

Masculinity and Health: A Critical Examination of Masculine Embodiment in

Physical Education

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores how male students aged 12-14, at a middle school in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada are embodying fatness and masculinity in a province where dominant discourses of health are present and influencing the position the boys hold in the social hierarchy in PE. In this critical ethnographic study, data was collected with 15 male middle school students through semi-structured interviews and class observations over 9 weeks. Data was analysed through a post-structural lens. Three main findings emerged. First, male youth are influenced and acting upon dominant discourses of masculinity and health. Second, alternative approaches by students and teachers are challenging the notion of dominant discourse to enhance student pleasure and engagement. Finally, the participants discuss the advancement of student-driven curriculum for the promotion of positive realities in PE. The results of this study bring attention to the promise of student-led approaches and teacher pedagogy to promote body-safe and inclusive classrooms.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Within Western schooling contexts, researchers have identified the complexity in how gender and body weight are being socially constructed, specifically within physical education (PE) settings (Hauge & Haavind, 2011). Students are increasingly faced with the pressures to conform to the “healthy masculine body” characterized as being lean, muscular, and “chiseled” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2008; Bramham, 2003; Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Norman, 2011). As a result, scholars are calling attention to how PE serves as a site where power relations of privilege and oppression are constructed through normative ideals of health and masculinity (Norman, 2013). Those that embody the universal traits associated with power in PE (e.g. thinness, strength, muscularity) are consequently privileged while those who don’t are often subject to subordination (Swain, 2000).

Critical obesity and health scholars have raised awareness of the social and cultural preoccupation of body size that has influenced public health and educational policy (Gard, 2010). Some scholars have gone as far as to coin the term the “schooled healthy body” (Cameron et al., 2014, p. 687), where they suggest a growing number of health-related policies, strategies, and responses within Western education systems are serving to privilege thinness and stigmatize fatness (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Cameron, 2014; Campos, 2004; Gard & Wright, 2001, 2005; O’Hara & Gregg, 2010; Pringle & Pringle, 2012). According to Gard and Wright (2001), “children have been targeted as a group ‘at risk,’ not so much for their present health but in the anticipation of health issues to come” (p. 184). Arguably, schools have been targeted as institutions that can help identify “at risk” children and are seen as primary sites of “intervention.” In

particular, healthy living messages in schools are promoting self-monitoring and surveillance practices that are in-turn leading students to feel guilt, shame, and disgust for bodies that are perceived to be outside the “normal weight” category (Beausoleil, 2009; Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; MacNeil & Rail, 2010; Petherick, 2013; Rail, 2009). Such messages promote how individuals can be “good healthy citizens” or what critical researchers would call a “biocitizen” (Halse, 2009). Halse (2009) describes a “good” biocitizen as someone who conforms to normative ideas of health not just for the sake of themselves, but also for the health and economic wellbeing of the community. Individuals that are perceived as “overweight” or “obese” are seen as deviant and bad biocitizens that are not complying with societal ideals of body shape and size (Lutpton, 1994; Wills et al., 2006).

According to Connell (1995), “the body is more or less a neutral surface or landscape on which a social symbolism is imprinted” (p. 46). The body provides “pedagogical sites” that allows individuals to learn about themselves and make meaning of the world around themselves (Wright, 2009). In the identification of dominant discourses surrounding health and anti-obesity, critical scholars have used the term “biopedagogies” to describe the ‘educative’ and prescriptive strategies that produce ‘good’ biocitizens (McPhail, 2013, p. 290). Biopedagogies place an emphasis on self-governance and the promotion of shaping lifestyle practices towards the prevention of illness and disease and the promotion of good quality life (Shilling, 2010). However, biopedagogies are often built upon unreliable representation of obesity from science and media outlets and the messages being displayed are seen by critical scholars as “anecdotal in nature” (Lafrance, Lafrance, & Norman, 2015). Biopedagogies thus situate obesity as a

problem within Western society and are tasked at reducing obesity through education policy (McPhail, 2013).

Despite the growing body of critical obesity literature, schools continue to be sites of public health interventions for tackling the “obesity epidemic” where health and PE curriculums are being redeveloped in the spirit of reducing obesity (Burrows & Wright, 2007; Gard & Plum, 2014; Rich & Evans, 2009). Despite the lack of supporting evidence in these public health initiatives, programs are still being put into place in hopes of “reducing risk.” Prescriptive messages portrayed as biopedagogies of how to live and how to achieve a healthy body circulate within schools and put the emphasis on youth to avoid or discontinue ‘risky’ behaviours (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; McPhail, 2013). In response, critical obesity scholars argue that school based health interventions can have damaging and enduring effects on health (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012; Gard & Plum, 2014; Gard & Wright, 2001; Lafrance, Lafrance, & Norman, 2015; Petherick, 2015; Rich & Evans, 2009; Wright, 2009) because of the ascribe to a weight-based health paradigm which suggests “obesity” causes disease and early death and that weight loss will improve health and life expectancy (O’Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012). As a result, many public health initiatives have been targeted at lowering rates of “obesity” among children in schools. However, these initiatives have been shown by critical obesity scholars to not only be ineffective, but also be causes of significant harm (O’Hara & Gregg, 2010; O’Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012).

The promotion of a weight-based health paradigm has the potential to result in negative social outcomes for those who do not fit the “ideal” (Aphramor & Gingras, 2008; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Story, 2003; Evans, 2006), eating disorders

(Paton et al., 1999), increased mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Eisenberg et al., 2003), and increased physiological distress of weight cycling (Ernsberger & Koletsky, 1995; Mann et al., 2007). The pressure to conform to the “health” ideals in contemporary society (e.g. thin and muscular) has shown to lead to unhealthy behaviour (e.g. eating disorders, excessive physical strain) in trying to attain the health aesthetic. Furthermore, for students who are already faced with the pressures of achieving body ideals, there is the pressure to meet additional healthy body norms and risk facing weight stigma, which can contribute to negative experiences in PE. A better understanding of how constructions of health and body intersect with gender and how this influences student experiences is critical for improving inclusive PE classrooms in the future.

Addressing an Important Gender Gap

While there is a need for more research on dominant discourses of health and biopedagogies, links between youth masculinity and health remain largely unquestioned (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010). The body functions as a vehicle through which masculinity is materialized and produced through regulatory ideals (Butler, 1993; Norman, 2013). The negative ideologies and anxieties amongst men about the “ideal masculine body” related to obesity are associated with the dominant messages of the masculine ideal of lean, muscular, and strong (Bordo, 1993; Petherick, 2013; Norman, 2013). It is argued by masculinity scholars that biopedagogies relating to men’s health are resulting in similar body dissatisfaction and body image disorders that are being faced by women (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012; Branham, 2003; Frost, 2003; Norman 2011, 2013); however, they argue fat male body has been placed in a unique position in social standing (Monaghan, 2005).

Unlike the female body, where being fat results in stigmatization (negative attitudes or beliefs that results in discriminatory action) in multiple domains (i.e. education, employment, health care) (Fikkan & Rothblum, 2011), the fat male body is both celebrated and demonized depending on the social setting (Monaghan & Hardey, 2009). There is a gendered inequality on the positioning of body size among males and females, with a greater acceptance of men's "bodily bigness" (Monaghan & Hardey, 2009, p. 306). Bordo (1993) suggests, "men are supposed to have hearty, even voracious appetites", which, through the consumption of red meat and calorific foods, is believed to create 'a natural' masculine body" (p. 108). In other words, for men having a bigger body can mean 'you're more of a man' and your embodied masculinity is portrayed by space occupation and presence (Monaghan & Malson, 2013). In contrast, Sykes & McPhail (2008) state "men can have fat without being fat – yet when men are perceived to be fat, they risk being emasculated" (p. 81). The binary between societal ideologies of male body size can create both negative and positive constructions of embodied masculinity that are confusing and contradictory. When viewed negatively, as a poor biocitizen, this leads to victimization and stigmatization.

According to Bramham (2003), "PE remains one of the few areas of the national curriculum where boys are expected to achieve standards" (p.57). Physical education classrooms are positioned within young men's social, physical, and educational spheres and offers a possibility to broaden the way boys and men think about their bodies in relation to everyday social positions (Davison, 2000). This makes for an environment that has a drastic influence on the ideologies that young men hold on health, masculinity, and body image. Examining how constructions of masculinity and body weight operate in PE

will “open a window into understanding how different content, pedagogies, and social dynamics can influence the masculinity process” (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014, p. 346). Creating safe and inclusive classrooms should be the ultimate goal of every physical educator, yet there is limited research in the field of masculinity and weight stigma reduction and prevention in the PE classroom. As discussed earlier, weight can play a fundamental role in the social positioning of males in PE classrooms as well as across the entire school setting. The attitudes and beliefs of students and teachers on weight and masculinity provide the framework to develop strategies to reduce weight stigma in classrooms.

Conducting Research in Newfoundland

Reports suggest Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) has the highest rate of “obesity” in Canada and children are less physically active than their counterparts in other provinces in Canada (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2009). Biopedagogical messages through the media are targeted at promoting the “health ideal.” Newspaper titles such as “Fatter, not fitter, in NL”(CBC, 2014), “‘Fat’ Newfoundland review prompts for better fitness” (CTV, 2015), and “NL fattest province in Canada, StatsCan report shows” (CBC, 2015) have been bombarding media outlets in NL. As a result, NL schools are increasingly seen as a vehicle to fight the “war against obesity” to promote “health”, yet as some scholars suggest the urgency in the implementation of these programs is causing more harm than good (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Gard & Wright, 2005; Rail et al., 2010). This research study builds on the current research in masculinity and critical health and obesity studies in PE to explore how the dominant

discourses around masculinity and body weight are being reinforced and/or resisted within PE classrooms in NL.

The aim of this study is to analyze how middle-school aged male students in NL are embodying fatness and masculinity in a province where dominant discourses of health are present influencing the position boys hold in the social hierarchy of PE. This critical ethnography was constructed through a critical post-structural lens and is influenced by hegemonic masculinity theory (Connell, 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is a concept built on feminist-inspired work that has considerably influenced recent research on gender, masculinity, and social hierarchy. Hegemonic masculinity conceptualizes the hierarchical gender power relations between men and women, as well as the hierarchy between men (Messerschmidt, 2012). In order to achieve the aim of this study, the objectives were to: a) explore the embodied experiences of male students in PE; b) understand the influences of masculine and health ideals in PE; and c) determine how to create body-safe inclusive PE classrooms from the voices of young male students.

According to Norman (2013), “more research is warranted on how boys and men embody fatness, particularly within the current historical moment where a “war” has been waged on overweight and obese bodies” (p. 427). This research will help inform PE teachers on how to make PE more inclusive and fun for all students, regardless of body size. As a PE teacher, I have witnessed the effects of hegemonic masculinity and weight stigma and there is a need for research focused on creating inclusive classroom settings for all body types.

Thesis Format

This thesis is written using a manuscript-style format and is organized into five chapters, plus references and appendices. Manuscript-style theses, also referred to as article-based theses, are comprised of self-contained and ready for publication journal manuscripts with their own abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results and conclusion (Krathwhol, 1994). Manuscript style was chosen for practical reasons as it allows for the acceleration of the process of turning this thesis into a research publication as opposed to the traditional thesis style. A manuscript style maximized the outcome of writing a thesis and allows for the development of publication worthy empirical research that contributes to academic and personal goals (Ahern, 2012). The first chapter provides an introduction to the research project, in which it highlights the purpose of the study, the guiding objectives of the study, and an introduction to critical obesity scholarship. The second chapter provides a review of the relevant literature that highlights three main areas of study: 1) masculinity studies, 2) critical obesity scholarship, and 3) alternative approaches challenging health and masculinity in PE.

The third chapter outlines the theoretical framework, methodology, and research design. This section provides a summary of the recruitment of participants (15 male students in grades 7 and 9), and it outlines the processes in data collection and data analysis.

Chapter four is the stand-alone manuscript that is intended for publication in an academic journal. The proposed academic journal that this manuscript has been formatted to is *Sport, Education, and Society*. This article explores how male students are taking up dominant messages of health and masculinity in the PE classroom. This critical

ethnographic study examines the relationships that male students have with their bodies and how this is influenced being within the physical education classroom.

The final chapter of this thesis project provides a summary of the key ideas and themes that emerged within this thesis project, limitations of this study, and potential recommendations for further research.

Defining Key Terms

The following section lists the key terms in alphabetical order that are used throughout this thesis. While these terms will be expanded further within the literature review, this list of terms provides a starting point for this study.

- ***Critical Obesity Scholarship*** is a field of academic scholarship that examines the social and cultural representation of body size and how obesity is subject to a form of oppression. Critical obesity scholarship draws attention to how weight-centered approaches to health fail to highlight more important social determinants of health (Cameron, 2016)
- ***Embodiment*** as described by Piran and Teall (2012) is the feeling of being “at one with the body and the subjective experience of living in the body with limited external consciousness, connection to the physical world, and openness to the body as a source of knowledge in interacting within the world” (p. 183). We also experience our body in relation to others; according to Norman and Rail (2016), “the contours of the body are formed and re-formed through ongoing everyday encounters” (p. 272).

- ***Fat*** is a descriptive word (like tall, male, or light-skinned) that does not imply a medical condition, nor does it refer to a normative standard that may be genetically determined (Crandall, 1994). As well, it is used among critical scholars as a political statement in attempt to challenge the dominant discourse by drawing attention to how this word can be used to inflict harm (Wann, 2009).
- ***Masculine Embodiment***: Although providing a definition of masculine embodiment is difficult and often convoluted, for the sake of this thesis, Gill, Henwood, and McLean (2005) provided a definition from the work of gender theorists Shilling (1993) and Giddens (1991). Masculine embodiment is a notion of “both the ‘unfinished’ nature of bodies through the life course and the pressures in affluent Western societies to ‘work on’ the body, transforming, and accomplishing it as part of individual identity” (p. 5).
- ***Obesity*** is a medicalized term that refers to an individual’s body weight that is considered higher than “normal.” In the medical community, the most common way to measure “obesity” is through the Body Mass Index. This is the ration of weight-to-height, that distinctly classifies people into categories (Health Canada, 2003). “Obesity” is presented as an issue of global concern and is constructed as a medical condition and chronic disease in need of treatment (World Health Organization, 2010).
- ***Weight-Based Oppression*** is defined as the negative attitudes and beliefs about weight that result in social stigma, bias, and discrimination that privilege thin bodies and oppress fat bodies (Cameron, 2014; Daghofer, 2013)

- ***Weight Bias*** is the negative weight-related attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions towards individuals who are seen over “normal” weight that results in negative and false stereotypes (Puhl & Heuer, 2009).
- ***Weight Stigma*** refers to how people who are considered over the “normal” weight range face multiple forms of prejudice and discrimination because of their weight (Puhl & Heuer, 2009). Weight stigma refers to how body size, particularly weight that is higher than “normal,” is devalued in a social context (Puhl & Brownell, 2006).
- ***Weight-Based Health Paradigm*** is part of a broader social and cultural paradigm in which “excess” body fat is regarded quite literally as a “fate worse than death” (O’Hara & Gregg, 2012, p. 42). According to O’Reilly and Sixsmith (2012), the weight-based health paradigm can be summarized into three main negative beliefs: 1) is that weight is associated with energy intake and expenditure; 2) fatness is associated with excess disease and early death; and 3) weight loss will invariably improve health. These beliefs of health are problematic and ineffective, but also cause significant harm (O’Hara & Gregg, 2012).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The following chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the areas of masculinity studies, critical obesity scholarship, and alternative approaches challenging masculinity and health in physical education (PE). The combination of these individual areas of study provides the framework for this research project. The first area of literature I will draw upon is gender studies, and more specifically masculinity studies in PE. This section highlights the relevant literature pertaining to the social construction of masculinities and masculine embodiment in adolescent males. The second area of literature focuses on biopedagogies and the weight-centered health paradigm in PE. This section draws from critical obesity scholarship in PE to provide insight on how body size and weight is seen as a signifier of “health.” The final area of literature will examine the alternative approaches challenging masculinity and health targeting male students in PE. As research in this area of study is limited (Norman, 2013), works from all three areas of literature have been examined to find relevant approaches that disrupt dominant discourses of masculinity and health in PE settings.

