Exploring Mechanisms of (Dis)Engagement in Health and Physical Education Class with Adolescent Boys

by:

Patrick Jachyra

Hon. B.P.H.E, University of Toronto (2012)

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Science
Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences
University of Toronto

©Copyright by Patrick Jachyra 2014
Exploring Mechanisms of (Dis)Engagement in Health and Physical Education Class with Adolescent Boys

Patrick Jachyra
Master of Science
Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences
University of Toronto
2014

Abstract
Currently, there remains a primitive understanding of the potential mechanisms that promote participation, disengagement and withdrawal in Health and Physical Education class (HPE) among adolescent boys. Of central concern then, and the foundation of this research, is to develop a substantive and theoretical understanding of the intersubjective and intrasubjective meanings ascribed to HPE among adolescent boys who are transitioning into their final year of institutionalized HPE in Ontario. Drawing from an ethnographic, grounded theory case study conducted at an independent elementary school for boys’, this research elucidates the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement from 15 adolescent boys (12-14 years of age) of varying physical abilities. In conjunction with Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital, habitus, practice and symbolic violence, it is proposed that a habitus of HPE (dis)engagement is formed through the reflexive observation, somatization and naturalization of the valorized forms of physical cultural capital in this particular social field.
Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the patience and understanding from students and teaching administration at the independent school. I would like to thank all the boys, teachers, research manager and school principal who were involved in this study one way or another. From our very first meeting, until the last day of fieldwork, thank you for expressing interest in my research and allowing me to dissect your lives on a daily basis. Without you, there would be no me.

I am forever grateful to my supervisor Dr. Michael Atkinson for his unwavering supervision, inspiration, support, mentorship, trust and countless reference letters over the years. Over the past five years under your tutelage you were a friend, supporter, co-author and guidance counselor when things seemed like they were about to derail. A simple follow-up email during the undergraduate research methods course spawned my interest and desire to carry out research as an undergraduate student and ultimately guided me toward graduate studies under your tutelage. My capabilities as a researcher have immeasurably improved and have actively prepared me for the next stages of my academic career. Your keen sociological eye and work in the trenches defying institutional barriers to allow me to begin this master’s program on time is a testament to your commitment to the students who you take under your wing. I thank you for always encouraging me to dig deeper; guiding me beyond standard master’s level expectations. It was an honour and a blessing in every sense of the word to have worked with you all these years. The skills I’ve learned and your friendship throughout is something that cannot be measured in any research paradigm. Although we will likely never agree about your fanaticism of the Habs, I will put this meagre difference between us, on the back burner.
I would also like to thank my always accessible and supportive committee members Dr. Caroline Fusco, Dr. Margaret MacNeill and Dr. Jackie Button for their guidance, insights and knowledge approaching my research from multidimensional perspectives. Many thanks go out to my external examiner Dr. Philip White for your thought provoking questions that stimulated a healthy discussion during the thesis defence. I would like to extend an honourable mention to the Dean of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education Dr. Ira Jacobs for establishing the research partnership with the independent boys’ school, which enabled me to carry out this research study. Your support of this project and the support of my future academic endeavours through our random career talks is sincerely appreciated. Lastly, thank you to Dr. Scott Thomas who was never a doubting Thomas and was able to shed light on a tunnel that seemed extremely bleak in the summer of 2012. I can always hold you in high esteem for your cordiality and assistance when graduate school plans seemed like they were going to be a distant reality.

I would also like to acknowledge my now lifelong friend and future collaborator Yosuke Washiya. Thank you for engaging in our frequent discussions and debates about Bourdieu, Elias, Goffman and Foucault as we tumultuously worked through these theorists together trying to make sense of our own research. Your support as my ‘older brother’ and mentor reflects our friendship that flourished instantly during graduate school orientation. Thanks to Kass Gibson who was always willing to discuss any and all thoughts I had about research, even as a wee little undergrad. Your support along the way progressing as an undergraduate student in your class, through to completing and extending research beyond this thesis, speaks to your great ability to encourage and mentor students along the way. Special thanks to my friends over the last two
years who put up my transient presence in their lives and were supportive of the work that I was doing.

