether this was parents, peers, teachers, or those watching from other schools, they questioned their own ability to perform to the standard that would help the team win. One participant explained his feelings:

Volleyball and basketball are definitely more stressful just because at our school, the culture is more stressful because more people show up and watch, the coaches are more into it, like we're in it to win it, and we're not really just in it for fun.

You don't want to let down your school. Last year we just came off a winning volleyball season for the senior boys and the coach wanted a win for a second year in a row. (P4-2)

The students' knowledge of the school expectations to win, and the pressure to compete as best as possible, did not deter students from trying out for the school teams. The shared experiences and the feelings of belonging to the team group were more important to the participants than not belonging at all.

In the school, there are different try out procedures for the teams based on the required number of players and the time frame allotted for each sport. The participants

spoke about tryouts and the possibility of being cut from a team and whether the process influenced their decision to try out. Students commented on the familiarity with teachers who were coaches and the positive impact the relationship had on their decision to tryout. Participants emphasized the importance of tryouts and making cuts when a large number of students were attending the tryouts. A student shared his thoughts; “I think it was fair because in grade 7 I was not as good compared to a lot of the other kids. I got cut, but I hadn’t grown much and so many of them were bigger and better” (P9).

The participants also shared their experiences with being cut from a team. Making cuts was considered part of the process, a necessary action in order to make a competitive team for the school. One student stated he wouldn’t try out for teams if cuts weren’t made because he felt his ability to improve would be hindered by less talented players. The ability to deal with being cut from a team was considered an opportunity for self-growth. One student shared his thoughts:

If you want to play sports, it doesn’t matter how good you are, you’re going to be cut at some point, and you’re going to have to deal with it. If you can’t deal with getting cut, how are you going to deal with having to take a game winning shot?
(P5)

Even though the students justified the system of making cuts, they shared their displeasure and disappointment of not belonging to the group of athletes who were members of the team. Instead of the experience being a deterrent to continuing with the particular PA, being cut from a team was used as motivation. The information from the coaches was used to increase their skill level and to help build their confidence.

Participants did not view the experience as a slight on their abilities, but a chance to move forward and plan for improvement as one student shared:

I think it's a good system. I think you know you don't want to have 60 or so kids for so long. I think the coaches see the skill and they know if you're good enough, they'll keep you and see what else you can do, so I like that. I know how it feels to get cut from a team. I asked the coach what I could work on for the next year and I just worked hard to try and make it in grade 8. (P8)

Another participant explained:

I don't like getting cut, but I think they're fair. The people who are better than me go on to play and people who aren't as good can always improve. You know what's good about this is, when you're cut, they're like I have this information, use this to get better. So it's not like, oh you're cut; you're bad at this sport. It's, here, you can improve using this, come back next year and try again. (P12)

The participants spoke about using the suggestions from the coaches when they were cut from a team as motivation. As well, there were various opportunities to improve their skill base provided in the school.

The intramural program at the school where the participants attend runs daily during lunchtime, and has student leaders guiding the activities. The activities change frequently, often mimicking the sport in progress at the time. While their conversations were shorter on the topic, most of the students in the study participated at some point in the program. Intramurals gave the students the opportunity to hone their skills during the sports' tryout period, as well as join their friends for some lunchtime movement. The freedom to choose when they would participate was an added attraction for the

participants. One student stated, “I went to the basketball one almost every day it was available, dodge ball too. It’s just fun! It’s not the most competitive so you can develop” (P10). When participants’ friends were going to the gymnasium during the lunchtime to engage in intramurals, they were more likely to join than if they were to go on their own. As a student shared, “We have a big friend group that we play intramurals with. We loved playing bump in the gym during intramurals or dodge ball. That was very competitive” (P4). The participants in the study took advantage of the different programs that were offered in the school, and enjoyed the choices that were available. However, the increase in responsibilities and scheduling of their time weighed on the students and how they tried to balance their involvement in PA and schoolwork.

As the participants shared their experiences with PA, they expressed the difficult choices they had to make due to the expectations to maintain their academic workload. The participants expressed the importance of PA to their well-being, and the difficulty they experienced in maintaining a balance with their schedules. Participants described the influence of long hours of studying, not getting enough rest and falling asleep in class on their ability to participate in PA. One student expressed how hungry he was during the day, and we talked about him asking to buy a thermos so he could take leftovers to school the next day. During our second interview he mentioned that his mom had purchased a thermos and he was eating better. Another participant provided an example to further illustrate the point saying:

School was getting hard to juggle because I’d get home at 4:00 and I’d want to go to bed and I’m already tired. Then I’m getting food shoved down my gullet because I have to go to soccer at 6:00. Then I get home at 9:00 and I’m dead and I

have twelve pages of homework to do. So, then I stay up to 12:00 at night finishing the homework and I'd have no sleep. The next day I'd be dead and then I would repeat and repeat and repeat. I just wasn't getting the enjoyment out of it and I think it just got to be too much for me. (P3)

The participants continued to provide examples of how they would attempt to fulfill all their commitments, and remain active. Reflecting on why they are involved in an activity was important when participants were deciding on the feasibility of continuing engagement in PA. If the participants were not enjoying themselves, they would choose to leave that PA. As the students described their busy schedules, some stated a difficult choice needed to be made:

I'll tell you a story! During grade 7, I'd have basketball in the morning, and then it would be wrestling practice after school, and then I'd forget my Math homework and then I'd have to go in the next morning earlier and then do my Math homework in the morning. I did that in grade 8, too. So I thought this year, I'm just going to do the sports that make me happy because last year I was trailing behind in school. (P4)

The ability to remain physically active and their attempt to maintain a balance in their lives also impacted their interactions with their family. The time commitment that some PA demanded was difficult for participants to sustain. Students looked to their parents for assistance in creating an atmosphere that was conducive to maintaining a physically active lifestyle. As the following quote stated:

My parents are both teachers so they really want me to focus on school, and so school comes first and if I have to miss a practice then I can because of my schooling. I would just get home, do my homework and then go to sports. (P8)

Parents guided their son's priorities, and working hard in the school setting was unquestioned. Another student explained, "Grades is one of those things, at least in my family, is a big focus and school comes first, and then sports comes second to school. I've never really had a problem; I've just tried to balance everything" (P7).

The intense schedules that some participants maintained negatively impacted their enjoyment of the PA and also influenced their decision to leave the PA. The pressure to get higher grades as the students were preparing for high school was discussed as a factor that influenced their continued engagement in PA. Students worked hard to maintain the balance of eating, sleeping and completing homework, however it started to wear on their well-being, particularly their enjoyment of the PA. One participant provided an example, saying:

I always do school first. I can do it in the car when we're driving sometimes, but I've had years when I have a way too busy schedule, and it kind of loses it's fun when you're doing it so much with school. (P11)

Another participant provided a reason for quitting hockey:

I think it's everything. I lost motivation for it because I was too worried about school and getting higher grades because there's more pressure now. Every weekend hockey took up a good majority of my day. It's sports, friends, and school and you can't really balance three equal parts. I have to pick two. (P10)

The scheduled PA within the school setting provided opportunities for the participants to be active and engaged. However, the time commitments required to remain in some PA, combined with the responsibility of maintaining grades, presented challenging choices for the participants.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Locker Rooms and Mixed Gender Classes

The following section resulted in data collected from two specific questions that were based on what research has shown to have an influence on adolescents' experiences with PA. The two themes in question are the locker rooms and mixed gender classes.

The first question that was inspired by research is the influence of the locker rooms and how the unsupervised area can create issues for adolescent males (Jachyra, 2016; Metcalfe, 2018)? The initial response from the participants when asked if they had experienced any issues in the locker rooms were short and concise, typically stating there were not issues. Such comments were, "No, change rooms have always been fine" (P10), and, "Uh, no, it's just kind of a place you go and get physical type clothes on" (P12). When prompted, the discussions pertaining to the locker room alluded to the fact that there was more going on than what the students initially wanted to express. Some students made reference to stories they were told about issues in the locker room but that they had never experienced anything themselves. Other students stated it was simply a place to 'change and get out as fast as you can' (P3-2) and then continued to describe the smacking on individuals' backs as a 'thing' that happened occasionally. Participants described the five-star smack on the back as a typical expectation in the locker room. A student responded to these smacks by saying, "That did happen a couple of times. But what goes around comes around" (P9).

Students shared the use of inappropriate language and gestures that were common in the locker room. Some participants stated they just got themselves changed and got out of the locker room as soon as they could when the antics started. As described by one participant:

It's guy talk, but it's misogynistic, and homophobic and people five-star. (The five-star being referred to is when an individual smacks another person on the back with their open hand leaving a red mark resembling a star with five points.) There are some people that just go down there and don't change because they get made fun of and called gay and are insulted and stuff like that. (P4)

Another student spoke to his coach about the locker room and the use of inappropriate language. As the quote shows, "I get annoyed in the change room, and sometimes I say, hey coach, there's so and so being kind of a jerk to the rest of the teammates, and then I try and tune it out" (P11). He expressed his appreciation when the behaviour stopped showing the coach had spoken to the teammate. The locker room is an unsupervised space that the participants expressed did factor into their experience in PA. It did not deter them from participating, however it was stated it was uncomfortable at times.