Gender, Masculinity Theory, and Masculinity Hierarchies in Physical Education

According to Armengol (2013), “the body remains the most visibly gendered social and cultural construction” (p. 1). It is not only a vehicle in which sex is classified based on physiological appearance, but it also conveys social divisions such as race, sexuality, and class. Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered (Connell, 1995) and influences the ways bodies, both male and female, are constructed and represented. In understanding the construction of gender, bodies are agents in social practice (Connell,

2002) and are influenced by socially constructed ideas of male and female, femininity and masculinity. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), masculinity is a “configuration of practice that is accomplished in social action” (p. 836) and materialized through regulatory ideals and normatives.

While the question “What does it mean to be a man?” has circulated throughout feminist literature for decades, the notion of masculine identity and embodiment has continued to shift according to Western society’s attitudes towards masculine bodies (Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 2002). According to Tremblay and L’Heureux (2012), masculine identity is not only the ability to distinguish oneself as masculine but also the ability to compare oneself as similar and different to other males. In other words, masculine identity is a self-organized, multi-dimensional process that lasts a lifetime (Erikson, 1957/1972) and is defined through social and cultural experiences. Masculine embodiment is a fluid process, and is dynamically defined through childhood and adolescence. During this time gender differentiation begins to take place. Children learn and identify ways of being, acting, thinking, and feeling that are more acceptable and differentiated between men and women through the influences of dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity (Tremblay & L’Heureux, 2012).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that, “masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished through social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular setting” (p. 836). Youth’s perception of gender identity is based on their social experiences, more specifically the experiences that they have in school (Connell, 1995). Patterns in masculinity are both

created and contested as children grow (Connell, 1995). Thus the masculine self is constructed through peer groups, control of school space, dating patterns, speech, and bullying (Mac an Ghail, 1994). Therefore, the influence of gender identity formation is formative in schools due to time spent in that environment.

In the literature on the social construction of gender roles, theory is built upon the workings of power, predominantly men's accumulation of power (Hearn, 2004). One of the most notable theorists in the construction of masculine subjectivities is Raewyn Connell. Connell's (1985, 1995) concept of "hegemonic masculinity" has been influential in helping to explain how masculinity identities are constructed, more specifically, how the configuration of gender practice situates the order of masculine subjectivities as dominant or oppressed. In this concept, the masculine character is said to be socially constructed, hierarchal in nature (Branham, 2003), and dependent on the relations between men and women, and among men (Messerschmidt, 2012). The hegemonic masculinity theory conceptualizes masculinity and embodiment as a hierarchal structure of the cultural ideal and social practice that grants social positioning of men over women and other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity was derived from the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's (1971) term "hegemony" attempts to explain the stability of class relations and how different groups can claim and sustain leading positions in social life. Gramsci's theory of "cultural hegemony" refers to the cultural dynamics by means of which a social group claims, sustains, and leads a dominant position in a social hierarchy. Gramsci's work was built on the ideology that a ruling class would dominate and manipulate the culture of society (e.g. beliefs and values) and would influence the

cultural norms and status quos of those of lower social standing. In the case of hegemonic masculinity, those males who hold the ‘cultural capital’ are rewarded while those who don’t are ostracized (McLaren, 2009).

In PE settings, the works of Connell (1985, 1995, 1996) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have informed research focused on the construction and deconstruction of masculinity hierarchies and embodiment (Bramham, 2003; Davison, 2000; Hickey & Fitzclareng, 1999; Kehler, 2010; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Swain, 2000, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011, 2014). Hierarchical stratifications that are formed in PE classrooms have been shown by the aforementioned scholars to be negatively influential on social patterns throughout entire schools. As researched by Hauge and Haavind (2011), adolescent males conduct their bodies in ways that position themselves within or against ideas of masculinity that address the social positioning of the male body. The concept of hegemonic masculinity theorizes the formation and configurations of masculinities through actions in particular social settings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Although all local models of hegemonic masculinity differ from one another, there are often universal characteristics at play in PE classrooms that are influenced by globally constructed body “ideals” that are seen in the media (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014). These universal characteristics in PE include traits such as strength, speed, muscularity, aggression, and competitiveness (Light & Kirk, 2000).

After reviewing the literature (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2012), four main theoretical principles of hegemonic masculinity theory are influential to this study: 1) the existence of multiple masculinities, 2) the influence of masculinity hierarchies, 3) social practice and masculinity hierarchies in social settings,

and 4) masculinity embodiment. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on each of these principles as theory help to expose the complexities of masculinity, embodiment, and power and privilege.

Multiple Masculinities. Michael Gard (2008) describes masculinity as “the process of becoming and being male” (p. 784). But, as he argues, this process is contingent on the social setting and the desired traits in that localized setting. What Gard is suggesting is that there is no *one* way of being male and it is not something that a male has or does not have. Rather, masculinities are fluid; they are constructed based on what traits are considered desirable within a specific social setting. When an individual portrays these traits in a given social setting they often gain credibility and popularity, while individuals who do not portray these traits are often ostracized and marginalized. These masculinity traits are built upon cultural, historical and classist ideals (Gerdin & Ovens, 2016).

The construction of masculinities has been described by Crocket (2012), as being “complex, fragmented identities” (p. 329). A major place where gender is constructed is within the school setting due to the increased amount of time spent in that setting. Gender is constructed in the middle school setting through aspects such peer structure, dating patterns, and control of school space (Mac An Ghail, 1994). This provides multiple outlets for males to create and build their identity. While seen in literature that dominant masculinities are formed within the PE classroom and through sport, masculinities can be formed across various platforms (e.g. school, academics, leadership, home).

Researchers have shown the differences in masculinities that are formed specifically throughout the school-aged years in PE (Hickey, 2008; Norman, 2013;

Parker, 1996; Pringle, 2008; Swain, 2000, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014). More particularly, in the work of Swain (2003), elementary-aged school boys characterized their masculinity into categories such as “macho,” “footballer,” “fighter,” “fat boy,” and “girly.” These masculinity categories acted as a determinant of one’s social positioning amongst peers depending on the category they were placed in by their peers.

Hegemonic Masculinity Hierarchies. Hierarchies present themselves based on the dominant and most valued masculine traits within a setting (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), where certain traits usually attain more distinction than others. Current research has shown the existence of masculinity hierarchies in PE and the negative effects of these hierarchies (Atkinson, 2008; Bramham, 2003; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Kehler, 2010; Norman, 2011, 2013; Swain, 2000, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011, 2014). For example, Swain (2000) highlights how school-aged boys constructed masculine hierarchies on the school playground during sport and recess. He found that status differentials among the boys were constructed on the playground, where the boys who embodied athletic masculinities were dominant and those that were less athletic were marginalized and feminized. In the work of Swain (2000), the construction of masculinity hierarchies was provided through football on the playground. The school playground provided a highly visible stage based on sport performance, which reaffirmed either displays of dominance or subordination.

Social Practice and Masculinity Hierarchies Across Social Settings. The third aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that dominant and marginal masculinities are formed through social practice. Schools provide a key site where different masculinities are

produced through performances that draw on the different cultural resources that are available in each setting (Connell, 1995; Swain, 2003). “Boys routinely organize and reorganize ways of being boys” (Kehler, 2010, p. 157) and advocate what constitutes dominant behaviour. Hegemonic hierarchies are shaped by events and actions in different social settings (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014). Masculinities are fabricated based on the most desired/dominant attributes in a social setting. The attributes that are deemed dominant in one social environment may not be considered dominant in other social environments (Connell, 1995). In most traditional sport-based PE classrooms, universal attributes such as speed, strength, and athleticism are seen as dominant traits because they allow individuals to be the best player or the strongest player in popular Western sports. In the research of masculinity in traditional sports-based PE, universal dominant traits (e.g. speed, strength, aggression) have been noted within the classroom (Bramham, 2003; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Norman, 2011, 2013; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011, 2014) and in school sports such as rugby (Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Light & Kirk, 2000; Pringle, 2008), football (Swain, 2000, 2003), and dance (Gard, 2001, 2003, 2008).

In an examination of masculinity hierarchies in PE and rugby, Light and Kirk (2000) examined the traits among elite high school boy rugby players and how these traits of dominance had been socially constructed over generations within a high school. In this study, school sport was identified as a site in the construction of gender and unequal power relations. Hierarchies were presented based on desired or ‘dominant’ traits associated with the rugby culture in the associated with the history of the school. Dominance was exhibited through ideals in physical domination, toughness, and strength, which in turn provided power within the social atmosphere in the school. The “dominant”

ideals have been passed down through generations; those that do not embody these given ideals are not subject to the same experience of sport or physical activity because they are not given the same opportunities.

Masculine Embodiment. The final aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that masculinity is embodied in PE through bodily movement in a social environment where all eyes are on performance. Schools provide crucial sites in the development of masculine identity and embodiment. In PE classrooms, strong undertones are associated with embodying the dominant masculine subjectivity. Bodies perform masculinities, thus the body and its performance reflects self-identity (Swain, 2003). For example, the PE setting is a visible space and there is constant surveillance from peers and teachers on the proficiency of body movements and body type. For adolescent boys, bodily performance serves as a key marker if they are embodying masculinity dominantly (Tischler & McCaughy, 2014). Researchers have investigated how males are distinguishing what it means to embody masculinity and how this is effecting their physical education experience. While the underlying message of dominant masculinity is associated with sculpted bodies and athletic prowess, researchers have noted the importance of attaining “normalcy” (Branham 2003; Davison, 2000; Norman, 2011; Swain, 2000). The concept of being normal was often associated with not being “too big” or “too small” and being good at traditional sport.

As stated by Norman (2011), “masculine practices of “doing” and “being” healthy are conflated by the media with a stylized “healthy” male body that is characterized by a lean, non-obese, muscular, and toned body; thus “health” is being portrayed by a masculine aesthetic or look” (p. 433). Male bodies are on constant surveillance in PE

classrooms due to the public display of movement taking place in sport and fitness. The message of body shape, size, and health are conceived of as being pliable aspects of flesh that can be stylized with discipline and will power (Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005). In PE, young men are at pivotal points in their social and physical development and being seen as “normal” is a necessity. With fatness seen often as a negative characteristic (Norman, 2013), there is a struggle among boys to negotiate dominant constructs of body weight in their situated masculine subjectivities. As Connell (2005) states, “to be an adult male is distinctively to occupy space, to have a physical presence in the world (p. 426).” To this extent, fat bodies could be seen as hypermasculine, due to their spatial domination. In PE, fat bodies can be recognized as powerful, dominating, and appropriately masculine (Gard & Wright, 2005) or are they can be seen as leaky, unhealthy, and unattractive (Norman, 2013). Research on body size and space occupation is still under theorized and there is no definitive line between the embodiment of different body sizes among males (Monaghan & Malson, 2013). Some researchers (Davison, 2000; Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005; Monaghan, 2014; Monaghan & Hardy, 2009; Monaghan & Malson, 2013; Norman, 2011, 2013) have looked at the attitudes and beliefs held by males of different body sizes in PE, but there is still a need for increased research to provide a framework for alternative approaches challenging masculinity and health in PE settings. The next section will introduce the “weight-based health paradigm” in physical education and how youth are perceiving messages of health in schools.

Biopedagogies and a Weight-Centered Health Paradigm in Physical Education

Critical Obesity Scholarship. Over the past 10 years, researchers have become interested in critical discourses surrounding obesity and youth's perception of fatness in society, particularly in schools (Beausoleil, 2009; Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Gard & Plum, 2014; Gard & Wright, 2001, 2005; MacNeill & Rail, 2010; O'Hara & Gregg, 2010; O'Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012; Rail, 2010, 2012; Rice, 2015; Sykes & McPhail, 2008; Welch, McMahon, & Wright, 2012; Wright, 2009, 2014). According to Gard and Wright (2005), there is a current preoccupation with obesity in PE that needs to be addressed because the claims about obesity are irresponsible and detrimental rather than productive towards health. Currently, there is a moral panic concerning the effects of modern lifestyle (Pringle & Pringle, 2012), which has been described to be at "epidemic" proportions (Gard & Wright, 2005). This has resulted in stigmatization of those who are considered and categorized as "overweight" and "obese" according to the highly controversial BMI scale.

In the wake of what many scientific researchers are terming the "obesity epidemic," critical scholars have brought attention to the skepticism of the "war on obesity." The idea of the "obesity epidemic" has been pushed forward in public health, scientific, and educational spheres resulting in misinformed public consciousness of the ill and dire fate of obesity (Wright, 2009). As a result of the traction gained by the "obesity epidemic," public health and educational campaigns have declared "war on childhood obesity" (Rail et al., 2010, p. 259) and PE remains on the frontline (Evans, 2010). In critical research on obesity, the notion of 'biopedagogies' has arisen to help characterize the "disciplinary and regulatory strategies that enable the governing bodies in the name of health and life" (Wright, 2009, p. 8).

Biopedagogies and “Healthy Living Discourse.” In the simplest form, “biopedagogy” means life (bios) lessons (pedagogy) and refers to how people can learn to work on themselves (Petherick, 2015; Wright, 2009). The ideologies of biopedagogies were built off Foucault’s (1984) foundational work on biopower. Biopower, as theorized by Foucault, builds on the idea of the influence of state power in the “disciplining” and “regularizing” of its citizens (LaFrance et al., 2016). The role of a biocitizen is to take responsibility for the personal care of oneself for the common good of the state (Halse, 2009). With the continued rhetoric of the “obesity epidemic” there is a continued “necessity” to manage one’s weight to be considered a disciplined member of society or in other words a good “biocitizen.” As a result, dominant discourses of health have emerged from professionals in the scientific and public health sectors that focus on weight as a lone measurement of health. Currently within Western society this has translated into “weight management” and monitoring “obesity” related risks and taking instruction from mass media on eating healthy and staying active (Harwood, 2009).

According to Beausoleil and Petherick (2015), children are faced with overwhelming health promotion messages about the ill effects of not exercising and proper diet and are well versed in recounting the perils of unhealthy lifestyles. A growing body of literature looks at how children and adolescents take up and act on health imperatives and their opinions of the healthy body. Researchers have looked at how children perceive health in schools (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Norman, 2011, 2013; Petherick, 2013; Wills, 2006) and have found children are learning about “health” from young ages. The common “prescription” for living a healthy lifestyle includes eating healthy, exercising, and not being fat (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015). From early

childhood, the messages of what is un/healthy behaviour accumulate from what children learn in school and what they hear/see on TV; these messages construct what it means to be “healthy” to them. These accumulated messages stay with them throughout childhood into adolescence and inform their lifelong ideas of health. More specifically in males, the healthy male body is “attained” by achieving a particular masculine aesthetic or look (Norman, 2011). Adolescent males are associating being healthy as a lean, nonobese, muscular, and toned body. These socially fabricated ideas of “health” relate body aesthetics with overall health, which shows the detrimental effects of misleading policies in schools. Youth view the lean, stylized body as healthy, which raises concerns about youth being “at risk” for developing unhealthy behaviours through unhealthy or disordered practices (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Norman, 2011, 2013).