Lastly, but never the least, my family. A few measly lines here cannot express your importance in my life. I thank you for your endless faith in me, which inspired me to pursue further education. Thank you for instilling a love for education, questioning and further inquiry in life. Even when I didn’t know a lick of English as a young boy, I still vividly recall my parents teaching me a Polish proverb that the encouraged further education “Ucz się ucz, bo nauka to potęgi klucz”. Little did I know that you were instilling a cultural capital that valued and emphasized education in its own right; which definitely had a role in getting me to where I am today. I thank you for taking me Polish school and enrolling me in French immersion classes through school as it now all seems worth it in the end. The French came in particularly handy when I was trying to understand Pierre Bourdieu as he made much more conceptual and empirical sense to me in French, than he did in English. Throughout all of these years of schooling, never did I dream of entering, let alone completing graduate school. Even though half the time you probably never really were aware of what I was doing on a daily basis, all of you some way, somehow, encouraged me to further pry open the academic envelope. Your unconditional love and support as parents and siblings enabled me to keep motoring along. For this, I am eternally grateful. To my youngest brother Sebe who will always be my baby brother, this thesis is for you, as you pursue your own schooling interests and defy standard educational expectations.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. iii
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................... ix
List of Appendices .................................................................................................................... ix
Summary of Chapters ............................................................................................................. x
Preface ......................................................................................................................................... xiii

## CHAPTER 1 ................................................................................................................................. 1

1.01 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
1.02 Research Purpose and Research Setting ............................................................................ 7

## CHAPTER 2 ................................................................................................................................. 11

2.01 Review of Literature ......................................................................................................... 11
  2.02 What is Transition? ........................................................................................................... 12
  2.03 Transition in Educational Settings .................................................................................. 14
  2.04 Transition, Dropout and HPE ......................................................................................... 16
  2.05 Rates of Participation and Attrition in Ontario Secondary School HPE ...................... 17
  2.06 Retaining Participants in HPE ....................................................................................... 18
  2.07 Factors Influencing HPE Withdrawal Among Girls and Boys .................................... 20
  2.08 Negative HPE Experiences and Withdrawal among Girls ........................................... 21
  2.09 Femininity, HPE Participation and Lack thereof. .......................................................... 21
  2.10 Masculinity Theory ......................................................................................................... 23
  2.11 Masculinity Theory and HPE ......................................................................................... 26
  2.12 Independent Schools, Masculinity and HPE ................................................................. 29

## CHAPTER 3 ................................................................................................................................. 31

3.01 Epistemological Positioning and Theoretical Background ............................................. 31
  3.02 Epistemological Orientation ............................................................................................ 31
  3.03 Bourdieu’s Conceptual Tools: An Overview of Embodied Subjectivities ....................... 34
  3.04 Field .................................................................................................................................. 36
  3.05 Capital ............................................................................................................................... 39
  3.06 Physical Cultural Capital .................................................................................................. 46
  3.07 Habitus ................................................................................................................................ 54
List of Tables

1. Table 1: Phases of fieldwork- p.80
2. Table 2: Participant demographics- p. 115

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics approval- p. 223
Appendix B: Informed consent/assent forms- p.225
Appendix C: Interview guide- p.228
Summary of Chapters

By way of introduction into this thesis, the preface outlines three separate yet concatenated detailed experiences in Health and Physical Education (HPE) as a former lifelong student, a teacher/coach in a teacher education program and now a researcher in the field. I very briefly examine current iterations of HPE and encourage the reader to actively question the ubiquitous challenges surrounding boys, bodies and pedagogies.

In the first chapter, I introduce the thesis as a whole, outlining the socio-political dimensions of the apparent ‘childhood obesity epidemic’ and how HPE has been championed as the space and place to tackle this ‘vile disease of modernity’. In particular, the first chapter highlights a dearth of HPE research that has been conducted with boys both in elementary and secondary educational contexts. Using relevant literature on boys’ participation and attrition in Ontario HPE, I build a case for studying the heeding relationships between boys, HPE, gender and transition as empirical points of departure that delve into understanding the potential mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement.