The participants were asked how they felt about having male and female mixed PE classes? The adolescent males in the study were not negatively influenced with females in their PE class. The previous suggestion by the participants to separate classes based on interest and competitive consideration was more important than males and females sharing the PA space. As one student stated:

I know guys are considered more 'physical' (he does air quotes) so I think that's probably why we're separated so we don't hurt anyone, but I don't see why.

Some girls are as tough as guys. Some girls overpower guys. I don't care if it's a guy or a girl as long as they try hard. (P2)

Some participants raised the point that they were on community teams with females who were members and it did not negatively impact their enjoyment of the game. They expressed that some of the females were the best players on the team, and therefore skill was not a factor in whether or not to mix the classes. The larger issue for the participants circled back to their PE class and whether or not the females were willingly participating at the level the males wanted to. Another student shared, "It depends because if I want to play a competitive game of basketball and if some girls want to play and put in the effort, then I don't mind at all" (P7). One student summed up his thoughts in the following quote, "I have a lot of friends that are girls and guys and it was more fun with more people" (P4). The participants were committed to enjoying their time while involved in PE and PA. The importance of the ability to participate was more important to the individuals than the gender of those joining them.

4.4 Community Level

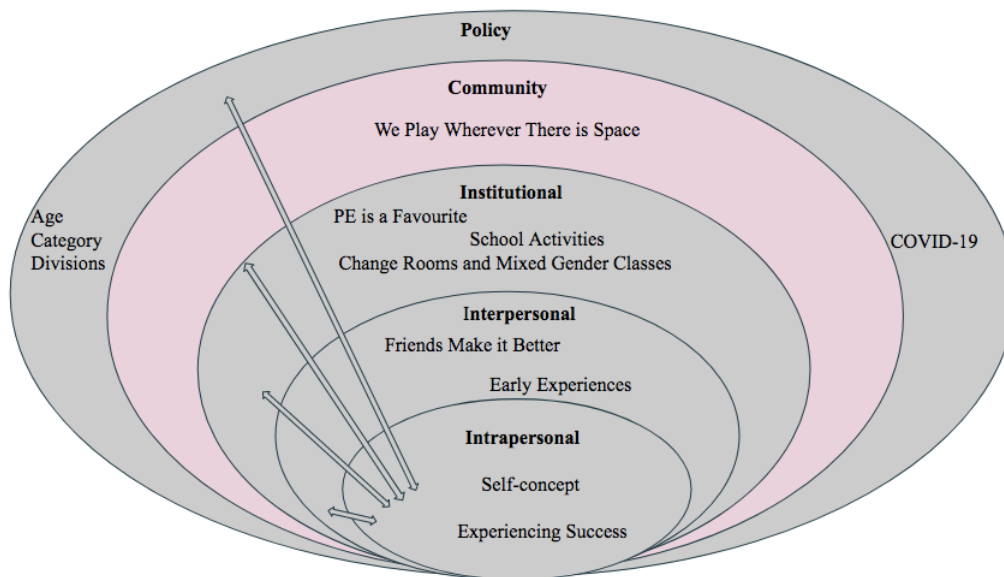
For the purpose of the study, the community level involves the relationships the participants have with the various facilities within their community, such as recreation centres, neighbourhood playgrounds, schoolyards and streets (McLeroy et al., 1988). When the participants were asked about their current engagement in community-organized activities, only a few stated that they continued to belong to club organized PA. The reasons for leaving community led PA were based on various influences. One participant listed a number of factors that impacted his decision to stop playing hockey:

I found it harder to improve, I didn't have the best coach that year, and I was already thinking about quitting because it took a lot of time, and the cost with everything else you put in, you didn't get as much out of it. (P7)

The influence of friends impacted the participants' experiences with PA within the community more than other potential factors. The students described the importance of being with their friends and the social aspect of being together. The availability of alternate spaces and accessibility to the space to play influenced how active the participants were. Therefore, the following theme was created as the participants described the various areas of the community they used to engage in PA: We play wherever there is space (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Socio-Ecological Model: Community Level and Theme



(McLeroy et al., 1988)

4.4.1 Theme 1: We Play Wherever There Is Space

Within the community, participants described joining up with friends to engage in a variety of activities and the influence of the accessibility to space. The ability to use the neighbourhood space to engage in PA was a factor. As one participant explained:

We go outside and play street hockey all the time for the whole day, go back in at dinner time and then do the same the next day, so that's really fun. Last summer we went on bikes almost every day. We also go walking sometimes and play a bunch of sports. If we're playing basketball, it's on a driveway. (P12)

A similar experience was echoed by another student, "I usually play with friends where I live and play on the hoops that we have hanging at our houses. If it's ball hockey, we set up the nets on the street because we live on a cul-de-sac" (P9). The students expressed their desire to be with their friends and engage in PA on a daily basis. The local schoolyard was a space frequented by the participants to use the basketball hoops and soccer fields. Additionally, the participants described the use of the city streets as active transportation to get to the PA space. The following participants explained, "I'll go over to friends' houses and we'll go skateboarding around the city" (P1), "I'm always biking to get wherever we're playing basketball" (P6), and "I live pretty close to the recreation centre, so do most of my friends, so we would say, hey let's grab our stuff and go swimming. We'd walk or bike there" (P12). The recreation centre provided an alternate space to engage in PA for many of the participants.

The recreation centre was used by all of the participants in varying degrees of frequency, and most of them had passes to the centre providing easy access. It was a popular venue as it provided well-designed playing areas that enhanced their PA

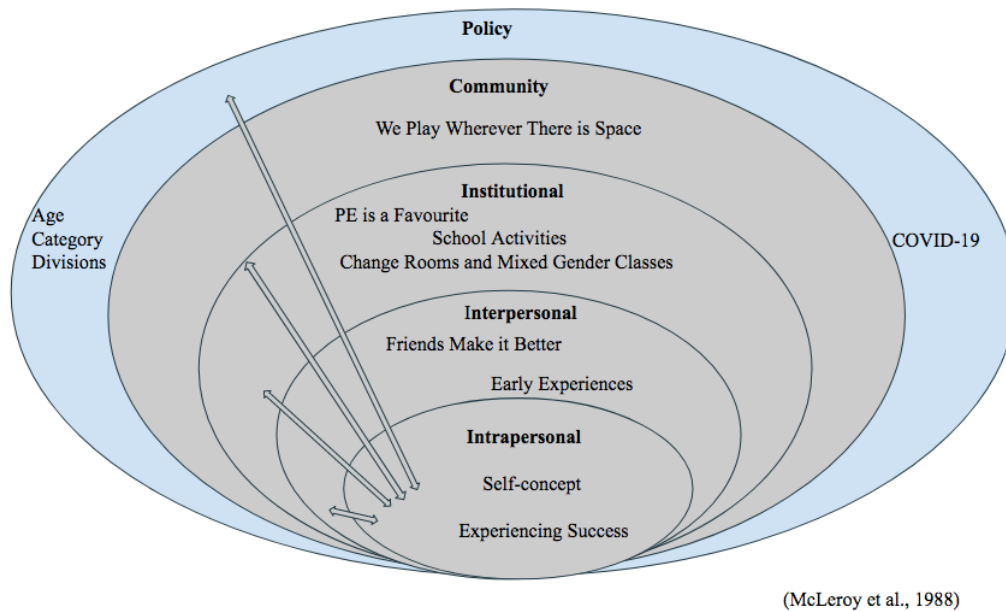
experience. The good condition of the basketball courts and the ability to use proper lines enticed the participants to frequent the community centre. The students enjoyed the ability to change PA and remain in one space. The soccer fields and basketball courts were utilized as well as the swimming pool. The ability to access the recreation centre on days when school was not in session was a positive factor for participants as one student shared, “Usually on half days me and my friends take the city bus and go to the rec centre and we play volleyball, badminton, basketball or football” (P4). The use of the community environment was important to the participants to meet up with their friends and engage in PA. They just wanted to be active and they used whatever space they had available to them. The freedom to choose where they would play and whom they would engage in PA positively influenced their experiences. The next section illustrates the impact of policies that are in place within the community.

4.5 Policy Level

The fifth level in the socio-ecological framework is the policy level. The section highlights the laws and policies that are in place in a community and province (McLeroy et al., 1988). The two themes that were constructed from the data that influenced the PA experiences of the students are: (1) Age category divisions and (2) COVID-19 (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Socio-Ecological Model: Policy Level and Themes



4.5.1 Theme 1: Age Category Divisions

The participants spoke about the age category divisions within the community leagues, and how the policy affected their experiences with PA. The policies of the community leagues are created to assist individuals in finding the appropriate placement for their level of PA. However, participants expressed feelings of inadequacy, fear of injury, and as a result choosing to become a non-participant due to their placement in a community league.