Currently within Canada, policy makers are displaying these dominant messages of “health” specifically to youth through promotional campaigns focused on “healthy eating” and “active living” (Beausoleil, 2009). According to Petherick (2013), PE is a cultural site where biopedagogies are taught. While these messages are being portrayed to all youth, PE classrooms are still sites where boys are learning how to embodying health and masculinity (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012). According to Atkinson and Kehler (2012) “locker rooms and gym classes remain part of a sex-segregated place in which young men continue to evaluate and re-evaluate the masculine body as emblematic of normative masculinity” (p.138). While “thinness” has been associated and reinforced for females, males face complex weight ideals. Men are inundated with messages of muscularity; studies suggest that being too small (thin) or too large (fat) are associated with body dissatisfaction (Austin, Haines, & Veugelers, 2009; Calzo et al., 2013; Calzo et al., 2012).

Thus muscularity concern is seen among middle-school aged males (Jones, Bain, & King, 2008) and as a result, critical scholars have argued that males are increasingly facing anxiety with body image disorders (Frost, 2003; Norman, 2013).

Weight-Centered Health Paradigm. O'Hara and Gregg (2010) have coined the term "weight-centered health paradigm," to bring attention to how health is being equated to one's body size. They argue that fatness is often associated with excess disease and early death (O'Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012) but that the evidence supporting these claims is "questionable at best" (p. 98) and that those who are not in the statistical extremes of body weight have been shown to have similar levels of health. This point has been argued by many other critical obesity scholars (see Aphramor, 2005; Campos, 2004; Gard & Wright, 2001, 2004; O'Hara & Gregg, 2010).

Another assumption outlined by O'Reilly & Sixsmith (2012), is that weight is often associated with energy intake and expenditure. In other words, it is commonly believed that people are fat because they eat too much and do not exercise enough. Gard and Wright referred to health professionals seeing health as something that is "quantifiable and controllable" through controlled exercise and dietary habits (p. 546). These dominant ideas have greatly influenced attitudes of physical educators in the PE classroom and has shown to negatively influence their expectations of students who they perceive to be fat, lazy, and lacking willpower (Gard & Wright, 2001). Those that do not fit the "ideal" body type are left stigmatized because it is thought that they have not been able to control their weight (O'Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012). Instead of an "obesity epidemic," the dominant obesity discourse has led to an epidemic of weight stigma and bias (O'Reilly, 2011). Some suggest that stigma is more dangerous to young individuals

than the health concerns regarding body weight because it has shown to result in exclusion, bullying, and even violence (Kehler, 2010). Additionally, stigma has also shown to lead to more health concerns, such as poor mental health and physiological consequences resulting from stress (O'Reilly, 2011).

Some of the leading research challenging the weight-centered health paradigm in PE has been done by Gard and Wright (2001, 2005) and Gard (2010). This research is a critical evaluation of the “obesity epidemic” and the negative effects that it is having on the culture of PE. They argue that PE is still plagued with outdated and marginalizing activities that create hegemony among classroom pupils, such as body weighing, fitness testing, and calculating BMI. Despite the highly questionable efficacy and value of these practices, they are still being used in classrooms. Educators are still constructing practices that are reinforcing ideologies surrounding a quantifiable and controllable singular body that aligns with the weight-centered health paradigm (O'Hara & Gregg, 2012). As Gard and Wright (2001) quote, “we suspect that it may be better for physical educators to say nothing about obesity, exercise, and health, rather than singing the praises of slimness and vigorous exercise and condemning the evils of fat and ‘sedentary’ life” (p. 457).

In accordance with the “obesity epidemic”, policy makers across Canada have established PE curricula that are saturated with the weight-based health paradigm and that have set out to counteract “obesity” across the country (Beausoleil, 2015). In NL particularly, the curriculum that has been implemented focuses on healthy eating and physical activity to combat obesity and create good biocitizens (McPhail, 2013). Messages of health imperatives that focus on eating well, exercising regularly, and monitoring the body carry powerful overtones that leave people feeling accountable and

responsible in the prevention of obesity and health related problems (Harwood & Wright, 2012). The powerful messages displayed in PE in NL that fit within a weight-based health paradigm need to be addressed (Petherick & Beausoleil, 2015).

Different Approaches Challenging Masculinity and Health

The research in masculinity studies has looked at the effects of excess weight in adult males (Monaghan, 2005, 2014; Monaghan & Hardy, 2009; Monaghan & Malson, 2013) but research is still limited in the experience of male youth. A leading researcher in this field, Moss Norman (2011, 2013), reveals how young men embody and articulate cultural constructions of “normal” embodied subjectivities. Youth from two distinct research sites contributed to the association in embodiment of body size with masculinity. For students “normalcy” was consistent with the lean, muscular, and athletic ideal. In one school, fat masculinity was constructed as “unattractive” and “unhealthy” which was seen as irresponsible. In the second school, they “offered nuanced constructions of fatness in ways that accorded with their lived experiences of fatness in everyday contexts” (p. 426). There was recognition that larger bodies were and could be perceived as either hypermasculine and powerful or fleshy and unhealthy.

In creating safe and inclusive classrooms, deconstruction and reformation of masculinity hierarchies will help with positive experiences for boys in PE. A leading researcher in the deconstruction of masculinity hierarchies in PE is Michael Gard (2001, 2003, 2008). Gard (2008) examines the deconstruction of masculinity hierarchies by using dance as a medium. Hegemonic masculinity controls the social and cultural ideals creating what is acceptable practice by males. Dance is seen as a form of physical activity

that boys express with feminine and homophobic stereotypes and is often constructed as an uncomfortable activity for males (Gard, 2008). Hegemonic masculinity has created ideals that men strive for which causes preconceived notions of how they express their physicality and their identity. This research rests on the assumption that “restrictions boys and men place on the ways that they use their bodies are linked to the restrictions boys and men place on what it means to be male” (Gard, 2008, p. 186). Gard’s pedagogical approach to teaching dance to males through ‘movement exploration’ activities serve as catalysts for new movement experiences. Gard discusses the non-normative physicality of dance (e.g. non-violent) and how this challenges the sport model of PE that has deeply engrained universal ideals of physicality. Dance is a physical practice that may be seen as uncomfortable for boys, but it is an activity that can potentially allow educators to re-order the physicality of masculinity.

The deconstruction of masculinity hierarchies in PE allows for classrooms to be inclusive, as males cannot assert dominance over one another. In traditional PE, the same sports are completed year after year and result in skill sets being developed unequally among students. This leads to hierarchies in the proficiency of sporting ability. In research completed by Tischler and McCaughtry (2014), they examined masculinity hierarchies and perceptions of males in traditional PE and in adventure PE (AdvPE). In this research, students were introduced to AdvPE and drastic differential was seen in the hierarchy arrangement of the boys. Traditional PE displayed inequitable status differentials between the boys due to their past-exposure to the sports and activities. As stated by Tischler and McCaughtry (2014), in AdvPE masculinities were “narrowed” and “shifted” based on no past-exposure to activities, causing a shift in balance in the pre-

determined masculinity hierarchies (p. 17). Seeing as students were exposed to new activities that were seen by most as uncommon resulted in different skill sets and mindsets to flourish week to week. This disruption in the masculinity hierarchies provided insight on how to create inclusive and safe environments.

With increased interest in safe and inclusive classrooms, several researchers have begun to investigate the social interactions of boys (Branham, 2013; Davison, 2000; Gard, 2001, 2003, 2008; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011, 2014; Light & Kirk, 2000; Norman, 2011, 2013; Pringle, 2008; Swain, 2000, 2003). It has been echoed that it is fundamental in beginning to create inclusive classrooms and having health and PE courses that do not take a weight-centered health approach. For instance, Petherick (2013) suggests that exploring and learning different approaches to teaching and learning about health are accepted in the classroom while traditional practices are challenged. Students should be able to explore sporting and fitness initiatives that are non-typical in traditional PE, which will result in an equal playing field in terms of previous experience. This is similar to the ideology that is proposed by Tischler and McCaughtry (2014). Tischler and McCaughtry suggest that PE programs could teach innovative methods to sequence content as a means of shifting and narrowing social hierarchies. This would result in teachers teaching both the traditional sports involved in PE as well as teaching non-conventional sports (dancing, tennis, paintball, etc.). This results in a shifting of social hierarchy of dominant characteristics, which has a capability of narrowing the masculinity hierarchies that form in PE.

Conclusion

In PE, boys are involved in a cycle of embodied masculinities and are consumed by a hegemonic masculine ideal. These hegemonic ideals influence the development of their gendered identity but also contribute to the reproduction of unequal, gender-based social relations (Light & Kirk, 2000). A dominant hegemonic masculinity is clearly alive (Branham, 2003) and awareness is necessary for teachers in order to create safe and inclusive classrooms for all body types. The reinforcement in the media of a lean, muscular, athletic male body equaling “healthy”, attractive, and desirable has created ideals in hegemonic masculinity in PE (Norman, 2011). The weight-centered health paradigm where the “muscular” and “fit not fat” male creates marginalization in a population who are not receiving the same educational opportunities as their so called “dominant” counterparts (Wills et al., 2006). Misleading policies and predictions by experts and health education have re-iterated the harmful message of weight-centered health discourse and have resulted in unintentional harm and ineffective health strategies (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Gard & Wright, 2005; Harwood & Wright, 2012; MacNeill & Rail; 2010; Norman, 2011, 2013; Petherick, 2013; Pinhas et al, 2013 Pringle & Pringle, 2012;). The “health” strategies have been prescribed as biopedagogies that have served to reinforce messages of self-monitoring, guilt, and shame for those who do not fit the fabricated “body ideal” (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015).

After completing the review of the literature, there are several gaps in the research that has influenced my research direction. The first gap is the relationship between masculinity embodiment and health discourses. This research will be examining how students of varying body shapes and sizes are viewed in the social hierarchy of PE in looking at what students constitute as “acceptable” bodies in the PE classroom. The

second identifiable gap in the research is how alternative approaches can create positive spaces. This research project will be analyzing how the students take up and act on their ideas of health and how much health is influenced by their PE teachers. The last segment that will be investigated is how students think classrooms can be made more inclusive through student-led curriculum and pedagogy.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

In order to investigate how male students in NL are embodying fatness and masculinity in the social hierarchy of PE, I conducted a critical ethnography of three middle school PE classes. The research setting was a middle school on the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The study included three PE classes in grades 7 and 9, who were actively involved in PE as part of the required provincial curriculum. The data collection took place over nine weeks between April 2016 and June 2016. Data was generated through the use of active observation, field notes, and interviews.

In this chapter, I outline the methodology and methods used within the study. Firstly, I discuss how my theoretical framework is influenced from my positionality as a researcher. A critical post-structural lens allowed for a deeper understanding of the complex network of social relations between embodied masculinities, school messages of health, and societal subjectivities of health. Secondly, I outline the rigorous process I underwent in this critical ethnographic study. I address the methods used in the recruitment of participants, and data collection, which included active observation, field notes, and interviews. Thirdly, I outline my data analysis process using thematic analysis through a post-structural lens.

Theoretical Framework

For this qualitative study, a critical post-structural lens was useful for understanding the ways in which males in secondary schools negotiate and construct gender relations in relation to fatness in PE classrooms. Post-structuralism makes a

connection between language, social organization, subjectivity, and power (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Language produces meaning and creates social reality. The belief in post-structuralism is that sociocultural forces constrain and govern our behavior. Post-structural thought is interested in “how boundaries are socially constructed and how they are maintained and policed” (Peters & Burbules, 2004, p. 26). In particular, this creates a series of binary oppositions of hierarchical value, which has the effect of including or excluding groups of people. In Foucault’s (1984) analysis of power relations, Foucault argues that power is productive in the construction of knowledge and that power is dispersed throughout the social system. Although power is dispersed it is not evenly dispersed. The ideology of biopower is based on extending power relations to those disciplined subjects who adhere to self-governance of lifestyle practices thought to prevent and manage illness, disease and poor quality of life (Shilling, 2010).

A poststructural perspective helped make sense of the power relations in the construction and deconstruction of hegemonic masculinities within the weight-centered health paradigm. According to Peters and Burbules (2004), “power is productive because it is not simply repressive; it also creates new knowledge (which may liberate)... poststructuralism wants to ask questions beyond traditional issues of truth, objectivity, or ‘useful knowledge’” (p. 29). In this study, focus was put on the complex ways young men form, and disrupt their gendered identities and the role that body size plays in the production of gender identity (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010). According to Norman (2013), “individuals materialize their embodied subjectivities through everyday talk” (p. 414). As the lived experience of male subjects in the physical environment was taken into account, the language being interpreted was both verbal and physical. Language is how “social

organization and power are defined and contested” (p. 961) and how ones subjectivity is identified (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Individual’s identities are shaped by society’s dominant discourses (e.g. gender roles, body size) and they reconstitute themselves by their everyday practices (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010).

Critical Theory. This project was influenced by critical theory through the use of a critical ethnography and critical poststructural lens. Critical theory is fundamentally linked to the work of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt school. These theorists began to challenge both theory and practice to promote equality and reduce oppression (Giroux, 2009). Critical theory in education seeks to expose how power relations (e.g. social and cultural) are influencing the education of children and how these complex relations can be challenged (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009). Critical theory in education attempts to explain how constructions of reality are glorified while others are not (McLaren, 2009). As stated by McLaren (2009), critical theory allows an education researcher to see the school “not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialization, but also as a cultural terrain that promote student empowerment and self-transformation” (p. 62). This project brings a critical lens to how males are embodying fatness in middle school PE.

Positionality

As part of undertaking a long-term qualitative academic project, it is important to disclose one’s positionality to articulate how one’s position may act as a privilege or complication towards the development of the research project. This project was inspired by my journey through sport, kinesiology, PE, and teaching experiences both in Canada and overseas. This research project was generated from my own interest in how boys

perform in a PE setting. It is based on my personal experiences as a student in PE as well as a teacher.

For the reader, I believe that it is important to know how my relations of power and privilege have influenced the direction of my research. I am a 6'1, 215lb, white able-bodied male who spent my life within this category and until being introduced to weight stigma research I did not think about the privileges I held. As a child, I was very active and participated in many different sports and activities. I loved sports, particularly hockey, and thus went on to play at the provincial level and later at the junior level. Playing at this level, I not only accepted but embraced the regulation, disciplining, and monitoring of my body. Through strict training regimens, daily practices, and off-ice training I accepted that this was what was needed to succeed. During this time I also witnessed the “locker room effect,” one that endorsed and privileged those who portrayed the hegemonic masculine subjectivity. Those who were the strongest, most athletic, and aggressive thrived in this environment and those who didn't were left at the wayside. Not only did this promote the normative ideas of being masculine, but also strongly endorsed by the white, straight, able-bodied, misogynistic reflections of masculinity.

After my sport career, I completed an honors degree in kinesiology at Lakehead University followed by a degree in education also from Lakehead University. During my time in kinesiology at Lakehead, I spent countless hours learning about body systems, physiology, and anatomy with the end goal of becoming a PE teacher. During this time, I learnt about the “scientific” aspects of body weight and health while also learning about the other side of the physical culture associated with Western culture. During my time in elite sport, I witnessed the toxic effect of masculinity within elite sport; outside of sport I

had a high degree of cultural and physical capital. I “fit the mold” of the physical culture associated with kinesiology and PE.