In the second chapter, I overview and amalgamate the literature in the field as it relates to boys’ participation in HPE. Drawing from sociology, educational psychology and exercise psychology literature at times, I interrogate the interconnections between schooling practices, the role of transition and HPE participation. In addition, the second chapter provides a contextual understanding of the HPE climate in Ontario (Canada) and identifies some of the factors that promote engagement and or withdrawal from HPE among boys and girls. As a mechanism that concomitantly invites yet dissuades participation in HPE, chapter two delves into theories of gender as it relates to HPE participation among both girls and boys. Given that this study was
conducted at an independent boys’ school, there is a significant emphasis on literature that draws on theories of masculinity in scholastic, sporting and physical cultural environments.

The third chapter explores the epistemological, philosophical and theoretical structures that guided the design, interpretation, analysis and representation of data that is presented in this thesis. Furthermore, the third chapter outlines Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital, habitus, practice and symbolic violence which are used to gain insight into the daily contingencies of boys who participated in institutionalized HPE at the independent boys’ school. Lastly, this chapter introduces the novel concept of \textit{physical cultural capital}; an integrated conceptual tool that emerged from the data. As a major finding in this study that is explained in detail in Chapter Four and Five respectively, it is proposed that one’s ability to accrue, mobilize and convert \textit{physical cultural capital} during elementary school plays a fundamental role in creating a habitus of HPE (dis)engagement.

The fourth chapter is the methodology chapter. The chapter should be seen as two unified discussions detailing research methodology from a conceptual standpoint at the outset, followed by an in-depth discussion regarding the methods of data collection and analysis. In the first section, I unravel a lengthy and nuanced discussion positioning that a grounded theory, participant observation based methodological approach was best suited for the exploration of the central questions posed in this research. Throughout the chapter, I explicitly outline how the research methodologies that were selected align with the epistemological and theoretical position of this research study. Illustrated through detailed narrative writing, the second portion of the chapter delves into the specific research methods that were implemented in this study. More concretely, the chapter outlines the three phases of participant observation, recruitment of
participants, the active interviewing technique, post-interview strategies and the process of simultaneous data interpretation and analysis.

In chapter five, elucidating the intersubjective and intrasubjective meanings that were ascribed to HPE, I present the mechanisms which I believe are associated with HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys of varying physical abilities at the independent boys’ school. As three separate yet concatenated sections of the chapter, this chapter presents a case to argue that within the deeply engrained HPE practices located in this particular social field, through the observation, somatization and naturalization of the valorized forms of physical cultural capital in HPE, adolescent boys actively (re)produce dispositions (habitus) toward participation, disengagement and or withdrawal. Elicited through the active interviewing technique and drawing from elementary school HPE experiences, this chapter concludes with reflexive accounts provided from the boys’ regarding their anticipated participation in secondary school HPE.

As the final and concluding chapter, chapter six recapitulates the research project as a whole and is centred on three objectives. The first objective is to provide a final analysis and discussion about the role of physical cultural capital in the formation of a habitus toward HPE (dis)engagement and the anticipated participation in secondary school HPE. Secondly this chapter addresses the major contributions of this thesis both at the substantive and theoretical level. The third and final task of this chapter is to provide recommendations for HPE practice at TBS, acknowledge the inherent study limitations of this current research project and outline opportunities for future research.
Preface

The impetus for this research study stems from my experience as a student in a Physical and Health Concurrent Teacher Education Program (CTEP), and my own experiences as a student in HPE from junior kindergarten through to grade 12. After completing three years of the teacher preparation program and while preparing for my fourth year, I realized that my appreciation and creativity for teaching was defunct. While I absolutely loved working with children and youth on a daily basis, I had many unresolved qualms and questions about teacher preparation; specifically, the curriculum itself in Ontario and the dominant pedagogies that often reflected a very narrow conceptualization of a healthy, active and socially responsible body. Reflecting on my CTEP experiences as I wrote this thesis, I developed apathy toward teaching HPE and continually questioned whether I was a misfit in CTEP. While technically I can be considered a teachers’ college dropout, my unresolved tensions allowed me delve into this salient area of research exploring how children and youth enjoy and experience HPE in the wake of an apparent global ‘obesity crisis and epidemic’.