The birthdate cutoff was the issue for some participants as it placed them in an activity with older athletes. Participants expressed that to be placed in a league as the youngest athlete was intimidating. Students questioned their abilities and deemed themselves as weaker when they watched the older athletes on the playing field. The physical differences between the older and younger athletes were a deterrent for the

participants in the study, resulting in leaving the sport. To further understand their concerns, one student explained:

I'm born at the end of December and so I'm always playing with kids that are a year or two years older than me. I was playing with kids that were 6'3" and I'm 5'7". I don't know if you've seen lacrosse before but you can hit people, and you go to play them and you see there's this tall kid and then you are scared for the rest of the game. You're kind of watching over your back to make sure that you're not getting chased down, or that tall kid isn't running straight at you about to cream you and just knock you off your feet. (P7)

Another participant echoed these feelings in the quote:

I'm born at the end of 2005 so I'm put with 16 year olds and 15 year olds even though I'm 14. I have a 14-year-old body playing against kids with beards. The same with track, next year I'll be in U18 because of how they do the birthdays, so I'm going to be versing 17 and 18 years olds. So that's the reason I quit the basketball league because it was hard for me to do anything. (P4)

The inability to feel like they were on an equal playing field was a deterrent for the participants based on the policy of age divisions. It was a critical factor affecting their experiences in community organized PA. Another policy that affected the participants PA experiences was due to COVID-19 restrictions.

4.5.2 Theme 2: COVID-19

As the interviews were being conducted for the study, we, as a society, were in different stages of COVID-19 restrictions. The conditions placed on the populace by Alberta Health Services (AHS) (2020) were to keep a physical distance of two meters,

eliminate community and social gatherings and interactions and in general, stay home. Therefore, the availability of PA was different from participant to participant. What became clear as the interviews progressed was the resiliency of the students and their ability to adapt to new circumstances, all with the goal of remaining physically active.

The participants described their own phases of adapting to the pandemic and quarantine. While the community was in a state of isolation, the students described their ability to be PA through the use of equipment within their home and finding online workouts that didn't require equipment. One student shared, "Working out was self-motivated. I do the no equipment workout, like pushups, crunches, I do have weights, and in the garage I can do pull-ups and that sort of thing" (P10). A number of the participants engaged in PA with family members, as many people were required to work from home. The students described how they were able to encourage their dad or brother to work out with them as they found online workouts that suited each person. The ability to get outside was important for the students, and due to policy rules, they were to be with people from the same household. Another participant stated, "During COVID quarantine we go out once or twice a week together to go for a walk" (P1). The policies in place made it difficult for the participants to remain motivated to be active. Their PA levels were also dependent on what the family permitted.

Within the interviews, students reflected on the influence the COVID-19 policies had on them, and factors they found difficult to navigate. Maintaining a positive attitude and trying to find the good in the situation was difficult for some of the participants. The families of the participants approached the restrictions differently, based on their own comfort level and family situation. Some students were able to go to the local schoolyard

and use the basketball court, or use the local outdoor rink. Participants described setting up cones at the outdoor rink and practicing skating and shooting drills. The extent of comfort within each family and the freedom to be in the community impacted each individual in the study. The struggles of one student are shared:

I was very limited to what I could do, I couldn't go and see my friends, couldn't be active with them, and have fun and all that kind of thing. I really struggled (light chuckle) with keeping kind of active because there was really no motivation for me. (P12)

The participants were involved in various types of PA when the pandemic restrictions were implemented. Participants described disappointment in PA being cancelled, such as Running Room Games or the badminton and rugby seasons. Some participants expressed the ability to maintain their skill level, as well as fitness level, was a challenge, as stated by a student:

I had access to go play on a basketball court outside that gave me chances to practice and improve. I use it as more of a good thing not a bad thing and work on my game and improve myself, and just whatever I can work on that I'd come back better than I was before. It was hard because playing with people is a big motivator, and self-passing the ball (chuckling) is not the same. (P7)

The effect of limited access to facilities for those that train on a competitive level was a factor for participants. The participants were concerned about the effects of the downtime and lack of access to their PA of choice, as shown in the quote:

I'm definitely out of shape compared to what I was last year. My volleyball and basketball skills are okay because I practice those a bit. My parents always said

we have to do a workout once a day, so I go to the track and it was hard training without a coach that would push you. (P4-2)

The reduction in PA within the community and school environments due to COVID-19 policies affected the participants differently. While some were concerned about their level of fitness and decline in skill level, others enjoyed the ability to stay at home. Some participants enjoyed the shut down of hockey and other sports so they did not have to rush after school to eat or get homework completed. Students expressed being able to see more of their family and have meals together. An example is shared in the following quote:

All this year I feel like since I've had less sports I've been more relaxed in class when I get an assignment because I know I have more time to do it at home, but other years I've always worked hard, just put my head down and kept working for the whole class. (P6)

The ability to feel more relaxed in school due to a slower PA schedule was a benefit the participants described. However, the lack of contact with their friends and the connections they thrive on, were becoming an issue for participants as the restrictions were prolonged. The students felt the absence of time with their friends and adjusting the rules of society to be able to be together became a focus for the participants.

During the phases of quarantine and the changing policies that were imposed, the participants adjusted to how they could see their friends. The participants expressed difficulty in maintaining their motivation to continue engaging in PA. As a result, the students described various ways they could see their friends while respecting the provincial policies for COVID-19. The students described playing basketball after school

hours, ensuring each person brought their own basketball. They adjusted the games to shooting games so they were not coming in physical contact with each other. The new policies within society remained in participants' minds as they ensured they were socially distanced with their friends. One student shared the physically distanced activities he participated in, "All organized sports are gone. I go outside a lot more, especially during the start of the quarantine in the summer, I'd be either long boarding, skateboarding or biking with people almost every day just to get outside" (P10). Throughout the interviews it became evident that while the participants were influenced and challenged by the COVID-19 policy changes, they found different ways to maintain their activity levels. The realization of how important PA was to each of the participants once it was taken away, was shared. This student summed up his thoughts in the quote:

I don't know if I emphasized how important physical education is. I was noticing when I was playing recently, since I got out again, and was actually doing stuff like playing basketball, and going out and doing anything, I started sweating, and it feels amazing. It's so nice to actually go out and enjoy nature, enjoy the air, enjoy the sun on your face and the running and the fun times, and the laughs. Since missing so much interaction, it makes you really miss it so when you do it, it reminds you how it feels great. (P3-2)

The ability to be active and to access a space to join others and play, whether in the midst of a pandemic or not, was important to the adolescent males interviewed.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Overview of the Findings

The purpose of the study was to understand the factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA. While research has provided statistics on all adolescents and their decline in engagement levels, the focus has largely been on adolescent females and suggesting program improvements for increasing female participation in PA (Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Clark et al., 2011; Gibbons 2014). The current study utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the experiences of adolescent males with PA. Through the adolescent males' voices, specific information about the factors that have influenced the demographic and their experiences with PA were identified using the socio-ecological framework. The importance of providing an understanding of the factors influencing adolescent males' experiences in PA is the hope to inspire change to programing within their PA environments.

Prior to a detailed discussion, an overview of the findings is provided. The benefit of utilizing a socio-ecological framework is the ability to cross-reference factors that have been identified as influencing individual behaviours (Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009; Sallis & Owen, 2015). Identifying factors across the levels is important as this knowledge provides an in depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied. These factors work together to provide an experience for the individuals and the interconnectedness gives strength to our understanding. Allowing for interventions to be placed at more than one level will therefore provide a comprehensive and meaningful approach (Sallis & Owen, 2015). As an example, the participants spoke of early experiences that influenced their future engagement in PA, and the decisions they made based on these experiences. The

benefit of this knowledge that crosses multiple levels is the ability to implement interventions that will apply to more than one level, therefore providing suggestions that will longer serve the individuals (Sallis & Owen, 2015). The participants were also influenced by their self-concept with PA and allowed their self-talk to determine whether or not they would engage in an activity. Additionally, their self-concept was connected to their early experiences, and whether or not they had previous experience with a particular activity. If success was experienced at an early age, the participants were more likely to continue their involvement as the feeling of success provided acknowledgment of ability and led to acceptance in a friend group. The sense of belonging to a friend group was very important to the participants, and was a factor that applied to all five levels. At the institutional level the participants expressed less concern about mixed gender PE classes, and felt it was more important to increase participation amongst those who sat out or talked on the sideline. Providing a system of choice for those in PE class was suggested as a way to increase engagement, as the less motivated students negatively impacted the experience of the participants. The participants highlighted the school-based activities as important for their continued engagement in PA. However, balancing their schedules was becoming more difficult as they considered the commitment to their studies that would be required for high school. The use of locker rooms is a topic that requires further investigation. While examples of shenanigans, “devious tricks or questionable conduct for underhand purposes” (Merriam-Webster, 2022) were given in a joking manner, the underlying sense of unease was present. The final factor of influence that is highlighted is within the policy level, and the restrictions placed on the community due to COVID-19. The students felt their inability to spend time with friends during the pandemic also

impacted their engagement in PA. The following discussion of the findings follows the socio-ecological framework, and highlight the most influential factors as described by the participants.