It wasn't until I reached my education year that I was introduced to the field of critical obesity scholarship. My professor, and now supervisor, introduced our class to discourses of health through a critical lens. I found this idea fascinating as it opened my eyes to the negative power of weight stigma especially within physical education and how important it was as a physical educator to be aware of power differentials in the classroom. It was not until this year of my education that I realized my own position within the power hierarchy and what that meant for myself as an educator. It was also not until this time that I began to view the body as a site of power that privileged the fit, strong and able bodies.

After finishing my undergraduate degrees, I immediately left Canada and taught PE overseas in the United Kingdom. In my first year of teaching, I realized first-hand the issues that educators face while teaching health and PE. In my first year of teaching, I was working at a school that was located in a low-socioeconomic status area of the city. This school was known for having a strong athletic program but it was also known for being a school that had many students with behavioral difficulties. In my position as a PE teacher, there was immense pressure to ensure that school athletic teams were successful and that PE lessons were engaging for all students. With the strengths in the athletic program, I noticed an immediate hegemony between the male students and the need for students to constantly construct and perform dominant masculinity traits. I constantly dealt with bullying (verbal and physical) and behaviour issues stemming from the need to display hegemonic masculinities to be considered in a position of social power. I also

began to recognize my own masculine subjectivity in the classroom and the position of power that I had in relation to the students. As an athletic, able-bodied male, I still embodied characteristics aligned with “fitting the mold” of dominant traits in PE. This proved to be extremely difficult for myself as a new teacher and I began to truly realize the issues faced by educators and students with masculinities in the classroom.

After spending a year dealing with the difficult behaviours of male students trying to construct and embody their masculine identity in PE and reflecting on my personal experiences within sport and PE, I realized that there was a need for research in the role of masculinity in PE. Based on my own personal experiences, reading literature, and being involved in projects throughout my time in my Master’s program, I believe that weight-based oppression is a major issue and that has remained under researched in PE, especially among males. I now situate myself in the study of masculinity in PE with a focus in critical obesity scholarship. I believe we need to do more for creating safe learning spaces for all students. Exploration of this issue is especially important for those males who are often left out of equation when it comes to their bodies.

Methodology/Methods

Critical Ethnography. The purpose of an ethnographic study is to describe the culture and social interactions of a group and involves the extensive immersion into a setting to collect data (Lichtman, 2010). In the educational context, ethnographic research is based on participant observation of everyday life occurring in a natural setting (Atkinson, 2001). The role of the ethnographer is to study the meaning of the behavior, language and interaction of members in a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007). While

this study was ethnographic in nature, this ethnography employs a critical methodological approach. A critical ethnographic study, while similar to a traditional ethnography, aims to expose power relationships through in-depth and sustained involvement in the research setting (Fitzpatrick, 2011). As with regular ethnographic research, multiple data sources allow for a deeper understanding of a given culture group. However, critical ethnography ensures that a critical analysis of data occurs. This included digging below the surface by ensuring that participant answers are not contradictory to other participants and not defying observed reality (Thomas, 1993). Critical ethnography is not solely about interviewing people, but spending time in the “everyday life” of participants provides a contextual framework to understand the discourses at play in the classroom. Critical data collection through observations, informal conversations, formal interviews, and reflection allows for a rich representation of complex relations and discourses at play in the middle school classroom.

A critical ethnography is a type of ethnographic research in which the researcher advocates for the emancipation of groups marginalized within society (Thomas, 1993). Critical ethnographic research attempts to gain a deep understanding of the social hierarchies and the questioning of inequalities that arise. Critical ethnography is a reflective process of “choosing between conceptual alternatives and making value-laden judgments of meaning and method to challenge research, policy and other forms of research policy” (Thomas & O’Maochatha, 1989, p. 147). Critical ethnographic research is a growing area of ethnographic research in education (Fitzpatrick, 2011) and this methodology is beneficial in exposing power relationships involved in teaching and research.

This critical ethnographic study examines the ongoing and shifting workings of power differentials among boys in PE classrooms. The power differentials that will be examined are hegemonic masculine social hierarchies, masculine embodiment, and weight stigma among males. The study builds on the literature informing critical ethnography in schools (Fitzpatrick, 2010; Norman, 2010, 2013; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011, 2014). According to Fitzpatrick (2010), critical ethnographies in school are relatively rare but critical ethnographies of health and PE are “almost unheard of” (p.26). In her dissertation, Fitzpatrick (2010) completed a year-long critical ethnography at a multi-ethnic high school in New Zealand in the PE classroom. Her study showed the unique positioning of PE in the production of racialized and gendered body discourses. Further research potential is warranted due to lack of critical ethnographic research in PE, especially in gender and critical obesity scholarship.

Participants and Setting. King’s College (pseudonym) is a multi-sex, middle school on the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. A school located outside of the metropolitan area of St. John’s was chosen to encompass the lifestyle of the “Bay Men” culture of Newfoundlanders. This population is important as there is “concern” in child and youth health in Newfoundland and Labrador (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015) as this population is under scrutiny from public health and education officials. Newfoundland and Labrador has been identified as having the highest rates of “obesity” in the country and youth are said to be not as active as other Canadian youth (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2009). This has resulted in urgency and panic in the implementation of measures centered in healthy eating and physical activity (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Beausoleil & Ward, 2010; McPhail, 2013). The

messages are being portrayed as biopedagogies and are negatively affecting how students are taking up messages of “health.”

Before recruitment began, ethical approval was obtained from Memorial University’s Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICHER), Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, King’s College’s principal, and the Health and Physical Education Department at King’s College. The school board, principal, and teacher were sent copies of the participant recruitment form along with the consent forms to distribute to the students in the classrooms to have it reviewed by their parents (see appendix A and C). Due to the age of the participants, a standard consent form that described the aims, procedures, and potential outcomes of the study was reviewed and distributed by the PE department to the students and their parents. The students who returned their consent forms that were signed by their parent/caregiver were able to participate in the study. Students were told that they were able to drop out of the study at anytime without any consequence. The participants that completed an interview were advised that email correspondence could continue after the interview if they had any questions, concerns, or wished to share any more information but no emails were sent by any of the students. Before data collection, any questions or concerns that the students, parents, and school administration had were answered.

A consent form was also created for the teacher of the classroom (Appendix B) as a precaution and to allow them to be a participant within the study. The teacher was interviewed but that data is not included within this project due to time constraints. The information from that interview was not discarded but used as secondary data in the triangulation of data sources.

The participants in the study came from three classes (approx. 30 students) of both male and female students who were enrolled in PE classes in grades 7 and 9. These grades were chosen because the participants in grade 7 and 9 are required to take PE in schools. As it is compulsory, students are required to take PE and do not have the option of signing up, thus resulting in less student bias (Gerdin, 2014). All students in the classroom were invited to participate in the study, as the social dynamic of the entire classroom was evaluated. In total, 15 boys and the teacher agreed to be interviewed. Mr. Smith thought that 3 different classrooms should be examined so that there was the opportunity to see different dynamics between different classrooms and different ages. According to Bramham (2003), it is also important to stress that research process and outcome are “dependent on the nature of existing relationship between staff and pupils” (p. 58). Therefore, this research was conducted at the end of the school year, as the students’ teacher, Mr. Smith (pseudonym), had solid foundations and relationships with the students in his classes.

There were possible minor psychological and social risks in this study, particularly for the younger participants, as they may have felt uncomfortable answering questions in the interview about masculine embodiment and health. Every effort was made to minimize the risks, as there were methods of rigor that were established. Ethnographic researchers (Light & Kirk, 2000; Gerdin, 2014; Swain, 2000, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, (2011, 2014) have noted the importance of prolonged exposure in the research environment to ensure trustworthiness. In this study, one month of getting to know the students, being involved in their daily routine and gaining their trust was completed before conducting any interviews. Interviews were intended to be one-on-one

to allow for privacy from their peers and in hopes of decreasing the anxiety of talking about masculinity. However, some students felt more comfortable going into interviews with a close friend and this promoted engaging discussions between the participants (Swain, 2000 Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the subjects (Norman, 2011). All personal information retrieved from field notes, interviews, and emails was kept confidential. It was important to work closely with the classroom teacher, the school's guidance counselor, and the school administration daily to ensure that the students would be directed to the proper outlet if needed.

Data Collection

For this qualitative study, data collection occurred from May-June 2016, where 4 days per week for 7 weeks were spent in the school, totaling 30 hours of observation. In total, 40 class observations (45 minutes each) were completed. As mentioned, the participants were under the age of consent; thus all students who were participants in this study needed to have informed consent from a parent or guardian. The data collected for this study includes: a) field notes from classroom observations, using active participation (Lichtman, 2010) and b) semi-structured one-on-one and two-on-one interviews that lasted 30-60 minutes.

Observations. To examine the boys' understandings and dynamics of masculinity and health, data collection began by conducting active participation observations. Active participation observation includes establishing a rapport with the individuals in the host community and immersing in the activities of daily life (Angrosino, 2005). To achieve

this, there was fluctuation between various classical roles of the participant observer including talking to the students/teacher, taking part in activities during the lesson and observing the students' (inter)actions from inside the game and as well as from outside the game as an observer (Gerdin, 2014). Active participation was used as it allowed for direct engagement into classroom activities. For example, Tischler and McCaughtry (2014) noted that it would have been "nearly impossible to observe students as a nonparticipant" (p. 348) because they were spread out in PE classes and it would limit what they could hear and see.

As an ethnographic researcher, it was important that data collection happened in the "natural location" which in this case was during the normal PE setting adhering to the normal class rotation (Angrosino, 2005). In choosing to be an active participant within their natural setting, the goal was set out to achieve subjective immersion within the culture of the PE groups (Angrosino, 2005; Wolcott, 1995). I introduced myself on the first day and explained the reasons why I was in their classroom. Researchers have emphasized the importance of developing rapport with the participant group and how this can be accomplished by communicating to the group the worthiness of the study (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Gerdin, 2014; Swain, 2000, 2003). In letting the students know that I was there to do research on boys' experiences in PE and how to make PE better for other boys within Newfoundland, I had hoped that the students would feel comfortable about my presence in the classroom without me interfering with the culture that was under observation (Angrosino, 2005).

As the study progressed past the one-month point of initial immersion, the observations specifically examined the participants' interactions with peers and teachers,

participation in activities, the teacher's pedagogy, and verbal/non-verbal communication. During the observations, particular interest was placed on how dominant discourses of gender and health were taken up and portrayed by the male students in the classroom. This included aspects such as social interaction and interpersonal relationships, participation, language and body language, and gender influences within the PE classroom.

After every session, detailed field notes were completed on the behaviors, actions, and communication between students and teachers during my observation time. The observations and field notes allowed for the perceptions and responses of the individual interviews to be confirmed as a form of triangulation the data sources. These field notes were transcribed verbatim and analyzed in ATLAS.ti.

Interviews. The second form of data in this study was collected through interviews, which were implemented in the form of semi-structured one-on-one and two-on-one audio-recorded interviews (Swain, 2000) that lasted approximately between 30-60 minutes. Research involving young males' understanding of masculine embodiment can be a sensitive topic (Bramham, 2003; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Norman, 2011; Swain, 2000, 2003) thus trustworthiness is imperative for quality results. For the first 4 weeks of observation, time was spent getting to know the students (talking to them, participating with them, engaging in their classwork) in the hopes of building trust and gaining a greater understanding of the culture in their group.

The number of the consent forms that were returned determined how many students would be invited to partake in individual interviews. All of the male students

were invited to take part in the interview process in order to avoid selecting students, which could potentially decrease trustworthiness, and to prevent the potential of harassment or ridicule for being chosen (Gerdin, 2014). In total, 15 male students brought back their consent forms to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews in a one-on-one and two-on-one ratio functions to reduce the influence of the presence of other masculinities. It was also requested by the school principal to give the students the option of doing interviews in groups of two to ensure the students felt comfortable in the interview setting. In total, 3 participants opted to have one-on-one interviews and the remaining 12 participants were in pairs.

As a male researcher, I was aware of the influence of my own masculinity, however, I had developed a good relationship with the students in an effort to reduce any anxiety that may arise from talking about masculinity and health. Previous research involving the interviews of male participants on masculinity (Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Hearn, 2013; Monaghan, 2014; Wight, 1994) have noted that displays of masculinity are “often contingent upon the presence of other males” (Gard & Meyenn, 2000, p.22). Researchers in male ethnography (Hearn, 2013; Bridges, 2013) make note that males may influence other males in terms of control, emotions, and creating social distance between researcher and participants, especially within groups. As conveyed by Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002), it is imperative that as a male interviewer one adopts an informal style with an emphasis on trying to understand the boys’ lives and generally being sympathetic and creating a non-judgmental and affirming atmosphere. With the incorporation of this style it is also important to ensure that students do not feel like

“objects of scientific discourse” but that I was there to learn from them and that they were the experts (Gerdin, 2014, p. 30).

The semi-structured interview took place at a time that was convenient for the students and staff. Due to the high level of “publicity and anxiety” (p. 22) surrounding child protection, it was necessary to conduct interviews in visible spaces so that students were always in view of other staff members (Gard & Meyenn, 2000). However, staff members did not participate in the interview as this may have disturbed the authenticity of the interview due to the power relations between staff and students. Prior to the interviews, students were informed that the interview would be helping teachers make PE more inclusive and fun for all students. Students were also given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research that I was conducting.

A semi-structured interview technique was used; this included the use of open-ended style questioning (Fontana & Frey, 2005). During the interviews, an interview guide (*see Appendix D*) that contained pre-constructed, open-ended interview questions was used to ensure consistency in the collection of data. Pre-constructed interview questions also ensured that there was intentionality of language appropriation. Many terms used throughout this study would not be known to students, teachers, and administration thus care was taken to ensure that language was clear and concise for all populations. Questions related to masculinity, health, and PE were asked, such as “what do you like/dislike about PE?” “what does it mean to you to be healthy?” “does PE make people popular?” Through active listening as an interviewer (Kvale, 2007), the prompted questions ultimately lead to spontaneous answers from the interviewee. As stated by Kvale (2007), “there is a sensitivity towards the social relationship of an interview...

where each move by the opponent changes the structure of the chessboard and the player has to consider the multiple implications of the opponents move before making the next move” (p.64). The openness of semi-structured interviews allows rich exploration of each individual experience through unstructured questioning.

During the interviews, it was ensured that there was in a two-way exchange of information (Gerdin, 2014). According to Mac an Ghail (1994), “male ethnographers of young men’s schooling have systematically failed to acknowledge the implicit male knowledges, understandings, and desires that we share with the research participants’ schooling experiences” (p. 174). As a qualitative researcher, reflexivity is necessary in the development of trustworthiness. There needs to be the conscious experience of self as the interviewer and interviewee in the development of research process (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As a post-structural researcher, there is a demand that researchers understand themselves and how their research efforts are shaped. As mentioned by ethnographic researchers in masculinity and health (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012; Gard, 2008; Gerdin, 2014; Norman, 2011,2013; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014) there is a need to scrutinize their own experience and see how this influences our research. There is also the need to share this information with the participants to form meaningful conversation. Throughout the interviews, personal experiences as a previous student and teacher were used to share experiences in PE and to build trustworthiness.

Data Analysis

Data consisted of 1) active observations, 2) field notes and 3) transcripts from the interviews. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. As done in the

work of Norman (2013), data was transcribed through their “idiomatic language practices” (p.413) in order to portray cultural nuances. In analyzing the data, a critical post-structural thematic analysis approach was used to identify the patterns that are found in language and that are used to construct the social world of PE and those within it (Norman, 2011; Taylor, 2004; Wright, 2004). A critical inspired analysis allowed for the analysis of the discourses of power within social process and language. This aligned with Lichtman’s Three C approach as data collected in the form of language and social interaction were thematically analyzed to attempt to show the relationship between language and power relations. Thematic analysis is a systematic approach in the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking relationships within the data (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Thematic analysis involves analyzing data guided by a theoretical framework and determining themes that arise from the research data.