Reminiscing about my own experience in HPE as a taller and larger child in the class (and by today’s metrics, I would be measured obese at the time), I remember the baseball diamond, school gymnasium and hockey arena as being my happy place. Although these spaces were hustling and bustling with bodies on the prowl in every sense of the word, it was there that I found a sense of purpose, unification and inner peace. Thinking reflexively, perhaps I found traits of inner peace in this space (despite my body size and the regular body shaming that took place during elementary school) because I was able to learn and execute the desired movement patterns with relative ease. In totality, despite some of these negative experiences, HPE was a staple in my life and I participated up until my graduation from secondary school. During my
senior (grade 11 and 12) years, I even enlisted and participated in HPE even though I was eligible to have a ‘spare’ period. In hindsight, HPE provided me with many fond memories and mostly positive experiences. But it wasn’t my own personal experiences that ‘turned me on’ to initially enrolling in teacher education. It was a personal connection I established with one of the participants in the class who ironically enough was in all my HPE classes during secondary school and who came out to watch me play baseball each and every single time we played at our home diamond during secondary school.

His name was Paul (a pseudonym), he was short in stature, had glasses, was in educational classes in a segregated learning environment and was full of life with a smile almost exclusively on his face. To this day, I see him at times and we share some of our fondest memories together; but we also have a difficult time forgetting some of the problematic, androcentric experiences that have traumatizing effects to this day. Two incidents play back in my mind as if they happened yesterday during our grade nine and grade eleven classes respectively. The first entailed Paul’s subjection to daily and repeated instances of verbal, physical and emotional bullying that occurred both in the gymnasium and in the changing room. He was typically ridiculed for being effeminate (generally weak, being soft spoken and playing sports like a ‘girl’) and having a lackluster ability in the sports that were taught at our secondary school. While it appeared that all teachers and students in the class were cognisant of these repeated instances of taunting and bullying, rarely did anyone intervene to try and stop this overtly damaging behaviour.

The second incident occurred when we were running around the gym ‘doing laps’, which is a stereotypical HPE warm-up. The teacher was not in the gymnasium at that time, and one of the dominant athletic boys took full advantage of his absence. As we were approaching the far end of
the gymnasium behind the basketball hoop, a student body checked Paul (hockey style) into the gymnasium side wall. As he lay on the floor devastated about what just happened, he had tears dripping down the side of his face and his broken glasses in his hands. Because there was no teacher in sight during this incident, the perpetrator of this act thought he would get away with his miscreant behaviour. However it was at that moment that the cogs in my brain started spinning and I stood up to the perpetrator and defended Paul, getting in a physical scuffle in the gymnasium. Nearly ten years later, these two particular incidents continue to resonate with me because they defy all standard logics of HPE participation, disengagement and withdrawal. Why would a non-dominant boy who clearly was subjected to repeated instances of bullying, taunting and abuse, continually participate in HPE if he, institutionally, was no longer required to do so?

From Paul’s story detailing some of his negative experiences in secondary school HPE, I conclude two things. The first being that despite the fact that HPE remains a hostile space and place for boys whose expressions of gender and physicality do not measure up to the valorized notions of a fit, (hetero)masculine, active healthy body, non-dominant adolescent boys naturally are not lazy and in fact seek opportunities to participate in HPE, sport and physical culture. The second conclusion also relates to the findings of this study whereby I propose that despite the abusive behaviour Paul experienced, boys of all physical abilities can find pleasurable aspects of HPE that contribute to their health and well-being if we (teachers, academics and policy makers) allow them to do so.

The purpose of this introspection is not to try to position myself as a hero or to confess how my ‘hegemonic’ gender expressions and social characteristics may have privileged me as a life-long student in HPE. It is to highlight and critically (re)evaluate the purpose of HPE in schools altogether; particularly at a time when rates of HPE participation among adolescent boys
continue to decrease, concurrent with increasing concerns surrounding an ‘apparent childhood obesity epidemic’. Based on the findings from this study, I would like to extend an invitation to children, youth, teachers, coaches, parents, academics and curricula designers alike to recognize and seriously consider how we teach HPE to boys of all physical and social abilities. The following discussion regarding the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among a group of fifteen adolescent boys constructed here is not meant to be a perfect or universalizing panacea for combatting the apparent ‘childhood obesity epidemic’. It is a piece of deep, rigorous methodological and conceptual research that aims to provoke critical discussion surrounding boys, bodies and pedagogies in schools. Before I culminate this preface, I leave you asking:

Since HPE is a human construct, ought we design and implement it to reflect the broader physical and social needs of all of its participants?
CHAPTER 1