5.2 Discussion of the Findings

5.2.1 The Intrapersonal Level

Within the intrapersonal level, the research highlights the importance of adolescent males' self-concept and the influence of experiencing success. Jachyra (2016) detailed the negative impact the sport-oriented atmosphere had on adolescent males and their sense of incompetence within a PE setting. The feeling of incompetence when the activity was too difficult or was a new activity deterred the participants from engaging in PA. The adolescent males who contributed to the study expressed their lack of confidence in their own physical ability and claimed they were better off not trying at all than risking embarrassment or alienation from friends. These findings are similar to those found by Moran and Weiss (2006) that state high skill level is deemed important, and athletic competence is directly related to peer acceptance. Additionally, Tischler and McCaughtry (2011) noted the importance of how self-talk impacts adolescent males and their perception of their own physical ability. Participants in the study preferred to avoid unpleasant comments or feelings of incompetence, and engage in activities that enhanced their feelings of success.

The idea of pleasure, as Gerdin and Larsson (2018) suggest, attributes to the continued participation in PA of adolescent males. The concept of pleasure "is often used interchangeably with fun, enjoyment, happiness, satisfaction" (Gerdin & Larsson, 2018, p. 68) and was described by the adolescent males as an influential factor for feeling

successful. In the current study, participants described success in various ways; however, the common thread was that they felt good about what they were doing and how they were performing. Additionally, the participants expressed a desire to win, as this made them feel successful, and affirmed their self-concept. Similarly, Jachyra and Gibson (2016) stated that success for adolescent males is linked to competence to perform an activity, which leads to acceptance and a place within their social structure. Referred to as “valued forms of capital” (Jachyra & Gibson, 2016, p. 86) the proven ability to join an activity and contribute to the playing field was echoed by the participants in the study.

5.2.2 The Interpersonal Level

The main factors of influence within the interpersonal level were early experiences and friends. The value and quality of experiences determines the subsequent involvement an individual will have in future years (Dewey, 1938). The present research supports the notion of the influence of early experiences, and is further divided into the family influence and early team experiences. Koh et al. (2017) reported an increase in PA levels of adolescent males when their families had been involved in their early participation in PA. Participants described how their parents would take them swimming, and go for bike rides or for walks when they were younger. The support of the family watching an event, or cheering on a parent involved in their own PA, motivated participants to be active in the present stage of their lives. Some participants recalled early experiences watching soccer games with grandfathers, playing hockey outside with dads and hoping to keep up with their brothers in various PA. These findings align with previous research (Martin-Matillas et al., 2011; Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2010) and the influence of family members on adolescent involvement in PA. Furthermore,

Martin-Matillas et al. (2011) reported the importance of the relationship between adolescent males and male family members as a contributing factor to continued engagement in PA. The participants in this study enjoyed time with their family when they were younger; expressing the inspiration to try different PA was due to their family's encouragement. Findings showed some participants highlighted that their parents' involvement in PA as they got older was less important than at the younger stages of their lives. Prochnow et al. (2020) reviewed the influence of the social network on adolescents' engagement in PA. Similar to current findings, the impact of the social network changed over time, with the family having a greater influence during the earlier years and peers becoming a more important influence during the adolescent years (Prochnow et al., 2020). The participants appreciated the support and encouragement their parents provided to engage in PA. The role their parents had in enrolling them for various activities such as teams and individual activities enhanced their PA experiences.

The ability to participate in PA at a level the adolescent males in the study deemed acceptable was directly related to their early experiences with team sports. Many of the participants began their early team experiences with Timbits soccer or hockey and proceeded to other PA as they determined their desire to continue playing. The participants described the early exposure to various activities developed confidence to attempt PA at the adolescent level, connecting the intrapersonal, interpersonal and institutional levels. The participants described their decision to try school activities were related to the experiences they had when they were younger. As an example, a lack of early exposure to snowboarding was a deterrent for a participant to join the junior high school ski and snowboard club as he felt his inexperience would lead to criticism from

other students. Similarly, Jachyra and Gibson (2016) found the habits adolescent males formed in their earlier years were reflected in their continued participation in PA. Additionally, the early experiences with coaches had an impact on the participants and their future involvement in PA. Previous literature has discussed the impact of a coach's leadership style on the mental and physical development of youth. Lefebvre et al. (2021) examined coach leadership behaviours and highlighted three main coaching styles. The first approach provided little to no feedback to the athlete. The second and more active approach provided positive reinforcement, and the third and more intense coaching technique encompassed development of the whole person (Lefebvre et al., 2021). A coach is more than an instructor of athletic skills, but also an individual who is a role model that may instill confidence and motivation for the youth they work with (Cruz & Kim, 2017; Holt et al., 2008; Lefebvre et al., 2021). Participants shared the significance of their previous coaches demonstrating an understanding of the skill level of the team, and contributing to their ongoing development as individuals. Additionally, they expressed the importance of the coach knowing and understanding their choice for level of competition, as well as their goals for skill improvement. Holt et al. (2008) also found that a coach's philosophy and the approach to building relationships with their athletes impacts their PA experiences. When purposeful modeling and respect for young athletes is valued, the lifelong influences contribute to further engagement in PA.

The negative impact coaches had on participants in this study affected their confidence to consider trying new PA. For example, participants discussed comments from coaches that were unsupportive in nature, or did not contribute to the betterment of the team or individual, were catalysts for leaving PA. Participants expressed the desire to

continue improving their skill, and to be successful when on the playing field, however, this was hindered by the approach from coaches at an early age. This aligns with previous research on the impact of coaches on PA experiences among adolescent males (Dworkin, 2007; Lefebvre, 2021; Vella et al., 2013). Vella et al. (2013) explored the relationship between coaches' leadership style, adolescent athletes, the success of their teams, and development experiences. A coach has a significant place in youth sport and they have the ability to influence youth in a manner that has lifelong implications (Vella et al., 2013). While this work was completed with males and females, the adolescent males in the study did support the notion that coaches can have a negative impact on their performance as well as their desire to continue their involvement in PA. Participants were able to recall exchanges they had with a coach from their youth, and their physical response showed the impact of these interactions. While research on adolescent males' PA experiences is limited, studies have been conducted on adolescents in general, with some differentiation between males and females being highlighted. Adolescent male participants in a study conducted by Cruz and Kim (2017) identified the importance of instructional coaching while being supported socially. The authors reported that adolescents prefer an instructional leadership style where they continue to learn and grow in the PA they are engaging in (Cruz & Kim, 2017). Findings in the current study, combined with Cruz and Kim (2017), emphasize the importance of the coach and their approach to PA. When participants recalled a coach that placed excessive expectations on them at an early age, within the interview they demonstrated emotional stress through non-verbal communication. The participants were able to describe in detail their early experiences that were a deterrent for future engagement in PA due to negative comments

from a coach, or the lack of modeling positive behaviours. The impact of the early experiences on the participants indicates the need for a deeper understanding of the interactions with youth in different PA environments.

As youth advance into the adolescent phase of their life, the focus shifts from parental influence to that of friends, as the findings in the study show. The social groupings are more pronounced and important in the adolescent years than in previous years, and acceptance is based on athletic competence (Moran & Weiss, 2006). The current study is not the first to suggest the importance of the peer group in the adolescent world. Koh et al. (2017) interviewed students attending an all boys' school investigating patterns of PA behaviour. Their findings suggested that when friends were involved in PA it inspired others to engage and be physically active. Aligning with Koh et al. (2017) and Moran and Weiss (2006), the participants elaborated on the influence of their friend group and the increased enjoyment in PA when their friends were present. Friends provided encouragement to engage in PA, a push to improve skill level, and competition within a safe environment for the students. The participants described a sense of comfort and connectedness when engaged in PA with friends. Similarly, Jachyra and Gibson (2016) reported the sense of importance of belonging to a friend group enhanced adolescent males' experience in PA. Combined with findings in the current study, the emotional support that is associated with friendships impacts individuals and their decision to be involved in PA. The importance of the friend group to the participants suggests that future programming may benefit from determining the friend base prior to organizing groupings within a PA.

5.2.3 The Institutional Level

Findings from the research show the influence of the institutional level and the PA programs that are offered in the school setting for the students. While PE class was described as the most important course in school for many of the participants, findings also highlight the effect of non-participants, the perspective of the students being cut from a team, the locker room shenanigans, and mixed gender classes. The PE class was a highlight for the males who enjoyed the ability to get out of their desks and move around. However, the impact of those not actively involved was a factor that influenced the participants and their outlook on PE. Gerdin (2017a) and Gerdin (2017b) emphasized that adolescent males like to participate in different activities, and to experience diversity in their PE class. The students in the current study suggested providing a choice for all of the students with the intent to inspire those that were not typically involved in an activity to become more involved. Furthermore, students suggested the ability to decide whom they were joining in the PA with, and how competitive they wanted to be would increase their enjoyment in PE. In a similar manner, Gerdin and Larsson (2018) reported that not all students need to be participating in the same activity at the same time. The ability to offer choice to the participants suggested a more meaningful PE class that would lead to more involvement from all students. Supporting the concept of meaningful PE, Beni et al. (2021) highlighted the effects of implementing a meaningful PE program. The approach requires buy-in from the facilitators, however once this occurs, the benefits to the students and teachers were notable (Beni et al., 2021). Participants provided suggestions to increase the involvement of all students, and believed the changes would encourage participation and enhance their experiences.