All data collected in this study was examined through a critical poststructural lens to examine how participants stratify into social positions based on body size and the effects of being in this position. Data analysis consisted of 95 pages of detailed written field notes of what was seen and heard through active participation and non-formal interactions and 103 pages of interview data that was collected and transcribed. Given that I was conducting a thematic analysis on multiple interviews and observations, the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti was used. ATLAS.ti is a qualitative research software that helps in the construction of codes and organization of data. According to Saldana (2013), computer assisted data analysis programs allow you to “organize evolving and potentially complex coding systems into such formats as

hierarchies and networks for ‘at a glance’ user reference” (p. 31). All of the data was transcribed using Microsoft Word and DSS Player and then uploaded to ATLAS.ti.

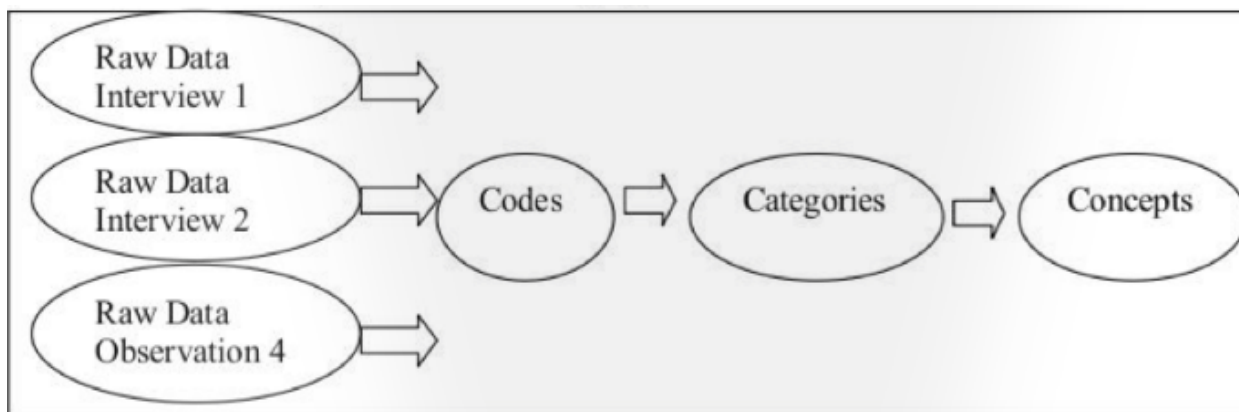


Figure 1. Three C’s of Data Analysis: Codes, categories, and Concepts (Lichtman, 2010)

In qualitative research, thematic analysis is the process of studying the data to extract codes, develop categories and central ideas, and move from categories to concepts (Lichtman, 2010). In the data analysis the three c’s approach was used: codes, categories and concepts (*see Figure 1*) (Lichtman, 2010), which is a content-driven, thematic analysis approach that is particularly suitable for ethnographic studies (Cameron, 2014). This approach was completed in multiple steps to take the raw data from the field notes and transcriptions to transform it into meaningful concepts, which helped make sense of the gathered data.

The first step in the data analysis was to do an initial coding of the data to help identify the central ideas of the participants. In this step, an initial coding was completed on the printed copies of all of the interviews and field notes. In the second stage of the analysis, a deeper coding was completed as the initial codes were refined as they were put into ATLAS.ti and the codes were modified through deeper analysis. In total, the coding process presented 160 unique codes, which then were grouped into categories. The third

step of the process focused on the development of an initial list of categories. This step was repeated three times in the modification of categories. This was completed with the collaboration of my supervisor to help with categories and concepts. In total, the codes were grouped into 9 categories. The final stage of the process involved refining the list of categories into 3 major concepts that best reflected the data.

As there are multiple sources of data, triangulation occurred to ensure that data was reliable. Triangulation involves comparing the data received from observations and interviews for credibility to ensure that data was consistent (Lichtman, 2010).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness provides the framework to establish rigor through the research process. While these constructs are different in qualitative and quantitative research, qualitative research aims at providing methods of trustworthiness to ensure rigidity within the work. To ensure trustworthiness, several strategies were implemented to provide rigor. One of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness is developing credibility (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). Credibility was accomplished through prolonged engagement to ensure there is an adequate understanding and trust between the participants and myself. Credibility was also accomplished through the triangulation of data sources (Krefting, 1991), through frequent debriefing sessions with my supervisor, peer scrutiny of research project and methods, and ensured that data collection session involved only those who willingly wanted to take part in the project and allowing those who did not want to participate refuse participation. To ensure trustworthiness, precautions have been taken in the methods to ensure dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

According to the Cochrane Review (2011), dependability ensures that the process of research is logical, traceable, and clearly documented. To ensure that this study was dependable, the research design, namely the methodology/methods of this study were developed with rigor and executed strategically. This was reflected through active observation, field notes, interviews and self-reflection on the process. Through constant peer and supervisor de-briefing, methods were constantly scrutinized to ensure that data was dependable and credible. Dependability was also ensured by completing the code-recode procedure (Krefting, 1991). This included coding and revisiting the codes to compare the coding during the analysis stage.

According to Shenton (2004), to achieve confirmability “steps must be taken to help ensure that as far possible that the work’s findings are the result of experience and ideas, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher” (p. 72). To ensure that this was accomplished, a detailed background of positionality, methodology and methods were included to show the step-by-step procedures of data collection and analysis. In the analysis of data, multiple layers of coding and categorizing were included to reduce personal bias.

Storage of Data

Only the primary researcher and supervisor had direct access to the raw data during the study and the party assumed the responsibility for data storage. All hardcopy data (e.g., transcripts) were deemed confidential material and were held in a locked filing cabinet within the social science lab space office at Memorial University. All electronic files (i.e., digital audio recordings, researcher notes) were password protected and stored

on an external hard drive in a filing cabinet within the social science lab space. The digital recordings and transcripts were stored separately from the master sheet identifying participant names, pseudonyms, and code numbers. If hardcopy data have electronic version, the data will be shredded after the completion of the study. Data will be kept for five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

Knowledge Translation

This research study will help build on the limited research in masculinity and health in PE, in order to explore how the dominant discourses around masculinity and health are being reinforced and/or resisted within PE classrooms in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). This study will address a gap in the research literature illustrating how to create safe and inclusive PE classrooms. Research on body size and space occupation is still under theorized and there is no definitive line between the embodiment of different body sizes among males and there is still a need for increased research to provide a framework for the implementation of intervention techniques.

This research is important in NL due to the increased pressure from "health" initiatives and policies targeting schools. This research could help to inform current initiatives that exist within public health and educational sectors for example: 1) *The Way Forward* (2016) and 2) *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* (2013). *The Way Forward* initiative attempts to achieve "a strong, diversified province with a high standard of living" for those in NL. This study will help inform various actions within the mandate.

These policies aim to provide safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments through practice and research. This research will inform many of the policies outlined in these documents and will help educate teachers on how they can create safe and inclusive classrooms.

The school and teachers will benefit from the work in this study as it could influence how teachers and students are taking up and negotiating messages of health. Negotiation of health messages includes how teachers and students are taking up messages of health and masculinity as well as how they challenge and resist dominant discourses. This work will encourage safe and inclusive classrooms by challenging masculinity and health messages in NL schools. This work will also be published in an academic journal upon completion (e.g. *Men and Masculinities*, *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *Sport, Education and Society*). Participants will be given access to the published material by email and a link will also be posted on the HIPP Collaborative website.

Chapter Four: Manuscript

Jocks and Fatties: Masculine embodiment and weight-based oppression in physical education

This paper explores how male students aged 12-14, at a middle school in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada are embodying fatness and masculinity in a province where dominant discourses of health are present and influencing the position the boys hold in the social hierarchy in PE. In this critical ethnographic study, data was collected with 15 male middle school students through semi-structured interviews and class observations over 9 weeks. Data was analysed through a post-structural lens. Three main findings emerged. First, male youth are influenced and acting upon dominant discourses of masculinity and health. Second, alternative approaches by students and teachers are challenging dominant discourses to enhance student pleasure and engagement. Finally, the participants discuss the advancement of student-driven curriculum for the promotion of positive realities in PE. The results of this study bring attention to the promise of student-led approaches and teacher pedagogy to promote body-safe and inclusive classrooms.

Keywords: physical education; gender; masculinity; obesity; biopedagogy; weight stigma

Introduction

Within Western schooling contexts, researchers have identified the complexity in how gender and body weight are being socially constructed, specifically within physical education (PE) settings (see e.g. Connell, 2005; Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Swain, 2000). Physical education classrooms are positioned within young men's social, physical, and educational spheres and offer a possibility to broaden the way boys think about their bodies in relation to everyday social positions. As a result, scholars are calling attention to how PE serves as a site where power relations of

privilege and oppression are constructed through normative ideals of health and masculinity (Norman, 2013).

With the prolonged rhetoric of the “obesity epidemic”, there is a continued “necessity” to manage one’s weight to be considered a disciplined member of society. The reinforcement in the media of a lean, muscular, athletic male body equalling “healthy”, attractive, and desirable has created ideals in hegemonic masculinity in PE (Norman, 2011). As a result, schools are increasingly seen as a vehicle to fight the “war against obesity” to promote “health.” Yet as some scholars suggest the urgency in the implementation of these programs is causing more harm than good (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Gard & Wright, 2005). Thus, male students are increasingly faced with the pressures from education and public health policy to conform to the “healthy masculine body” characterized as being lean, muscular, and “chiseled” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2008; Bramham, 2003; Gill, Henwood, & McLean, 2005; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Norman, 2011).

The aim of this study was to analyze how male students in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Canada are embodying fatness and masculinity in a province where dominant discourses of health are present and influencing the position boys hold in the social hierarchy of PE. This research study builds on the current research in masculinity and critical health and obesity studies in PE to explore how the dominant discourses around masculinity and body weight are being reinforced and/or resisted within PE classrooms in NL. In order to achieve the aim of this study, the objectives were to: a) explore the embodied experiences of male students in PE; b) understand the influences of

masculine and health ideals in PE; and c) determine how to create body-safe inclusive PE classrooms from the voices of young male students

Review of Literature

Biopedagogies and the embodiment of masculinity in PE. Physical and health education classrooms have been considered essential sites to prevent and fight “obesity” among youth populations. Arguably, schools have been targeted as institutions that can help identify “at risk” children and are seen as primary sites of “intervention.” In particular, healthy living messages in schools are promoting self-monitoring and surveillance practices that are in-turn leading students to feel guilt, shame, and disgust for bodies that are perceived to be outside the “normal weight” category (Beausoleil, 2009; Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; MacNeil & Rail, 2010; Pinhas et al., 2013, Petherick, 2013; Rail, 2009). Further, PE serves as a setting where masculinities are produced through performance and practices in which their subjectivities become defined and appropriated (Swain, 2003). With these explicit messages of weight and gender embodiment, researchers have begun to influence the increasing pressures for men to work on and thus worry about the physical and social presence of their bodies (Norman, 2011). Specifically within PE, the physicality and functionality of the body is under constant surveillance from peers and teachers creating a hegemony that privileges and rewards those who fit the aesthetic in turn marginalizing and subordinating those who do not.

In the examination of the critical social construction of gender roles, theory is built upon the workings of power, predominantly men’s accumulation of power (Hearn, 2004). Connell’s (1985, 1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity has been influential in

helping PE scholars understand how masculinity identities are constructed, more specifically, how the configuration of gender practice situates the order of masculine subjectivities as dominant or subordinated (Atkinson & Kehler, 2008; Bramham, 2003; Drummond, 2003; Pringle, 2008; Swain, 2000, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011, 2014). Although the concept of hegemonic masculinity is dependent on the relations between men and women, the ideology of patriarchy and male dominance are prominent (Hearn, 2004). Hegemonic masculinity is said to be a hierarchal structure that is reinforced through social practice grants social positioning of men over women and other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In the wake of what many are terming the ‘obesity epidemic,’ critical scholars have become interested in critical discourses surrounding obesity and youth’s perception of fatness in the weight-centered health paradigm in education (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Gard & Wright, 2001, 2005; MacNeill & Rail, 2010; O’Hara & Gregg, 2010; O’Reilly & Sixsmith, 2012; Rail, 2009, Sykes & McPhail, 2008; Wright, 2009, 2014). As a result of the traction gained by the “obesity epidemic,” public health and educational administrators have declared “war on childhood obesity” (Rail *et al.*, 2010, p. 259) and PE remains on the frontline. Presented as biopedagogies, policy makers are displaying these dominant messages of “health” specifically to youth through promotional campaigns focused on ‘healthy eating’ and “active living” (Beausoleil, 2009).

As a result of the moral panic surrounding ‘excessive weight’, fatness has been constructed as undesirable and irresponsible. More specifically in males, the healthy male body is “attained” by achieving a particular masculine aesthetic or look (Norman, 2011). While “thinness” has been associated and reinforced for females, males face complex

weight ideals. Men are inundated with messages of muscularity; studies suggest that being too small (thin) or too large (fat) are associated with body dissatisfaction (Austin, Haines, & Veugelers, 2009; Calzo et al., 2013; Calzo et al., 2012). According to Gill, Henwood, and McLean (2005), the message of body shape, size, and health are conceived of as being pliable aspects of flesh that can be stylized with discipline and will power. As youth view the lean, stylized body as healthy, researchers have raised concerns about youth being “at risk” for developing unhealthy behaviours (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Norman, 2011, 2013). Individuals who do not meet the social construction of the ‘normal’ male body can result in being considered undesirable. The consequence of not being considered “normal” results in social exclusion, bullying, and even violence (Kehler, 2010).

Methodology

This research is informed by a critical post-structural theoretical framework, specifically through the works of Foucault (1980). Post-structuralism makes a connection between language, social organization, subjectivity, and power (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Language produces meaning and creates social reality. Post-structural thought is interested in “how boundaries are socially constructed and how they are maintained and policed” (Peters & Burbules, 2004, p. 26). In particular, this creates a series of binary oppositions of hierarchical value, which has the effect of including or excluding groups of people.

A critical poststructural perspective helps make sense of the everyday realities of how youth perform health and masculinity and the power struggle this creates in the PE classroom. According to Peters and Burbules (2004), “power is productive because it is

not simply repressive; it also creates new knowledge (which may liberate)... poststructuralism wants to ask questions beyond traditional issues of truth, objectivity, or ‘useful knowledge’” (p. 29). Focus was placed on the complex ways young men form, and disrupt their gendered identities and the role that PE plays in the production of gender identity (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010). According to Norman (2013), “individuals materialize their embodied subjectivities through everyday talk” (p 414). As the lived experiences of male subjects in the physical environment are being taken into account, the language being interpreted is both verbal and physical. This language is how “social organization and power are defined and contested” (p. 961) and how ones subjectivity is identified (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Critical Ethnography. The purpose of an ethnographic study is to describe the culture and social interactions of a group and involves the extensive immersion into a setting to collect data (Lichtman, 2010). In the educational context, ethnographic research is based on participant observation of everyday life occurring in a natural setting, in this case the PE classroom. The role of the ethnographer is to study the meaning of the behaviour, language and interaction of members in a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007). While this study was ethnographic in nature, this ethnography employs a critical approach. A critical ethnographic study, while similar to a traditional ethnography, aims to expose power relationships through in-depth and sustained involvement in the research setting (Fitzpatrick, 2011). This methodology is beneficial in exposing power relationships involved in teaching and critical ethnographic research is a growing area of ethnographic research in education (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

Methods

For this qualitative study, ethical approval was obtained from Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICHER), Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, and from the administration at King's College (pseudonym). Data collection occurred from May-June 2016, where 4 days per week for 7 weeks were spent in the school, totalling 30 hours of observation. In total, 40 class observations (45 minutes each) were completed. As mentioned, the participants were under the age of consent; thus all students who were participants in this study needed to have informed consent from a parent or guardian. The data collected for this study includes: a) field notes from classroom observations, using active participation (Lichtman, 2010) and b) semi-structured one-on-one and two-on-one interviews that lasted 30-60 minutes.