1.01 Introduction

Epidemiological statistics in Canada and around the world suggest that childhood obesity is increasing and physical activity among children and adolescents is declining (Active Healthy Kids, 2013). Furthermore bio-medical health reports correlate declining levels of physical activity with obesity and the onset of several acute and chronic health complications (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; World Health Organization, 2000a). With mounting global ‘moral panic’ (Evans, Rich, Davies & Allwood, 2008) about childhood obesity and physical inactivity, policy analysts, parents and educational stakeholders have championed Health and Physical Education (HPE) in schools as a potential panacea to increase physical activity levels and combat the ‘childhood obesity epidemic’ (Gard, 2010; Gard & Wright, 2005; VanderShee & Gard, 2014). Concurrently, while schools have been charged with the task of increasing rates of childhood obesity in the wake of an apparent ‘childhood obesity epidemic’, a dominant governing logic of conceptualizing and pathologizing childhood obesity as a disease has emerged from a positivist, bio-medical research paradigm and has made its incursion into schools and curricula in westernized and industrialized countries.

Situated within this current neo-liberal childhood obesity climate, increasingly, critical physical education and physical cultural scholars are interrogating the explicit and tacit discourses of healthism (Crawford, 1980), biopedagogies (Kirk, 2006; Tinning & Glasby, 2002), the construction of play-based learning, HPE curricula, and physical activity in schools as interventions on the bodies of young people that have become health-based and medicalized (Alexander, Frohlich & Fusco, 2012; Burrows & Wright, 2001, 2004, 2007; Evans, Davis & Wright, 2004; Frohlich, Alexander & Fusco, 2012; Gard & Kirk, 2007; Gard & Wright, 2005;
Jachyra, 2013; Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson, 2014; Jachyra & Fusco, 2014; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010; MacNeill & Rail, 2010; Petherick, 2012; Rich & Evans, 2009). Under surveillance for its adherence to neo-liberalism’s new health imperatives in schools (Rich, 2011; Rich & Perhamus, 2010), HPE has been critiqued for actively teaching children and youth at this particular time to take charge of their bodies as tools to “help students develop an understanding of what they need in order to make a commitment to lifelong healthy, active living and develop the capacity to live satisfying, productive lives” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a, p. 4). It was not surprising then, and in response to the ‘childhood obesity epidemic’ that the Ontario Ministry of Education implemented the Daily Physical Activity program in schools (see Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005), a new play-based learning curriculum with several active based learning components (Jachyra & Fusco, 2014), and a revision of the elementary school HPE curriculum in order to use HPE, sport and physical activity as the means for disease prevention and intervention (exercise as medicine perspective). While the purpose of my research was not an examination of the ontology of obesity, I acknowledge that others have actively disputed the social construction of the obesity epidemic (see Campos, 2004, 2006; Gard, 2010; Gard & Wright, 2005; Oliver, 2006; Oliver & Lalik, 2004; Rail, 2012; Rail, Holmes & Murray, 2010). However the current scholastic conceptualization of the ‘childhood obesity epidemic’ inherently has significant implications for children and youth, as HPE serves as an important social arena that teaches young people how to understand, discipline, control and instrumentalize their bodies to achieve neo-liberal promises of health and well-being throughout the life course.

Interestingly although HPE has been championed to counter the declining levels of physical activity among children and youth and to prevent and intervene on childhood obesity as a disease of modernity (Jachyra, 2013), rather than inviting and inciting active participation,
research conducted in Canadian and in international secondary school settings have suggested that HPE in fact may be dissuading both boys and girls onto the fringes of HPE (Barr-Anderson et al, 2008; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Ennis, 1996; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Garrett, 2004; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010; van Daalen, 2005). International research conducted with both male and female youth (individuals older than 14 years of age) suggests that unfavourable and memorable negative HPE experiences are likely associated with physical inactivity during adolescence and are also related to physical inactivity during adulthood (Allender, Cowburn & Foster, 2006; Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012; Carlson, 1995; Ennis 1996; Thompson, Humber, & Mirwald, 2003; van Daalen, 2005; Wellard, 2009). As a result, it appears that the HPE formative years during elementary school (4-13 years of age) may have a significant impact on establishing the physical, social, emotional and mental groundwork for participation in sport and physical culture(s) during secondary school and throughout the life course more broadly.