A further finding from the discussions with the participants was that their enjoyment in the PE program was a gateway to new sports and built their confidence to attend tryouts for various teams within the school setting. Each of the participants in the study had been cut from a team at some point, and while this was a disappointing experience, their view of the practice conjured mixed feelings. The findings support the positive effect of team bonding and the connections the adolescent males felt while participating in PA with their friends that were previously discussed. A surprising finding was the youth did not express the negative impacts of being cut from a team. Recent research by Gleddie et al. (2019) examined the social and emotional effects on the individuals who were cut from teams and the negative impact the event had on participants. Individuals in their research expressed the lack of desire to continue participating in the activity they were cut from, and the social distancing that occurred due to not being a part of a team (Gleddie et al., 2019). The students in this study found the tryouts and process of being cut a part of their athletic experience, and one that is a necessary part of being involved with teams. The participants did not enjoy the elimination process, however they used it as a motivational tool, going to intramurals to practice more, and meeting up with friends outside of school to better their skill level. The finding may be unique to the adolescent males in this study, and requires further investigation.

The results from the present research support the notion that the unsupervised locker room is a place adolescent males experience a sense of bonding, as well as a space to prepare and get fired up to play a game (Gerdin, 2017b). However, the findings also support the evidence that the locker room is a space of discomfort, aligning with previous

research that expressed concern for adolescent males in the locker room, and the bullying that occurs behind these doors (Jachyra, 2016; Jachyra & Gibson, 2016; Metcalfe, 2018). Metcalfe (2018) conducted research on gendered norms, and the implications of social judgement on adolescents in the PE environment. The peer policing aligned with experiences in the locker room from both male and female participants however, the females expressed judgement from both genders while the males only reported judgement from other males (Metcalfe, 2018). Metcalfe (2018) focused on gendered norms, which are beyond the scope of this research. However, the author discussed concerns that are relevant to the aspect of the current study as they address the issue of locker rooms and interactions amongst peers. The locker room is an unsupervised space, away from the watchful eyes of those that can intervene when teasing or physical activities advance past the point of comfort. The participants described smacking on backs, misogynist comments and exposure to language they were not comfortable with. Additionally, they brushed off the locker room activities as acceptable and the way boys are, aligning with research by Jachyra and Gibson (2016) that discussed the stereotypical mannerisms of adolescent males and how these behaviours are formed in their youth. As Metcalfe (2018) discussed, the negative impact of gendered locker rooms, and the imposed rule of changing clothing prior to PE class needs to be explored while addressing gendered norms. The participants in the study created enough question about the locker room that this topic requires further inquiry. If changing into active clothing is to remain a requirement for PE or other activities, discussions pertaining to the discomfort of the locker room atmosphere will be beneficial for adolescent males and their concerns.

As part of the exploration of the experiences of PA within the institutional level, and in particular PE, was the adolescent males' thoughts on mixed gender PE classes. Research has shown adolescent females identified the presence of males as a negative factor for female participation in PA (Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Clark et al., 2011; Gibbons, 2014; Robinson, 2013). Cameron and Humbert (2020) sought to understand the role of students' gender within the PE environment, particularly the notion of strong girls. While the adolescent females found support and strength amongst each other, creating a sense of social justice within the PE environment, there remained influences of the gendered norms associated with male dominance that negatively influenced their experiences (Cameron & Humbert, 2020). An important contribution of this research is that it highlights that participants were more interested in PA where everyone is engaged, regardless of their gender. Participants expressed their desire to surround themselves with individuals who are trying and are interested in engaging in the PE environment. Furthermore, participants stated they believed that some females in their classes were better athletes and more skilled than themselves. The ideals of having fun and participating were greater than whether or not those involved were female. The findings align with the research conducted by Martins et al. (2018) who explored the perspectives of physically active and inactive adolescents. They found that adolescents enjoy PE when they have positive experiences related to autonomy and support within their social relationships (Martins et al., 2018). Additionally, Cameron and Humbert (2020) emphasized the need for approaching PE classes with intentional social justice that allows for all students to be heard and respected, while providing opportunities for all to participate to the best of their ability. The adolescent males in the study were unknowingly describing the idea of

social justice by wanting to create a space that was respectful of all levels of participation within a PA setting.

5.2.4 The Community Level

A common theme created from the data in the study was to have space to play. The interpersonal and community levels intersect as the participants express the importance of having a space to meet up with friends to engage in PA. Participants identified the recreation centre, schoolyards, driveways and streets in their neighbourhood as places to gather and engage in PA. The availability of this infrastructure supports the ParticipACTION report card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth (2020), stating 78% to 93% of Canadian communities have green spaces, community centres, multi-use trails and fields available for PA. Tannehill et al. (2015) reported on the choices children make when deciding to be active or inactive. Findings showed males were receptive to various PA environments, where they could choose their activity and create a space of fun with friends (Tannehill et al., 2015). Within the current study, participants also valued opportunities to play in more relaxed settings with their friends, engaging in a variety of PA within their communities. The community and what the infrastructure has to offer is a factor that needs to be considered in discussions surrounding adolescent males and their engagement in PA. Participants enjoyed the freedom to choose where they played and the level of competition they engaged in. The simple joy of participation in PA is possibly underestimated for adolescent males. The ability to play at their own pace within the community and with whomever they chose is cause for consideration and further study. While some of the participants were presently

involved in competitive sports, or had recently left the competitive world, they expressed the love of simply being able to be physically active and with their friends.

5.2.5 The Policy Level

The final factor to be discussed that influenced the PA experiences of adolescent males is the policy level, and the restrictions placed on the participants as the COVID-19 pandemic struck our province. The policies that were put in place during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic were at the forefront of the participants' minds in the current study. As previously stated, the restrictions placed on the populace by Alberta Health Services (AHS) (2020) were to keep a physical distance of two meters, eliminate community and social gatherings and interactions and in general, stay home. The recent studies that have been conducted on PA and COVID-19 discuss age groups such as Canadian adults, or Canadian children and not adolescent males specifically (Lesser & Nienhuis, 2020; Masse et al., 2021; Rhodes et al., 2020). The information from the current study will add to the growing body of research, and is valuable at the early stage of the pandemic to identify how adolescent males have reacted to the restrictions placed on society at this time. The participants found engaging in PA within the parameters of the public health measures a challenge, which supports what Lesser and Nienhuis (2020), Masse et al. (2021), and Rhodes et al. (2020) found in their studies on Canadians. Rhodes et al. (2020) investigated the effects of COVID-19 on the PA levels of Canadian adults. Through assessing the unique situations of their participants, it was found that engagement in PA was decreased and depended on a variety of factors based on availability of home equipment, personality traits, age and history of PA engagement (Rhodes et al., 2020). Lesser and Nienhuis (2020) reported similar findings as Rhodes et

al. (2020) and PA engagement in Canadian adults during the pandemic. However, they extended their study to the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of Canadians. The authors found a distinct difference in well-being between those who were active and inactive, stating active individuals had lower anxiety levels (Lesser & Nienhuis, 2020). Furthermore, the seasonal transitions throughout Canada in the spring and the opportunities to gather outdoors and engage in PA impacted well-being (Lesser & Nienhuis, 2020). The importance of social interactions for adolescent males and the policies in place at the time of the study hindered the participants' ability to connect in-person. In the early stages of the pandemic, students found the imposed isolation to be a factor in motivation to be physically active, aligning with Lesser and Nienhuis (2020).

As the pandemic restrictions continued, the participants found alternate ways of being active and seeing their friends. This finding is contrary to the work of Masse et al. (2021) and Rhodes et al. (2020). Masse et al. (2021) focused on the influence of financial well-being on children's PA and leisure screen time behaviour. It was reported that there were multilevel influences that impacted the youth in their study (Masse et al., 2021). The restrictions that were placed on their parents due to workplace options, as well as the reduced availability of finances for some families, led to screen time replacing PA (Masse et al., 2021). As Lesser and Nienhuis (2020) discovered, a change of locations and an adjustment to how individuals were being active was viewed as a challenge and aligns with the students in this study. The participants that were active previously discovered different ways to play and alternative activities while adhering to the parameters of the policies in place. For example, they rode their bikes, skateboards or long boards, as they could remain socially distanced. Remaining in contact with their

friends was an important piece to their sense of well-being, reinforcing the connection between the intrapersonal, interpersonal and policy levels. While some participants commented on their frustration with not being able to see friends and be physically active, they did not allow this policy to dictate their activity levels. They overcame the challenges of the restrictions and found alternate ways to be active by meeting at local schools with their own basketball and playing shooting games so they didn't touch another person's basketball. They would congregate at outdoor rinks and skate or practice shots on an open net. While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect societal policies, hopefully the participants in the study will continue to adapt and create alternative opportunities to be physically active.