Participants and Setting. This research took place over 2 months in 2016 in three different classrooms at King's College, a junior high-school, in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. This school was located outside of the metropolitan area of St. John's, Newfoundland. This population is important as there is "concern" in child and youth health in Newfoundland and Labrador (Petherick & Beausoleil, 2015) as this population is under scrutiny from public health and education officials. Newfoundland and Labrador has been identified as having the highest rates of "obesity" in the country and youth are said to be not as active as other Canadian youth (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2009). This has resulted in urgency and panic in the implementation of measures centered in healthy eating and physical activity (Beausoleil & Petherick, 2015; Beausoleil & Ward, 2010; McPhail, 2013). The messages are being portrayed as

biopedagogies and are negatively affecting how students are taking up messages of “health.”

The participants in the study were from three classes of both male and female students who were enrolled in PE and health classes in grades 7 and 9. These grades were chosen as the participants in grade 7 and 9 are required to take PE. As it is compulsory, students are required to take PE and do not have the option of signing up, thus resulting in less student bias (Gerdin, 2014). According to Bramham (2003), it is important to stress that research process and outcome are “dependent on the nature of existing relationship between staff and pupils” (p. 58). Therefore, this research was conducted at the end of the school year, as the students’ teacher, Mr. Smith (pseudonym), had built solid foundations and relationships with the students in his classes.

Observations. To examine the boys’ understandings and dynamics of masculinity and health, I began by conducting active participation observations. Active participation observation includes developing rapport with the host community and immersing oneself in the activities of daily life (Angrosino, 2005). To achieve this, I fluctuated between various classical roles of the participant observer including talking to the students/teacher, taking part in activities during the lesson and observing the students (inter)actions from inside the game and as well as from outside the game as an observer (Gerdin, 2014).

The observations specifically examined the participants’ interactions with peers and teachers, participation in activities, the teacher’s pedagogy, and verbal/non-verbal communication. During the observations I was particularly interested in how dominant discourses of masculinity and health were taken up and portrayed by the male students in

the classroom. This included aspects such as social interaction and interpersonal relationships, participation, language and body language, and gender influences within the PE classroom.

After every class detailed field notes were written documenting on the behaviours, actions, and communication between students and teachers during my observation time. These field notes were transcribed and used in complementation with the transcribed interviews.

Interviews. The second form of data in this study was semi-structured one-on-one and two-on-one audio-recorded interviews that lasted approximately between 30-60 minutes. Research involving young males understanding of masculine embodiment can be a sensitive topic (Bramham, 2003; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Norman, 2011; Swain, 2000, 2003) thus I spent the first four weeks getting to know the students (talking to them, participating with them, engaging in their classwork) before conducting interviews.

A semi-structured interview technique was used; this included the use of open-ended, ethnographic style questioning (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Questions related to masculinity, health, and PE were be asked, such as “what do you like/dislike about PE?” “what does it mean to you to be healthy?” “does PE make people popular?” Through active listening as an interviewer, the prompted questions ultimately lead to spontaneous answers from the interviewee (Kvale, 2007).

Data Analysis. Data consisted of field notes and transcripts from the interviews. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis. As done in the work of Norman (2013), data was transcribed through their “idiomatic language practices” (p.413) in order to show understanding of their culture. In analyzing the data, a critical

post-structural thematic analysis approach was used to identify the patterns that are found in language and that are used to construct the social world of PE and those within it (Norman, 2011; Wright, 2004). Thematic analysis is a systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns of cultural meaning and interpreting the resulting thematic structures by seeking relationships within the data (Mills, Durepos, Wiebe, 2010). Using a thematic analysis involves analyzing data guided by a theoretical framework and determining themes that arise from the research data.

In qualitative research, thematic analysis is the process of studying the data to extract codes, develop categories and central ideas, and move from categories to concepts (Lichtman, 2010). In my data analysis I employed the three c's approach: codes, categories and concepts (Lichtman, 2010), which is a content-driven, thematic analysis approach that is particularly suitable for exploratory studies (Cameron, 2014). This approach was completed in multiple steps to take the raw data from the field notes and transcriptions to transform it into meaningful concepts.

Results

In the findings below, I investigate the ways that boys in PE classrooms are experiencing and embodying masculinity and health. In the first section, I examine how the male youth in the classroom are influenced and enacting upon dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity and weight-based health. Furthermore, I bring attention to the negative attitudes and biases inflicted on those who are outside the view of "normal." In the second section, I bring attention to the alternative approaches that students and teachers are conveying to challenge the dominant discourses and how this effects student

pleasure and engagement. In the final section, I shed light on the advancement of student-driven curricula and pedagogy for the promotion of positive realities in PE.

Dominant discourse is alive and well

At King's College, through the voices of the students it was evident that there was influence from dominant discourses surrounding health and gender. In the course of the interviews, two main messages surrounding gender and health emerged: 1) health was presented as a visible aspect through body weight; and 2) the perception of masculine subjectivity was perceived as athletic, technically skilled, strong, and dominant. The purpose of this section is to highlight the perceptions of masculinity and health in male youth.

'Health' Presented as Weight. One of the main messages portrayed by the participants in the interviews was the idea that health was an aspect that could be controlled through eating and exercise. It was emphasized that "health" could be attained through daily exercise and "healthy" eating and thus leading to achieving a "healthy" body weight. During this part of the interviews, the participants were asked questions like "what does it mean to be healthy?" and "how do you know if you are healthy?" In answering these questions students spoke about formulating their own messages of what it means to be healthy from sources such as TV, the Internet, and social media. When asked what health in general meant personally to them, the students gave very similar answers regarding healthy eating and exercise:

Interviewer: Do you have your own ideas of what it means to be healthy?

Sebastian – Just like eating well and exercising

Perry – Ya that is the main thing really

Similarly, a second group answered the question in the same fashion:

Rick – I eat good I guess, not eating McDonalds everyday

Julian – Eating good and staying active pretty much

While some students mentioned other imperatives for healthy living like not smoking, being happy, and mental health, these perspectives were shared by very few participants. It was apparent that the most dominant messages involved the moderation of eating practices and the regulation of physical activity. In the moderation of eating practices, the participants referred to “healthy food,” “restricting junk food,” “no Doritos,” “dieting,” and “eating in moderation.” However, these practices were not formulated through their health classes; when asked about health class students responded by:

Interviewer – What about health class?

(Laughs from both boys)

Andy – Ya I suppose that you could say that

Interviewer – What do you mean by that

(Continued laughter)

Jordan – Its not much of health it is more so of a relaxing class

This conception of health class was common among most of the students. Health class was referred to as a “joke,” “not liked,” “don’t do much” and “boring.” Health class was seen as a filler class by many of the students and was not appreciated among the students. As shown by the students below, health class seemed to be under-utilized:

Interviewer – So what kinds of things that are coming up in health this year?

Chappy – This year it is more sexuality oriented and learning about STIs and that stuff.

Randolph –The classes are pushover classes, you just kind of go in and sit down and you do a poster for a class or three or you watch a movie.

This was a prevailing theme in the interviews; the students spoke about learning about health from outside of school influences such as parents, other teachers, coaches, TV, magazines and commercials. The students are faced with messages that were shaping their eating and physical activity levels and what their bodies should look like. When asked what the male body should look like it was characterized as “lean,” “athletic,” and “not too fat, or too skinny.” The masculine body is under constant surveillance in PE and weight-based oppression does not only affect those seen as overweight or obese but also those who are seen as underweight or skinny. One of the most powerful dialogues occurred when two grade 9 males were talking about being a healthy male:

Interviewer –What kind of things do you hear about your body weight, is body weight important?

Jordan – Yes definitely, totally is, like I said when I was younger I was always lean, I didn't like the way my body looked and I wanted something to change, so losing weight was probably the biggest thing for that, like gaining muscle mass is the other thing that makes a big difference, so like not quite losing weight as much as gaining the weight in muscle instead of gaining fat makes a big difference

Andy – I have always been generally skinny, it rots me but still, people say I am skinny but people think I am weak but it is a far cry from what I actually am, I've proved enough people wrong

Jordan – And there are people like that too, there is a balance too, you need to be in that area where you are not too heavy, if your not as heavy you aren't going to be as active, or your not too light because if you are too light then well you start having eating problems and you are not going to be, how do I say it, your not going to be able to grow up a 100% healthy because you know you are going to be a little bit less healthier, a little bit less muscle mass and bone strength.

Furthermore, students quantified what was an acceptable range for male students their age:

Ricky: like it depends, if you are 200 pounds I would think that you are overweight but you know if you are like 100-130

Julian: well it depends on what kind of weight that you have, if you have muscle weight or it is like fat weight

In assessing their own health, these students identified that body weight was not only a signifier of health but also manifested their social standing. Thus attaining “health” is characterized by reaching a certain aesthetic taking into account body size, body weight, and type of weight. The body types that fell outside of the desired aesthetic masculine ideal were considered unhealthy resulted in bias and oppression. In talking about health, the participants spoke about how the “unhealthy” body was also linked to ill-informed linkages to disease such as “diabetes,” “bone strength,” and “immune system problems.” Those who were considered outside of “normal” weight were said to be subjected to marginalization, oppression, and even bullying. According to one of the participants,

Jared - people aren't respecting towards other people, whereas sometimes (pause).
Sometimes people that are overweight get treated differently; get made fun of for the way they look

The Hegemonic Masculine. The participants in this study described their experiences with being and acting masculine in their PE classroom as a process of performance. This section illustrates the boys' perceptions of masculinity and how masculine identity is achieved in PE. The construction of masculinity and masculine hierarchies was described through dominant traits of being masculine including skill, attitude, popularity, strength, weight, and athleticism. This can be seen in an excerpt from my field notes,

Today was very interesting as there was an evident social hierarchy occurring between the boys as well as boys and girls. The boys would first try and exert their dominance over the females, the boys wanted to be first in everything that they were doing, be it batting, throwing, or answering questions. The boys would also always try and run right to the front of the line to be the first person. They wanted to set the tone for what is seen as dominant. Today this included showing-off their skills and showing off by acting silly or disruptive. It is always the same boys who are always battling for top spot and want to be the one who is seen as the most dominant.

These ideas were echoed in the interviews, the participants referred to the dominant traits of masculinity as being popular and gaining attention. In asking the participants how they get attention they responded,

Andy: Attention, attention seems to be everything, the more attention that you get the more people are going to look at you and going to hang out with you

Interviewer: How would one get attention?

Jordan: Sports for sure

Andy: Ya I feel like attention goes to those say if someone plays AAA (highest level their age) hockey will get more attention than if someone plays a lower level

Jordan: ya hockey seems to be a big thing for attention, I find that where I do something different, that they would get more attention than I would.

The direction and type of attention played a significant role in the construction of masculine identities in PE. It was evident in the observations that students were constantly trying to show off and display their skill at each sport or game encountered. In one of the observations, the students were throwing the balls against the wall and one of the students yelled out “you suck” and other students laughed. This resulted in one student emerging as dominant and another was placed in a subordinate position. However, when asking the students about what it means to be a man, one dialogue between students included:

Perry: You just need to not be an idiot and just hold your own

Sebastian: Don't be a douche bag

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Perry: Well not making like random comments and not being a bully or making stupid arguments

Sebastian: A man just needs to be able to hold his own and not back down

In the dialogue above, the students made reference to what exemplifies dominant masculinities. They spoke about gaining prominence over one another through the use of aggression and violence. However, while the students responded in accordance with the dominant discourse of hegemonic masculinity there was evidence that there was a desire for change. The following section will discuss the approaches that the classroom teacher and the students have taken to disrupt the dominant discourses that are alive and well in PE classrooms.

Alternative approaches influences positive spaces

The participants in this study made clear distinctions in the ways that they understood and experienced PE at King's College. There was a unique preoccupation with the positive experiences that were produced by the teacher and students working to create an inclusive space. While the students did allude to negative experiences with other teachers, their experiences with Mr Smith were mostly positive and they recognized aspects of his pedagogy that provided a positive learning environment. The pedagogical approach of providing a diverse array of activities and promoting inclusion in all activities garnered the engagement of student buy-in to the alternative games approach.

The participants commented on the content, teacher's approach, and teacher personality were manifested in the production of an inclusive classroom. The participants talked about how in previous years, there was a well-defined teaching format of traditional sport. They talked about how other teachers "taught similar activities every year", "often in the same order", and how it benefited those who were involved in those sports in and out of school. In Mr. Smith's class, the students talked about the diversity of sports and games that they played and how they saw this as a positive approach,

Rudy – Mr. Smith wants us to be more diverse in PE, and not just play the same things over and over again; I don't think that we have played the same thing twice all year and he will change all of the rules in sports so that like people who obviously play something like hockey a whole bunch are better at it than everyone else he can make it a more balanced game

Sebastian – He is always trying to do things to get everyone to participate, he won't be like you're not trying hard enough that's a zero, he will say go have fun. He's like if you try and have a laugh he will give you a good mark, where most teachers are like if you aren't good at sport you wont get as good of marks

In relation to teacher pedagogy, the participants were passionate about the teachers' evaluation process and assessment techniques. The boys spoke of their previous experiences in PE and how teachers would mark based on their skill level resulting in a uneven social status among the students. Those who displayed the most athletic traits such as speed and strength were privileged strictly on skill. This negatively effected the perceptions of boys and resulted in negative engagement. However, the students in Mr. Smith's class praised his evaluation technique as it promoted inclusion of everyone. The students were not focused on skill, but focused on participating and putting forward full effort. This was evident in his daily speeches and demonstrations, as each day he would talk about "mistakes as learning experiences" and "wanting to see everyone participating." According to the students, it was about not comparing yourself to others and focusing on individual engagement level,

Sebastian – he says it's not about what you can do compared to what other people can do, its about what you can do

Alex – ya like trying hard, you are not graded on if you can do ten pull-ups its about trying the best that you can

Similarly, one of the students talked about how Mr. Smith focused on getting the students moving in class by putting focus on individual achievement and engagement by taking out the aspect of competition:

Jordan– ya and he bases the marks for the fact of doing it and enjoying it and trying hard, so if he sees you trying, like he could care less if someone got down on the floor and did 75 push-ups no problem but he would care more if there was someone right beside him who did 10 perfect push-ups and dropped on the 11th

The participants also placed an emphasis on how the teacher’s assessment practices disrupted the masculine hierarchies by taking away the emphasis on winning and skill mastery. The focus was further determined by effort and attitude. The boys believed that this made for a more enjoyable experience for all students involved and reduced the hegemony between students. According to Jay,

Jay – I think that he makes it really fair and marks you on your effort, it doesn’t matter if you are a terrible hockey player, it depends on how much effort you put in.