5.2.6 A Deeper Understanding Through Interconnectedness

The premise of the socio-ecological framework is that the factors that influence behaviours do not act in isolation of other factors. Therefore, using a multi-level approach is more effective in understanding the impact of PA experiences as described by the participants (Pratt et al., 2015; Robertson-Wilson et al., 2009). The purpose of the study was to identify factors that influence adolescent males with PA, and if the results showed interconnections between levels, it would deepen our understanding. The findings have shown an overlap of factors within each level. As an example, the themes at the intrapersonal level of self-concept and experiencing success intersect with the interpersonal, institutional, community and policy levels of the socio-ecological framework. The introduction of PA at the younger age group influenced the participants to continue engagement based on their feelings of success. As reported by Koh et al. (2017), participants were more likely to continue engaging in PA during their adolescent

years when they have had positive experiences in their formative years. To further highlight the interconnectedness of the socio-ecological levels, and the complexity of understanding influential experiences, Martins et al. (2018) explored the perspectives of youth and factors influencing their experiences with PA. The early experiences of the participants impacted their self-concept, at times creating barriers that determined their PA levels as adolescents, and affected their engagement in PE class (Martins et al., 2018).

The theme of friends and their positive influence on the participants are connected to each level. The presence of friends attributed to a sense of well-being and a positive self-concept discussed at the intrapersonal level. Additionally, the participants' comfort level with friends and the encouragement they received from them was instrumental in encouraging participants to try out for team sports, overlapping with the institutional and community levels. Tannehill et al. (2015) reported similar findings with friends contributing to overlapping factors influencing adolescent males' experiences. The importance of spending time with friends provided encouragement to try new activities, in addition to the sense of belonging that was felt when there were together, stating "it did not matter where you went as long as you were with your friends" (Tannehill et al., 2015, p. 453).

Furthermore, the complexity of the influential factors is extended as participants' involvement in PA at the community level was influenced by other interconnected factors, such as experiencing success, early experiences, and scheduling conflicts. The factors influencing adolescent males are multi-leveled and provide an in-depth understanding of this group. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing

adolescent males, it is imperative to view the intersecting influences and not only the singular ones.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations

As in all research, recognizing the strengths and limitations are an important part of this study. The findings fill a gap in the literature around adolescent males and the factors that influence their experiences with PA. While there is previous research on adolescents and PA, the study has focused solely on adolescent males and their experiences. Through their voices, factors influencing adolescent males' experiences with PA have been reported. The sharing of the knowledge will allow those who work with this group to understand and develop programming that will enhance the adolescent males' experiences with PA.

The socio-ecological framework utilized within the research does not identify one factor that is most influential at a particular level (Sallis & Owen, 2015). While some may consider it a limitation, the pairing of IPA, and categorizing the lived experiences of the participants into a combination of levels allows for a deeper understanding of the factors that influence adolescent males and PA (McLeroy et al., 1988). Information could be studied in the different levels that are instrumental in influencing the lives of adolescent males, providing alternative measures that cross over the various levels. An example of the overlap was the influences of early experiences from the interpersonal level on the decisions that adolescent males made in the institutional level. Due to the cross level influence, we are able to make recommendations such as working with those who coach younger individuals and educating them on the long lasting effects their actions have in the decisions of adolescent males and PA. Similarly, the influence at the

policy level impacted the involvement of the participants at the community level, which in turn was influenced by their experiences at the interpersonal level and their connection to friends. As society moves through the continued impacts of COVID-19, the information is useful in assisting recreation centres on the depth of impact potential closures have on adolescent males.

Within the study, the fact that the interviewer is female may have been considered a limitation, and possibly a reason for participants to restrict the detail in responses with more sensitive topics such as locker room issues or having females in their PE classes. However, based on research by Lefkowich (2019) it may be viewed that being female was a benefit in the study. Lefkowich (2019) presents the idea that males may feel more comfortable expressing emotions to a female interviewer as opposed to a male based on societal gender norms. Gender norms associated with females, such as patience, nurturance and compassion, as opposed to those stereotypically associated with males that would lean away from emotional reflections may have allowed for expressive communication, such as was noted when the participants were talking about early experiences (Lefkowich, 2019). On more than one occasion participants took pause when discussing a sensitive issue, such as parental expectations, coaches' comments or the lack of confidence they felt within themselves. These shared moments may have differed with a male interviewer.

The location of the interviews was considered to ensure the comfort and familiarity for the participants. The careful consideration changed with the presence of COVID-19. The shift to an online platform may be considered a limitation, as the depth of discussions may have been limited due to the format that was utilized. The value of in-

person communication may have provided a risk-free atmosphere with respect to who was listening in the background. Within each interview session, the participants were either disrupted by a sibling, or wondering whether or not a parent was listening to their more sensitive answers. On occasion, a parent corrected the participants' response or added to their memory as they reflected on a question. During interviews, we were restricted by the integrity of the wireless connection. At times the connection was lost when the student was mid-sentence. While this did not discourage any of the participants from continuing the interview, it was evident that in some cases, an answer was cut short or the essence of the message was not restored. While being in-person was not an option during the time frame, it was imperative to make adjustments as the interview progressed, and assist participants if disruptions occurred.

A consideration for a limitation is the age range of the statistics used in the study. Recognizing that the age range of 12-17 is a wide span and as stated previously, physical, mental, emotional, and social development rates vary between individuals (Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010) it may be prudent to adjust this grouping. If we want to truly understand factors influencing PA experiences, creating smaller age groupings may prove beneficial when applying interventions and programming changes.

A final limitation to be considered is the nature of the study may have inspired those individuals who have an interest in PA to volunteer to be participants. The recruiting process did occur in PE classes, possibly encouraging those who felt more comfortable with the topic to volunteer for the study. The recruiting of the participants outlined that the level of PA participation was not criteria for involvement in the study, however those who dislike PA may not have opted to participate.

5.4 Practical Implications and Future Directions

5.4.1 Practical Implications

The aim of this study was to understand the factors that influence adolescent males' experiences with PA. Sharing the information fills a gap in the literature that has previously left questions for those who work with this group of individuals. Based on the findings of the research, and the socio-ecological levels, four recommendations are discussed to improve the PA experiences of adolescent males: (1) autonomy within their PA environment, (2) facilitator (e.g., teacher or coach) knowledge of the individuals, (3) community infrastructure and (4) suggestions for pre-service teachers.

The results of the study showed that adolescent males want to be physically active. Based on the findings, adolescent males seek out choice when deciding their level of engagement in PA. Through the choice of activity, the participants expressed experiencing the success they thrive on and the connections with their friends that are imperative at this age. The ability to decide on the competitive nature of their involvement enhanced their experience of enjoyment and having fun. As a PA facilitator this does not mean allowing adolescent males to do whatever they want whenever they want. Rather, as suggested by the students, allowing the choice of competitive or non-competitive playing areas or presenting a choice of three games to play is preferential to having everyone involved in the same activity. The participants believed they would increase their skill level if they were permitted to be in a group with those of a similar skill level. They felt they would be challenged and this would improve their ability. Sulz et al. (2020) explored the concept of choice in PE, drawing attention to the fact that at times the ability to choose becomes an open gym type atmosphere. It is imperative to

remember that there is more to PE than just the activity. Ensuring that the physical and mental needs of the students are met, in conjunction with the demands of the curriculum, is essential to a well-rounded program (Sulz et al., 2020). Within the PE class setting, the goal may be to engage students in activities requiring manipulative skills, such as catching or bouncing. At the same time, students should be given the opportunity to build their leadership skills while also checking in with their sense of well-being. When space is available, a PE class could have a group playing a game of basketball that resembles the rules and regulations applied to the actual game. In another space within the setting, a group may have chosen to pass the ball to each other, creating a game that resembles a 4 square setting. A third group may also be playing a game of basketball, but they may have chosen a different type of ball to complete their made up game. Within the setting, adolescent males may be present in each of the different groupings, participating in the PA of choice, and with the people they choose to be with in a way that aligns with their comfort level.

Adolescent males in the study expressed the importance of the PA facilitator having an understanding of the skill level of the individuals and their competitive intent. Their involvement in a no-hit hockey league does not mean they do not want to learn, compete and win. Adolescent males, once leaving a competitive league, continue to seek improving their skill level and this should be considered as a PA facilitator. Within a PA setting, there could be a series of stations that the participants work through that increase in difficulty. Each station could focus on a different skill, and the participants could keep track of their own success and challenges, logging their progress and suggestions from the facilitator. From the perspective of the adolescent males, the success of their PA

experience relied heavily on the facilitators' knowledge of the participating individuals, and their ability to adjust the activities to best suit their overall needs.

Within the community setting, it is important for city planners to have an understanding of factors influencing adolescent males. An important factor is that the participants utilized the outdoor parks, pools, and trails on a regular basis. The ability to meet in a common area was an important factor for continued engagement in PA. The infrastructure within a community that accommodates high levels of PA would include a recreation centre that could host a number of playing fields, such as basketball, soccer, badminton, with the ability of the participants to choose their activity. Accessible swimming pools, indoor or outdoor, were frequented by the youth. While the involvement in the swimming lesson program was mentioned, the ability to freely play was frequently enjoyed. The availability of outdoor courts for basketball, or the outdoor rinks for all-season PA are essential. The ability to utilize school facilities allows for neighbourhood friends to meet up and play together. A community that encourages active transportation and acknowledges the value in the movement will develop trails and road systems that accommodate the needs of adolescent males with skateboarding, biking, running or walking. The participants wanted to be active, and utilized the available facilities. As the COVID-19 restrictions continued to hinder the choices for PA, the availability of outdoor spaces became more important. Where possible, the availability of space to move and create games would provide the basics for adolescent males to engage in PA.

The final message is for pre-service teachers, or those who are new to the practice of teaching PE. You are about to embark on an amazing career, one that allows you the

true gift of working with adolescents in a physical activity capacity. It is very important to understand your own journey with PA, and to recognize preconceived notions of what PE should look like. It is imperative to understand your roots of PA and how you came to be the physically active individual you are today. Students deserve to have a PE teacher who is dedicated to lifelong PA, and one who is willing to share their experiences. The adolescent males in this study enjoyed when their PE teacher joined in their class, or shared their personal experiences with PA. For example, when the PE class is engaged in a tournament of pickle ball, the teacher could rotate in as a student's partner. With this in mind, the teacher is not committed to one section of the PA space, and is engaging with different students. Another example is during the Terry Fox run, completing a loop with the students or encouraging those that are struggling by walking with them towards the finish line. Additionally, the participants expressed trusting that the PE teacher would respond to their wants and needs within the PA environment, and adapt the class to enhance their experiences. Therefore, preparation for a PE class could outline one basic activity that has options for different scenarios to change according to the circumstances presented. Such as, a session with fitness stations may rotate in a certain order and completion is based on a pre-determined number of repetitions. However, it may become obvious that some students are completing stations at a quicker rate than others. An activity of this nature allows for the flexibility to adjust the requirements to a time frame as opposed to a certain number of reps, removing the focus from those individuals who are working at a different pace.

It is important to take time to reflect on your PA history. Does it revolve predominantly around team experiences; therefore guiding your practice towards a more

sports-centred approach? It is important to recognize that may not appeal to all students, and that the knowledge of how to run a PE class with an option for choice of activity is beneficial. It is important to take the time to identify your thoughts on gender stereotypes and PA. Is your philosophy based on gender differentiation resulting in activities specific to males or females? While the study was focused on adolescent males and factors influencing their experiences with PA, there are similarities with adolescent females that will provide knowledge to help create a gender-neutral PA space. The goal is to develop an approach that will enhance the PA experience for all students. Above all, continue to share your journey with PA with your students so they too, will remain active once they leave your class.

5.4.2 Future Directions

As previously stated, much of the research is focused on adolescent females and PA, leaving questions about adolescent males and the factors influencing this group. There are two thoughts for future studies to be highlighted: (1) adolescent males early experiences and (2) a gender-neutral approach to programming PA.

Previous research has reported the importance of early experiences and the impact these interactions have on continued engagement in PA (Hills et al., 2014; Telford et al., 2016; Yogman et al, 2018). However, the focus in previous research was on youth in general. To delve deeper into the early experiences of adolescent males' that have affected their decisions to engage in PA through a longitudinal study would be beneficial in understanding this age group. Adolescent males are leaving PA for specific reasons, and these may be tied to their early experiences. The adolescent males in this study wanted to talk about their experiences with PA and were excited to know they were being

listened to. The emotion that was connected to their storytelling demonstrated the deep impact of early experiences with PA. To hear the stories of what has impacted adolescent males engagement in PA due to early experiences would provide a basis of understanding that is not present in current literature.

The second suggestion for future studies is to move towards a gender-neutral focus as a facilitator (e.g., teacher, coach) in a PA environment. The approach to working with adolescents should be one that inspires all individuals to be active, regardless of their identity. However, there are factors that influence gender specific individuals and these have been reported in this study on adolescent males, as well as previous research on adolescent females (Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Clark et al., 2011; Corr et al., 2019; Tannehill et al., 2015). These influences impact adolescents and their decision to engage in PA. Therefore, prior to a discussion surrounding gender-neutral PA spaces, the similarities and the differences between the adolescent males and females and the factors that influence their experiences with PA will be highlighted below to provide insight into these demographics.

The differences between the factors that influence adolescent males and females in the PA setting are based on the current research on adolescent males and previous work with adolescent females. Research on adolescent females has shown that the presence of males in PE has negatively impacted their experiences (Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Clark et al., 2011; Robinson, 2013). Robinson (2013) stated, “The male students do not necessarily have to be doing any explicit and easily-observable transgressions to be viewed as problems for female students. Their mere presence and their observation of female students can make them feel uncomfortable” (p. 16). The adolescent males in the

current study were not impacted by the presence of females in the PE environment. Their larger concern was if the females would participate actively, and if they were prepared to engage at the level the males desired. A second difference is that while some adolescent females stated they enjoyed engaging in PA, their reasons for participating differed from adolescent males. For example, adolescent females were concerned about aesthetics and their body image, and focused more on weight loss as benefit to being physically active (Clark et al., 2011; Robinson, 2013). Whereas the adolescent males sought the adrenalin rush and described a sense of well-being that accompanied their PA experiences. A third difference in factors influencing adolescent males and females is the initiative to be engaged in PA within the community infrastructure. Within the study, the adolescent males utilized the many venues available within a community setting, such as schoolyards, streets, community centre, trails and driveways to create and play inventive games that suited the individuals who were present. For example, bike riding and skateboarding were forms of active transportation that led to an open field to play soccer or a school basketball court. In contrast, if adolescent females were active within the community, they were more often enrolled in organized PA, such as dance, hockey, and soccer programs (Clark et al., 2011; Corr et al., 2019). To understand the differences between adolescent males and females may enhance the experiences of those within a PE setting.

As this study showed some of the factors influencing adolescent males are similar to those of adolescent females. For example, adolescent females reported the desire to continue being challenged in their PA experience, while improving their skill level (Clark et al., 2011; Cameron & Humbert, 2020). Adolescent females have also identified choice

and autonomy as positively influencing their PA experiences, as well as sharing their play with friends (Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Clark et al., 2011; Robinson, 2013; Tannehill et al., 2015). Furthermore, based on current findings adolescent males have similar concerns as adolescent females with feelings of inadequacy in their skill level, peer comments, or overall lack of enjoyment (Cameron & Humbert, 2020; Gibbons, 2014; Robinson, 2013; van Daalen, 2005; Wang & Liu, 2007).

In order to truly make a difference in the experiences of adolescents in PA, it is important to implement strategies that are meeting the needs and interests of those involved. While having the knowledge of the factors influencing both genders is helpful, gender differences may not be critical information for developing a sound PA program. Approaching PA with the intention to improve overall experiences within a gender-neutral space is worth further investigation. Furthermore, following the study by Metcalfe (2018) and gendered identities, adolescents fall into the practice of gender specific behaviours that society has placed on them. The locker room is a space that instills discomfort for many students. Enquiring into the policy of changing into active clothing and the space provided for adolescents, as a whole is a worthy area to research. To dispel the stereotypical tendencies and place an emphasis on the whole person as opposed to a gendered individual may provide insight for creating programming that will inspire all youth to engage in PA.

5.5 Conclusion

Findings from this research suggest that adolescent males do engage in PA and want to talk about their past and present experiences. Adolescent males are emotionally tied to their early experiences, and want to have a choice in their preferred activity levels.

These choices are driven by their need to be active, with their friends, and in a capacity that allows them to be successful. The desire to develop their whole being and create a habit of engagement in PA was evident in the voices of the participants. The adolescent males in the study sought out ways to develop and nurture their whole self, creating a balance in their lives that best suited their sense of well-being. The research addresses a gap in literature on adolescent males and answers questions about what has influenced their experiences with PA. Additionally, earlier research on adolescent males has focused on PE, which is only one factor identified in this study. Utilizing the socio-ecological framework addressed the multi-levels of influence that previous research has not done. The practical suggestions for working with adolescent males will hopefully reflect their desires for involvement in PA. It is my hope that the findings from this research help to inform those who work with adolescent males in the PA capacity by allowing their voices to not only be heard, but listened to.

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Appendix A

Guiding Questions for Students in the project titled: Adolescent Males' Experiences with Physical Activity

Introduction:

Thank you for meeting with me today and agreeing to talk about physical activity. I'm going to ask you questions about your thoughts on physical activity, and the experiences you have had in school, out of school, with friends and family members.

There are no right or wrong answers.

You can choose not to answer any questions and we can stop at any time.

The tape recorder is on, but can be turned off at any time.

I am the only one who will listen to your responses, along with my supervisor.

Your name will not be used, but either a pseudonym or P1, P2.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Explanation of my study:

The reason I am doing my study is because I am curious about what factors influence teenage boys and their decision to participate in physical activity. I want to hear about the different experiences you have had when participating in physical activity and how that affected your decision to continue or stop playing a sport or being active. I really appreciate that you trust me to talk about your thoughts, and I am excited to have you as

part of my study. I am going to start with a few questions about yourself, and then you will have a chance to talk about your experiences.