The approach of student driven curricula and pedagogy creates everyday realities

The participants spoke enthusiastically about having the opportunity to discuss young people’s health and the multiple ways that they have or would intervene in curricula and pedagogy. Much of the enthusiasm was centered on health discourse as

opposed to gender discourse. The students wanted to have the opportunity to let teachers and administration know what was happening in their school and the problems that young people are seeing in health and physical education. While health discourses presented as biopedagogies are problematic, the students were able to see issues within schools of following through with messages of physical activity. Students spoke about how they were not getting enough time in the gym and school administration not following through with the daily recommended time of physical activity. One of the students easily “recited” the guidelines that students are learning in schools,

Bryan – We don’t get enough physical activity at school, adolescents are supposed to have 60 minutes of physical activity a day but in school we get 45 minutes every two or three days of school which is not enough

Not surprisingly, the participants know the “health” imperative presented as healthy eating and physical activity. However, they also know when those who are giving them these messages are not following these messages. As PE is seen as a generally positive experience by the students in this cohort, they want to be spending time in their gym classes. The students do recognize however, that although they are being told they need to get 60 minutes of exercise a day that the school is not following these regulations. One dialogue between two students showed their frustrations:

Jay – I have one thing to say, I find our school is brutal for this, they say that we are supposed to get at least 60 minutes of physical activity but we get 45 minutes

of gym twice in a cycle (every 7 school days), it makes no sense why they would even say this if they aren't going to go through with it

Rick – ya definitely not enough, they are complaining that we need to get more physical activity but they need to give us the opportunities because we don't have all the time in the world outside of school.

One of the most surprising aspects of this research project was the student-led approach to inclusivity in their PE classes. When asking the students about aspects of masculinity, one important aspect was the ideology of sexuality and the perceptions that students hold. When the participants were asked about sexuality their answers deviated from the dominant discourse. In my first interview with the boys, I was told:

Interviewer – do you think that people judge one another based on their sexuality at your school?

Sebastian – not as much as it used to, the GSA has really helped in educating people about sexuality

Throughout the interviews other students discussed how sexuality was not a of male dominance in their school. In one of the interviews, two of the students were members of their school Gay-Straight Alliance. They spoke of the initiatives that they have put into place to promote inclusivity in their school,

Rudy – I mean we are both members of our school GSA which is like supporting and making everyone feel equal and right in the world and apparently principal wrote a letter to the English school district and they applauded us for being such a forward and accepting school

Andy – we had a day where we signed a petition saying that we would not talk for a day because some people who are gay feel like they can't tell anyone and they keep it to themselves and so it was kind of symbolic of that, and to show our support, I think that everyone in the GSA club did this and didn't talk all day to show support

While the narratives of these students show how the power dynamics highlight the power differentials that are involved in shaping health and gender ideals, they also show the power of student voice in the promotion of change. Although the students are well versed in the health messages designed to help them shape their lifestyle practices, they are also able to navigate these messages and create meaning of what is important in their social world.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine how male students in NL are embodying fatness and masculinity. The perceptions of the young men in this study provide insight into the complexities of the relationships that male students have with their bodies and the bodies of others. While the results of the study show the attitudes that males hold towards masculinity and health are still influenced by the dominant discourses of

masculinity and health. The study also sheds light on how alternative approaches in student driven curricula and pedagogy can begin to create positive and inclusive learning spaces.

As seen in this research, PE remains a pivotal site for the construction of health and gender ideals. Monaghan and Hardey (2009) have discussed the current state of research in men's bodies, fatness, and weight stigma. The neglect of research has resulted in a misinterpreted representation of men's bodies and social positioning. As a result, discourses surrounding health and gender are influencing "ideals" in PE and are providing convoluted ideologies of the social norms associated with the male body. As seen in this research, the portrayal of the ideal masculine body is nuanced in the appropriation of "normal." The ideologies portrayed by these middle school students were not to be too fat or too thin. The dominant masculine body type that was desired by the students was a muscular, athletic body type that allowed students to excel at sport, in turn leading to popularity and dominance. Adjacent to the work of others in the field (see, Gill, Henwood, and McLean, 2005; Monaghan, 2005, Monaghan & Hardey, 2009; Norman, 2013; Swain, 2003) the necessity placed by students on the aesthetic of the male body is resulting in a regulated approach to "attaining" desired masculinity. Similar to this study, as stated by Gill, Henwood, & McLean, "the look of the body was read as an indicator of a whole range of lifestyle and identity choices" (p. 23). The resultant factor is a group of young males who are projecting their health to an external aesthetic and discrediting those who aren't portraying the ideal.

It is suggested in this research that alternative approaches in PE can provide positive and safe spaces for male students. The introduction of an alternative means of

providing PE allowed for status differentials that would be alive in traditional PE based off of skill and athleticism to be contested. The hegemony seen in previous research in traditional PE (Akinson & Kehler, 2012; Bramham, 2003; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011) was re-organized when technical skill was not the signifier of dominance. While previous research studies have examined teacher pedagogy in narrowing inequitable gender relations in PE through dance (Gard, 2001, 2003, 2008), adventure PE (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014), and rugby (Gard & Meyenn, 2000); this study showed that diversity of learning activities created a positive and safe learning environment.

One of the surprises emerging from this research is related to the everyday realities that students are facing in their classrooms and how they are proactively trying to create inclusivity for one another. While alternative teacher pedagogical approaches have been examined in current literature, a gap exists in student-led initiatives and curricula. Most notably in this study was the development of a gay-straight alliance (GSA) by male youth to promote inclusion. Gender theorists have suggested that power and privilege hierarchies have the capacity to be reordered (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus researchers have looked at the promotion of GSAs in schools (Fields & Russell, 2005; Herdt et al., 2007, Russell, 2002); however, this study is unique as the GSA plays a major role in the PE classroom by influencing the values associated with the masculine subjectivity. According to Tischler and McCaughtry (2014), “in order for hierarchies to reshuffle and narrow, intentional actions must be put into motion” (p. 358); in this case the students developed a GSA to promote inclusion in the school. Although this is only one aspect of narrowing social hierarchies, it is still creating awareness and consciousness to inequitable power relations in the PE classroom.

Based on the findings in this study, this research offers three recommendations to the field of critical obesity scholarship in PE that will help address inclusive classrooms. First, the participants in this study shed light on the importance of teacher pedagogy and attitude in the creation of inclusive classrooms. Previous research (Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Hickey, 2008; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011) has discussed the influence teachers have on perpetuating discourses of health and masculinity within the PE classroom. Research has shown the drastic prevalence of weight stigma in PE teachers and PE teacher candidates (Fontana et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2010; O'Brien, Hunter, & Banks, 2007; Rukavina, Li, & Rowell, 2008; Russell-Mayhew et al., 2015; Tingstrom, 2008). Thus, it is imperative that the perceptions and bias held by those teaching PE is addressed to promote change in the students. Weight bias has been shown to be a significant issue within K-12 schools (Puhl & Heuer, 2009), thus there is a need for more interventions for helping reduce weight bias and develop body-inclusive spaces, curriculum, and teaching.

Secondly, research in alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching PE have begun to study the status differentials in non-sports based models of PE. Researchers have shown the promise of creating positive learning environment through the use of different models such as dance (Gard, 2001, 2003, 2008), adventure PE (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014), and multi-sport settings (Kirk, 2010). The results from this study suggest that alternative approaches to teaching and learning in PE can enhance the participation and engagement with physical activity in school and should be examined further.

Lastly, it was evident that the student-voice was instrumental in the development of creating a sense of inclusivity and thus promoting participation in the classroom.

According to Dyson (2006), listening to students has the potential to provide valuable insights into the complexity of student relations in PE classroom. Previous research has shown the student voice has been instrumental in improving student engagement and inclusivity in PE (see. Dyson, 2006; Gutusky, McCaughtey, Shen, Centeio, & Garn, 2016; Howley & Tannehill, 2014). Further research is warranted on how students can create body-inclusive classrooms from the perspective of students.

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Chapter 5: Looking Forward

This final chapter summarizes the findings from my research study, highlights the limitations within the study, and offers three recommendations to the field of critical obesity scholarship in physical education that will help address inclusive classrooms. The recommendations have been derived from both my readings of the literature and from the research findings of my thesis project. The recommendations made in this final chapter are focused towards current researchers, school educators and administration, and others interested in the field of critical obesity scholarship who are advocating for inclusive and body-safe classrooms. My hope is that this chapter, as well as my entire thesis, will encourage new research questions and inspire others to become involved in developing inclusive classrooms.

Limitations

This study had three main limitations: 1) practical limitations, 2) population sample limitations, and 3) my limitations as a researcher. The practical limitations in this study were the most recognizable. For example, one of the biggest limitations was the amount of time for participant observations. The observations provided rich and detailed data by allowing me to get to know my participants on a deeper level but this could have been improved with more time in the research setting. As this was a project for a Master's thesis, the amount of time in the research setting was limited to ensure timely completion. The financial support and time restrictions to complete a longer time at the research site was not feasible. Being able to observe the participants for a longer period of time would have afforded me the opportunity to develop stronger relationships, be able to observe the

student across multiple units, further examine pedagogical perspectives of the teacher and include more avenues for data collection (e.g. email correspondence).

There were also limitations in the population from which the participants were drawn. First, the number of students that could be interviewed in this given time frame was limited due to time constraints. The major criteria for the participants in the interviews was that they had to be male; given the restrictions of time, I would have liked to have been able to interview the females. This would have provided a unique lens in the analysis of power/privilege in PE. However, this would have been beyond the scope of what is reasonable for a Master's thesis. Second, only grade 7 and 9 were included in the study. Due to the scheduling of the teacher and the number of classes that would have been observed grade 8 was not included in the study. Given the difference in age, I would have like to have included all grades within the school.

Lastly, I recognize my own limitations as a researcher. As a researcher who is new to the field of critical obesity scholarship and gender studies, my understanding of this research area developed throughout the course of this study. While this may not be perceived as a limitation (Cameron, 2014), it definitely influenced the study. For example, throughout the observation period, field note and interview skills were developed throughout out the study. As a master's student, these skills are meant to be developed through research. As research progressed, so did my skills in observations, field notes, and interviews. I also recognize my integration into the community of critical obesity studies and PE as a limitation. While critical obesity scholarship has broadly been described as a growing movement to resist discrimination and promote body acceptance as well as health for people of all sizes (Watkins, Farrell, & Doyle Hugmeyer, 2012); I

came to realize the intricacies of a drastically growing field promoting the inclusion of all bodies. The field of fat studies and critical obesity scholarship has a very open community that are accepting and inviting for those wishing to pursue research in the field. While at the beginning of this study I identified strongly with physical education, I have come to see through my communication with scholars in the field and my interactions with those involved in my research project that my work is strongly influenced through a critical obesity studies perspective situated in health education, physical education, and gender discourse.

In the following pages, I make three recommendations that emerged directly from my research findings. These recommendations are meant to help serve as avenues for further research in PE and critical obesity scholarship.

Recommendations For The Promotion of Body-Safe Physical Education Classrooms

1. More teacher resources need to be made available for educators and teacher education for body-inclusive spaces

As articulated throughout the paper, previous research and the participants in this study shed light on the importance of teacher pedagogy and attitude in the creation of inclusive classrooms. Previous research (Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Hickey, 2008; Light & Kirk, 2000; Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011) has discussed the influence teachers have on perpetuating discourses of health and masculinity within the PE classroom. While the participants in this study discussed how their teacher provided a safe and inclusive learning atmosphere for all bodies, they also alluded to how this was not always the case in their previous classes. Research has shown the drastic prevalence of weight stigma in

PE teachers and PE teacher candidates (Fontana et al., 2013; O'Brien et al., 2010; O'Brien, Hunter, & Banks, 2007; Rukavina, Li, & Rowell, 2008; Russell-Mayhew et al., 2015; Tingstrom, 2008). While research has focused on the quantitative implicit and explicit bias of professional and pre-professional teachers, more research is warranted in the qualitative examination of teachers perception in relation to health and the body in physical and health education. In this study it was apparent that the teacher had a strong influence on the students' perceptions of health and masculinity. Thus there is a need for more teacher resources that support teachers to develop body-inclusive spaces, curriculum, and teaching practices.

2. More research is warranted in the intersectionality of gender discourse and implications on weight-based oppression

While there has been a large volume of research in PE making comparisons between boys and girls, masculine hierarchies in PE, and the marginalization of female in PE (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014) there is still a gap in the male-female relations in regards to weight-based oppression. Most research in gender discourse in PE is in single-sex classrooms (Atkinson & Kehler, 2012; Light & Kirk, 2000; Norman, 2013; Pringle, 2008; Swain, 2000, 2003) and examine the effects of hegemonic masculinity and masculine hierarchies. As many classrooms are still segregated based on gender, this study was unique as it provided the perspective of males in a mixed gender PE classroom. Due to the time constraints on this research project, only the male perspectives of masculinity and male health were examined in interviews. Although, through observations and interviews it was apparent that there was a drastic influence from the

female perspective on the generation of masculine hierarchies and weight-based health and body ideals. The perceptions of females on the shifting power relations between males and the role that they play in this intricate process in a mixed-gender classroom could provide valuable information in creating body-safe classrooms. The boys clearly expressed the orientation of the female influence on their actions and the actions of others in social positioning. The intersectionality between genders in PE can help provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of gender and health discourse.

3. More research in inclusive activities to create body-safe classrooms

As previously stated, research in alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching PE have begun to study hegemony in non-sports based models of PE. Researchers have shown the promise of creating positive learning environment through the use of different activities such as dance (Gard, 2001, 2003, 2008), adventure PE (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2014), and inclusive activity and sport approach (Kirk, 2010). Through this research, results demonstrate that the inclusive alternative activity approach showed that masculine hierarchies could be shifted through the incorporation of diverse activities. Students liked how they were not only participating in traditional sport but were given the opportunity to gain new experiences in a variety of activities. The results from this study suggest that alternative approaches to teaching and learning in PE can enhance the participation and engagement with physical activity in school and should be examined further.

Concluding Thoughts

A growing number of scholars have called attention to the necessity for further research in masculinity, men's bodies, perspectives of fatness, and physical education (see: Gerdin & Ovens, 2016; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Monaghan, 2005; Monaghan & Hardey, 2009; Norman, 2013). Additionally, the current climate in critical physical education is drawing attention to the socially constructed moral panic surrounding "obesity" and modern lifestyles (Pringle & Pringle, 2012). Consequently, critical scholars have asserted the need to explore potential strategies to address weight-based oppression in physical education (Cameron, 2014), especially within the male population (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010). This study was directed towards adding to the literature in this field.

The purpose of this study was to examine how male students in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Canada are embodying fatness and masculinity in a province where dominant discourses of health are presently influencing the position boys hold in the social hierarchy of PE. My interest was in how males were interacting within the PE classroom, not only with their peers and their teacher, but also with their own relationship with their own bodies. This allowed for a rich exploration into how these young men were taking up messages of health but also how they were promoting an inclusive atmosphere in the classroom.

This thesis adds to the current literature in masculinity studies and critical obesity scholarship and is a call for further research in this area. It currently is a time where dominant discourses surrounding weight are negatively affecting PE classrooms and teachers and is resulting in weight stigma and oppression. Physical education provides a unique atmosphere for celebrating the human body and its capabilities, however, there is a need for a change of context where all bodies are accepted and celebrated.

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Appendix A: Consent Form Participants and Parents/Guardians

Informed Consent Form Participants and Parent/Guardians

Title: Masculinity and Health: A Critical Examination of Male Embodiment in Physical Education

Researcher(s): Chris, Borduas, HBK, BEd, MPE Candidate, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, cjmb35@mun.ca

Dr. Erin Cameron (Supervisor), PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, ecameron@mun.ca

Students are invited to take part in a research project entitled, “Masculinity and Health: A Critical Examination of Male Embodiment in Physical Education.” This project is in accordance with Chris Borduas’ Master’s thesis in Physical Education.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact Chris Borduas, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to the student and parent/guardian to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

Since its inception as part of the school curriculum, PE has always been associated with the improvement of health. The PE curriculum in Canada is structured to promote enjoyable lifelong physical and health education. To ensure that individuals are having an optimal experience in physical education, there needs to be a safe and inclusive atmosphere. In particular, the attitudes and beliefs that male students hold about health

and masculinity are often reflections of their experiences in health and physical education classrooms.

This research project is being completed by Chris Borduas (Master's of Physical Education Candidate). Chris has teaching experience in physical education at the secondary level from teaching in the United Kingdom. Engaged from previous experiences, Chris wants to build on the literature on how to make classrooms safe and inclusive. To do so, the research question leading this project is: How do male students embody messages of health and how can physical education become a safer, more inclusive setting?

To answer this question, this study aims first to examine the male experience of health and embodiment in physical education. To achieve the aim of this study, the objectives are to: 1) To gain insights on the embodied experiences of male students in PE; 2) To examine the influences of masculine and health ideals in PE; and 3) To gain perspectives on how to create healthy and inclusive PE classrooms from the perceptions of young males.

What you will do in this study:

Students will have an opportunity to have their voice heard in relation to their experience in physical education. Chris will be in the classroom conducting observations during physical education lessons three days per week from May-June 2016. As the participants are under the age of consent, each participant will need to have parental consent. In the observations, Chris will be taking field notes and examining how students are taking up messages of health within PE, the relationships between students and teachers, and the group dynamics in the classroom. No personal information will be included in the observations.

Students are invited to also participate in a 30-60 minute individual interview. Students will be interviewed on their experience in physical education, students' understanding of health, and how males interact in the PE setting. Chris will bring in some of the data from observations into the interview, as it will help enhance the interview. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed out) verbatim upon parental consent. All transcribed interviews, emails, and written documents will be used as study data. Email correspondence will occur after the initial interviews, students will have the option to contact Chris if they have any additional information to share. If a student initiates email correspondence it is considered data and will be used and stored as research data. Students will have the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews and final research findings to provide feedback and make changes, corrections, and/or clarifications.

This study is not a school requirement and that the decision to participate, or not will not affect the students' standing in the school or with the teacher(s).

Length of time:

The primary investigator will be in the classroom from May 2016 – June 2016 conducting observations.

Start date: TBD

Total individual time commitment is approximately 1.5 hours (interview = 45-60 minutes; review of transcription = 30 minutes).

Additional time required if email correspondence is continued.

Withdrawal from the study:

- If students and/or parents/guardians decide to withdraw or not participate in certain aspects of the study they will be free to do so without penalty of any sort. If a withdrawal is requested (verbally or in writing), Chris will accept the request immediately. If a student chooses to quit or withdraw they will have two options: 1) they will be able to stay in the classroom but will have no information recorded about them or 2) they will be able to leave the classroom and be accommodated in another classroom. The student/parent do not need to provide any reason and are free to omit any question(s) that you do not wish to answer. If you wish to withdraw please contact Chris Borduas by phone or email. If you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to one month after the completion of your review of research findings.

Possible benefits:

Participation in this study gives students the opportunity to have their voices heard and have a potential impact on better understanding how teachers can make physical education more fun and inclusive for all male students.

Possible risks:

There is the possibility of minor psychological and social risks in this study, as students may feel uncomfortable answering questions in the interview about masculinity and health. Every effort will be made to minimize the risks as there will be methods of trustworthiness that will be established. Participants have no obligation to answer any questions in the interview if it makes them feel uncomfortable. If the participant feels uncomfortable, the participant can choose to finish the interview or move on to a new question.

Confidentiality:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

The following steps will be taken to protect your confidentiality on the verbatim transcripts for the interviews, (a) names or other identifying particulars will not be discussed or made public outside of the researcher (b) pseudonyms will be substituted for all names that appear on the data transcripts and materials for publication, (c) the audio tapes will be identified by code number only, (d) the data codes and this consent forms will be stored separate from the data (consent form will be stored in the locking filing cabinet in the principle investigator's office), (e) the codes which link the data to the participants will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Quotes may be used to illustrate the themes. However, every effort will be made to protect the identity of the participants in any printed text. All names, locations, or personal identifiers will be removed from the quotes. Your confidentiality will be held paramount at all times.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics. While your **interview will be** audio-recorded and transcribed upon your consent, all identifying information (e.g., names, school name) will be removed and codes/pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

This study is not anonymous as there will be teachers and students involved in the study. Due to the fact that this study involves work with minors, it is imperative that all interviews are visible to ensure the safety of the researcher and the safety of the student. Although the interviews are not anonymous, all data and results will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in publications.

Recording of Data:

Permission for audio-recording is required for participants to participate in the study (checkbox is provided at the end of this form). Two audio-recorders will be placed on the table to record interviews.

Storage of Data:

Only Chris Borduas and his supervisor Dr. Erin Cameron will have direct access to the data during the study. Chris Borduas will assume the responsibility for data storage. All hardcopy data (e.g., transcripts) will be deemed confidential material and will be held in a locked filing cabinet within HKR qualitative analysis office at MUN. All electronic files (i.e., digital audio recordings, researcher notes) will be password protected and stored on an external hard drive that will be locked in a filing cabinet within the HKR qualitative

analysis office. The digital recordings and transcripts will be stored separately from the master sheet identifying participant names, pseudonyms, and code numbers. If hardcopy data have electronic version, the data will be shredded after the completion of the study. Data will be kept for five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. After five years, all electronic data will be permanently removed from the external hard drive. Hardcopy data will be shredded by Chris Borduas.

Reporting of Results:

The data will be presented as common themes across participants that emerge from the transcripts. Quotes from the interviews will be used to illustrate the themes. Permission from the participant on using quotes is required for you to participate in the study (checkbox is provided at the end of this form). However, all names, locations, or personal identifiers will be removed from the quotes. The research findings will be presented in academic conference presentations and published in scholarly journals.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

Participants will have access to the research findings without having to contact the researcher once published publically. The results will be sent out by email to the participants and a link will also be posted to the HIPP (Health Innovation through Promotion and Practice) Collaborative and HKR websites where participants will be able to access the results. The results of this thesis will also be publically available at the QEII library at Memorial University.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Chris Borduas.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Informed Consent Form

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that if under the age of 19, parent/guardian consent is needed
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be destroyed.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to one month after the completion of your review of research findings.

I agree to participate in the study	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I agree to participate in classroom observations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I agree to participate in an interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
I agree to participate in email correspondence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your signature confirms:

- I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.
- I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.
- A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix B: Informed Consent Teacher

Informed Consent Form Teacher

Title: Masculinity and Health: A Critical Examination of Male Embodiment in Physical Education

Researcher(s): Chris, Borduas, HBK, BEd, MPE Candidate, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, cjmb35@mun.ca

Dr. Erin Cameron (Supervisor), PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, ecameron@mun.ca

Teachers (participants) are invited to take part in a research project entitled, “Masculinity and Health: A Critical Examination of Male Embodiment in Physical Education.” This project is in accordance with Chris Borduas’ Master’s thesis in Physical Education.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact Chris Borduas, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to the participant decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction:

Since its inception as part of the school curriculum, PE has always been associated with the improvement of health. The PE curriculum in Canada is structured to promote enjoyable lifelong physical and health education. To ensure that individuals are having an optimal experience in physical education, there needs to be a safe and inclusive atmosphere. In particular, the attitudes and beliefs that male students hold about health

and masculinity are often reflections of their experiences in health and physical education classrooms.

This research project is being completed by Chris Borduas (Master's of Physical Education Candidate). Chris has teaching experience in physical education at the secondary level from teaching in the United Kingdom. Engaged from previous experiences, Chris wants to build on the literature on how to make classrooms safe and inclusive. To do so, the research question leading this project is: How do male students embody messages of health and how can physical education become a safer, more inclusive setting?

To answer this question, this study aims first to examine the male experience of health and embodiment in physical education. To achieve the aim of this study, the objectives are to: 1) To gain insights on the embodied experiences of male students in PE; 2) To examine the influences of masculine and health ideals in PE; and 3) To gain perspectives on how to create healthy and inclusive PE classrooms from the perceptions of young males.

What you will do in this study:

Participants will have an opportunity to have their voice heard in relation to their experience in physical education. Chris will be in the classroom conducting observations during physical education lessons three days per week from May-June 2016. In the observations, Chris will be taking field notes and examining how students are taking up messages of health within PE, the relationships between students and teachers, and the group dynamics in the classroom. No personal information will be included in the observations.

Participants are invited to also participate in a 60-90 minute individual interview and email correspondence. Participants will be interviewed on their experience in physical education, students' understanding of health, and how males interact in the PE setting. Chris will bring in some of the data from observations into the interview, as it will help enhance the interview. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed out) verbatim. All transcribed interviews, emails, and written documents will be used as study data. Email correspondence will occur after the initial interviews, participants will have the option to contact Chris if they have any additional information to share. If a participant initiates email correspondence it is considered data and will be uploaded to ATLAS.ti to be used as research data. Participants will have the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews and final research findings to provide feedback and make changes, corrections, and/or clarifications.

Length of time:

The primary investigator will be in the classroom from May 2016 – June 2016 conducting observations.

Start date: TBD

Total individual time commitment is approximately 2 hours (interview = 60-90 minutes; review of transcription = 30 minutes).

Additional time required if email correspondence is continued.

Withdrawal from the study:

If the participant decides to withdraw or not participate in certain aspects of the study they will be free to do so without penalty of any sort. If a withdrawal is requested (verbally or in writing), Chris will accept the request immediately. The participant does not need to provide any reason and are free to omit any question(s) that you do not wish to answer. If you wish to withdraw please contact Chris Borduas by phone or email.

Possible benefits:

Participation in this study gives parents the opportunity to have their voices heard and have a potential impact on better understanding how they can make physical education more fun and inclusive for all male students.

Possible risks:

There is the possibility of minor psychological and social risks in this study, as participants may feel uncomfortable answering questions in the interview about masculinity and health. Every effort will be made to minimize the risks as there will be methods of trustworthiness that will be established. Participants have no obligation to answer any questions in the interview if it makes them feel uncomfortable. If the participant feels uncomfortable, the participant can chose to finish the interview or move on to a new question.

Confidentiality:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

The following steps will be taken to protect your confidentiality on the verbatim transcripts for the interviews, (a) names or other identifying particulars will not be discussed or made public outside of the researcher (b) pseudonyms will be substituted for all names that appear on the data transcripts and materials for publication, (c) the audio tapes will be identified by code number only, (d) the data codes and this consent forms will be stored separate from the data (consent form will be stored in the locking filling cabinet in the principle investigator's office), (e) the codes which link the data to the

participants will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Quotes may be used to illustrate the themes. However, every effort will be made to protect the identity of the participants in any printed text. All names, locations, or personal identifiers will be removed from the quotes. Your confidentiality will be held paramount at all times.

Anonymity:

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics. While your **interview will be** audio-recorded and transcribed upon your consent, all identifying information (e.g., names, school name) will be removed and codes/pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Although my thesis will not identify you or the school directly, informed readers may be able to identify comments made given the small sample size of participants. However, all precautions will be made to help ensure your identity is protected.

Recording of Data:

Permission for audio-recording is required for participants to participate in the study (checkbox is provided at the end of this form). Two audio-recorders will be placed on the table to record interviews.

Storage of Data:

Only Chris Borduas and his supervisor Dr. Erin Cameron will have direct access to the data during the study. Chris Borduas will assume the responsibility for data storage. All hardcopy data (e.g., transcripts) will be deemed confidential material and will be held in a locked filing cabinet within HKR qualitative analysis office at MUN. All electronic files (i.e., digital audio recordings, researcher notes) will be password protected and stored on an external hard drive that will be locked in a filing cabinet within the HKR qualitative analysis office. The digital recordings and transcripts will be stored separately from the master sheet identifying participant names, pseudonyms, and code numbers. If hardcopy data have electronic version, the data will be shredded after the completion of the study. Data will be kept for five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. After five years, all electronic data will be permanently removed from the external hard drive. Hardcopy data will be shredded by Chris Borduas.

Reporting of Results:

The data will be presented as common themes across participants that emerge from the transcripts. Quotes from the interviews will be used to illustrate the themes. Permission from the participant on using quotes is required for you to participate in the study (checkbox is provided at the end of this form). However, all names, locations, or personal identifiers will be removed from the quotes. The research findings will be presented in academic conference presentations and published in scholarly journals.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

Participants will have access to the research findings without having to contact the researcher once published publically. The results will be sent out by email to the participants and a link will also be posted to the HIPP (Health Innovation through Promotion and Practice) Collaborative and HKR websites where participants will be able to access the results. The results of this thesis will also be publically available at the QEII library at Memorial University.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Chris Borduas.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Informed Consent Form**Consent:**

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be destroyed.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to one month after the completion of your review of research findings.

I agree to participate in the study

Yes No

- I agree to participate in an interview Yes No
I agree to participate in email correspondence Yes No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your signature confirms:

- I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.
- I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.
- A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Signature of participant

Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter



Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant:

School of Human

Kinetics and Recreation

Chris Borduas, HBK, BEd,

MPE Candidate

Email: cjmb35@mun.ca

Erin Cameron, PhD

Email: ecameron@mun.ca

I am conducting research on the male experience in physical education. This project is in coordination with my thesis project for my Masters in Physical Education under the supervision of Dr. Erin Cameron. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project to share your experiences in physical education. This will support teachers to make physical education more inclusive and enjoyable for all.

For this specific study, I am looking to observe and talk to grade 9 male students who are involved in physical education. Participants will be asked to be observed 3 days per week for 8 weeks and partake in a semi-structured interview that would last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview would focus on the experiences of being a male in physical education, students' understandings of health, and how males interact in the physical education setting. Participants will also be able to have email correspondence with the researcher if they have any other ideas to share after the interview.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Participants may choose to decline or answer any question. If a student wants to talk to someone in more confidentiality, I will facilitate contact their school guidance counsellor. Participants may choose to withdraw from the study without repercussion. No identifying information will be used. The data collected from the interviews will only be viewed by the lead researcher and his supervisor, and will be securely stored in the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation at Memorial University for five years, at which point it will be destroyed. This study is not a school requirement and that the decision to participate, or not, will not affect the student's standing in the school or with the teacher(s).

This study will contribute to a growing body of literature in the areas of masculinity studies, physical education, and critical health studies. This study will benefit students and teachers by creating a better understanding of how male students in NL can make PE more safe and inclusive for all. The research will be presented at conferences, published in academic and non-academic journals. It is our hope that findings from this research study could help to guide further research in masculinity and critical health studies in physical education. Thank you for your consideration.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Interview Questions

1. What do you like most about physical education, what do you like the least?
2. What is a typical day of physical education like for you? (Prompts: Is it enjoyable? Is it sports-based? How often do you have health class?)
3. What does health mean? What does health mean to you?
4. What messages of health do you hear at school? (*Prompts: physical activity, diet, body weight*)
5. What does it mean to be a man? (Prompts: diet, exercise/sport, body type)
6. Are there masculinity hierarchies in your physical education classroom? Why? (Prompts: What causes males to display dominance over one another? Does the teacher stop this? Does it extend outside of the classroom?)
7. Does body weight play into the creation of masculinity hierarchies? (Prompts: Is the big body being seen as strong? Is the big body seen as fat? where is the divide?)
8. What would you like to see happen in physical education at your school? (Prompts: If there were no restriction and you could plan your own physical education class/course instead of your teacher, what would you like do?)