The semi-structured interview guide is organized following a socio-ecological framework using the following categories: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Institutional, and Community.

Intrapersonal Questions: those pertaining to knowledge of PA, self-concept and skill level.

1. When you hear the words physical activity, tell me what do you think about?

2. Tell me what well-being means to you?

a. What do you do to experience this feeling you have described as well-being?

3. Tell me about a time when physical activity was really fun.

- a. What were you doing?*
- b. What was the activity?*
- c. Were you able to choose the activity?*
- d. Do you remember how old you were?*
- e. Were your friends with you?*
- f. Did you get to do this very often?*

4. Tell me about a time when physical activity was not fun.

- a. What were you doing?*
- b. What made it different from when you enjoyed participating?*
- c. How would you have changed the activity to make it better?*
- d. Do you remember how old you were?*

5. How would you finish this sentence? I feel most successful in physical activities when...

Interpersonal: those factors that include the social network: parents, friends and teammates.

6. Tell me about activities you do with your family?

- a. What is your earliest memory of this activity?*
- b. Are there other family members that join you? (cousins, aunts)*
- c. Who chooses what you do?*
- d. How many times a week are you active with your family?*
- e. If your family is not active, is there something you would like to do with a family member?*
- f. How do you think the experiences with your family influence how active you are at this age?*

7. Tell me about your favourite physical activity to do with your friends.

- a. How often are you able to meet up with your friends?*
- b. Do you make up the rules at the time or are they always the same?*

Institutional factors: Questions to establish participation levels in the school environment, and reasons for the choices.

8. What type of physical activity do you do at school?

If 'yes'...

- a. Which activities are you involved in?*
- b. What do you enjoy about these activities?*
- c. Is there anything you would change about school team sports?*
- d. Do you participate in school intramurals?*

If 'no'...

- a. *What has stopped you from participating?*
- b. *What would you like to see done differently that would have as many participating as possible?*

9. Tell me how PE class has influenced your participation in physical activity.

- a. *Was there something specific about this particular time that made the class different?*
- b. *If you were in charge of PE class, what would do to get as many kids active as possible?*

Community: questions to determine participation in community programs, and with whom they are engaging in activity and how often.

10. Tell me about what you do outside of school to keep active.

- a. *How many days a week are you physically active?*
- b. *At what age did you start?*
- c. *What is your favourite memory of this activity? Can you recall details of what was happening that you enjoyed so much?*
- d. *What is your least favourite memory of PA? Can you recall details of what you did not enjoy?*
- e. *How did you get started in this activity? Was it your choice or a parent interest?*

Questions more specific to establishing factors that influence participation in physical activity.

11. Tell me about an activity you would like to try within the school setting?

- a. *What has stopped you from participating?*
- b. *Is there a specific incident or circumstance that comes to mind?*

12. Tell me about an activity you would like to try in your community?

- a. *What has stopped you from participating?*
- b. *Is there a specific incident or circumstance that comes to mind?*

13. I'm wondering if there is anything you can think of that may have influenced your participation in physical activity?

- a. *Are you comfortable using public change rooms so you always change into different clothing to participate in PA? (change room issues)*
- b. *Does it make a difference if activities are mixed with males and females?*
- c. *Do you try harder in certain activities? (athletic ability)*
- d. *Does it make a difference if friends are with you?*

Closing question.

14. If you could describe the best physical activity for yourself, what would it look like from the moment it began, who would be with you, what activity would you be doing and where would you be?

Thank you for your conversation and sharing your experiences with me.

Adapted from Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; van Daalen, 2005; Wang & Lu, 2007.

Appendix B

Information Letter and Assent Form

Study Title: Adolescent Males' Experiences with Physical Activity

Research Investigator:

Wendy Jennings

Department of Secondary Education

Faculty of Education

University of Alberta, T6G 2G5

wjennin@ualberta.ca

780-460-3728

I want to tell you about a research study I am doing. A research study is a way to learn more about something. I would like to find out more about adolescent males' experiences with physical activity. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Lauren Sulz at the University of Alberta. You are being asked to join the study because I am interested in talking to you, as a Grade 9 male, about what has influenced your decision to engage in physical activity. There is no pressure to participate and participation in this study is not linked to any grades or marks in any of your classes.

If you agree to join this study, I will set up a time, on a day that works best for you and talk to you for about 30 minutes. I would like to meet with you twice to ask any follow up questions or gain further explanations from our first meeting. I will talk to you individually and our discussion will be recorded with an audiotape. I record our discussion so I can remember what was said.

I do not know if this study will help you, but I think it will provide a better understanding of adolescent males and the different factors that influence their decision to participate in physical activity. I think it will help others create new programs and different ways of looking at adolescent males and what encourages engagement in physical activity.

The information gathered in this study will be used to write my masters thesis. The information may also be used in research articles and may be presented to others. Your name or any other information that could be used to identify you will not be included in these articles or presentations.

You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say okay now and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell me you want to stop. No one will be mad at you if you don't want to be in the study or if you join the study and change your mind later and stop.

Before you say **yes or no** to being in this study, I will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. Just tell me that you have a question.

If you have any questions about this study please feel free to contact Wendy Jennings at 780-460-3728 or wjennin@ualberta.ca or Lauren Sulz at 780-492-0870 or lsulz@ualberta.ca. You may also contact the Research Ethics Office at 780-492-2615 and refer to study ID: 00089866.

Yes, I will be in this research study.

Child's name	Signature	Date
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Person obtaining Assent	Signature	Date
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Appendix C

Information and Consent - Parent

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This letter is to inform you about a study I am conducting through the University of Alberta. My name is Wendy Jennings and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education, Department of Secondary Education. My supervisor is Dr. Lauren Sulz. The information gathered in this study will be used as part of a Masters thesis and may be published in professional journals or presented at related conferences in the future.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the factors that influence adolescent males experiences in physical activity. Physical activity plays an important role in the optimal growth and development of children and youth of all ages.

Unfortunately, statistics show that participation in physical activity declines throughout the adolescent years. There is research inquiring into adolescent female activity levels, and possible program changes to enhance activity levels. However, there is limited research on adolescent male participation and factors influencing their participation.

The information gathered in this project will yield important information about the factors that have influenced the experiences of adolescent males and physical activity, an area of minimal research. A better understanding of the factors that influence adolescent

males will encourage program changes to enhance participation levels, and will be of interest to parent groups, community programmers, and school districts.

Your son has been invited to participate in this study and we are requesting permission from you as a parent or guardian, and the student themselves to be part of this experience.

There is no pressure to participate and participation in this study is not linked to any marks or grades.

Study Procedures

If your son chooses to volunteer to be part of this project, his role as a participant is to take part in two interviews. As the primary researcher, I will design and structure the study by conducting the one-on-one interviews. The interviews will take place at your son's school, outside of school hours (e.g., lunch, afterschool) and will take approximately 30 minutes. All interviews will be audio-recorded to help with accuracy of the data.

Benefits

Although there will be no direct benefit to your son as a result of the study, I hope that the information I get from doing this study will provide a better understanding of adolescent males and the various factors that influence their decision to participate in physical activity.

Risk

There are no known or anticipated risks to your son by participating in this research.

There may be risks to being in this study that are not known. If I learn anything during the research that may affect your son's willingness to continue being in the study, I will tell him right away.

Rights

Your son has the right:

- To not participate.
- To withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without prejudice or penalty and to decline to answer particular questions or discuss specific issues. If your son withdraws within the middle of the interview, any information he has provided will be removed from analysis. After the interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, your son will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of his interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as he sees fit. At this time, your son will also be provided with a chance to withdraw his information. Participants will have two weeks after they are given interview transcripts to withdraw their information. After the two weeks, participants will not be able to remove their data.
- To privacy and confidentiality. His name will not be associated with any transcripts and the data will be coded.

- To safeguards for security of data. All data collected will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of 5 years following completion of research project and when appropriate will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.
- To disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest on the part of the researcher.
- To a copy of a report of the research findings. If you and/or son are interested in receiving a draft summary of the study, your son can share contact information with the primary researcher, Wendy Jennings, or you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Lauren Sulz (see contact information below).

Other uses

The data gathered in this study may be used: to write research articles, inform presentations, influence provincial and school district policy, to teach students, and as a web posting. Data for all uses will be handled in compliance with the Ethical Standards at the University of Alberta.

If your son chooses to be a part of this study, please complete the following form and return it to Wendy Jennings. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Wendy Jennings (780-460-3728; wjenning@ualberta.ca) or Dr. Lauren Sulz (780-492-0870; lsulz@ualberta.ca).

A Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta has reviewed the plan for this study for its adherence to ethical guidelines. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615, and refer to study ID: Pro00089866.

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to consent to my son to participate in the research study described above and I will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

Parent/Guardian’s Name (printed) _____
Date

Parent/Guardian’s Signature _____
Date

Son’s Name (printed) _____
Date