While there is a prevailing belief that early life experiences in sport, physical cultures and HPE may influence physical activity patterns later on in life (O’Reilly, Tompkins & Gallant, 2001; Strean 2009), there is little empirical evidence supporting this cultural ideology because overwhelmingly, much of the research conducted in this area is based on retrospective accounts of HPE experiences from mature adolescents and adults (see Allender, Cowburn & Foster, 2006; Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012; Carlson, 1995; Ennis 1996; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010; Thompson, Humber, & Mirwald, 2003; van Daalen, 2005). Thus, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding children’s and young adolescent’s experiences of contemporary HPE. It would be irresponsible of me to assume that there is no literature on the enjoyment and social experiences of HPE during elementary school for this research (see Baron & Downrey, 2007; Brustad, 1993; Cairney et al., 2012; Fox, 1991; Mandigo & Couture,1996; Motl et al., 2001; Portman, 1995;
Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000; Silverman & Subramaniam, 1999; Trost et al., 1997).

However, these previous research studies have typically used positivist, psychological accounts of attitudes and barriers toward HPE participation without taking into account the various socio-contextual factors that actively mediate HPE participation.

One of the socio-contextual factors that actively mediates HPE participation is gender. As a social construct, gender (and masculinity in particular) powerfully dictates physically active behaviours, health practices and the (re)conceptualization of one’s own body in HPE, sport and physical culture (World Health Organization, 2000b). While the social scientific research interrogating the intersectionalities of the body, gender and discourses of fitness and fatness with older adolescents and adults continues to proliferate, as noted by Kehler & Atkinson (2010), at best, there is limited and spotted research on boys, bodies and masculinities. Moreover, Renold (2007) proposes:

There is a lack of research that scrutinizes the specificities of age and generational dynamics in the formation of young masculinities or that fully problematizes the appropriateness of adopting adult-defined notions of hegemonic masculinity to make sense of young boys’ construction of ‘boyness’ (p. 276).

There is a dearth of research that has investigated the complicated relationship between gender, body image, health practices and HPE participation among young boys and adolescents, which has particular implications for boys because boys are more likely become overweight and or obese (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2007; Flegal, 1999, Fox, 2004). Additionally Canadian data consistently suggests that boys demonstrate higher rates of attrition in physical activity and sport participation in comparison to their female counterparts (Active Healthy Kids, 2013). Not only are rates of attrition in sport participation progressively rising, but boys in Ontario secondary schools are also increasingly turning away from HPE as
soon as they are, institutionally, allowed to do so (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). Yet, there still remains a limited understanding of the potential mechanisms that may promote disengagement and withdrawal, rather than active participation in HPE among boys. Accounting for the paucity of research in this area, there is a pressing need to examine and understand boys’ experiences in contemporary HPE (van Dallen, 2005) and how they understand their own body size and shape (Wright & Burrows, 2004) at the height of an apparent ‘global obesity epidemic’.

The purpose of conducting my research is not to reproduce studies on HPE’s adherence to neo-liberalism’s new health imperatives in schools (Rich, 2011; Rich & Perhamus, 2010) or to combat the ‘war on childhood obesity’, but to rather formulate a discussion that centres around creating spaces and places that support the overall health and well-being of boys of all shapes, sizes and physical abilities in HPE. Acknowledging Swain’s (2006), van Dallen’s (2005) and Wright and Burrows (2004) call for more empirical research regarding the intersections of masculinity and HPE participation among boys, this thesis goes some way to answer that call by providing contextual accounts surrounding the conceptualization, negotiation and performance of masculinities as a mechanism of HPE (dis)engagement and participation in elementary school HPE.

Further, the direction and purpose of this study was to provide a nuanced discussion regarding HPE experiences from boys in the ‘here and the now’. Scholars exploring narratives of HPE withdrawal among both girls and boys have typically employed retrospective and life history approaches (see Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012; Atkinson & Kehler, 2010; Strean, 2009) among secondary school students and adult participants. While I acknowledge that these previous research endeavours are of tremendous value to the HPE literature informing knowledge, practice and curricular policies, by exploring and contextualizing HPE experiences
as they happen, I am afforded an opportunity to delve further into the mechanisms and temporal contemplations of HPE (dis)engagement as they ‘naturally’ occur in the field.

With the ‘here and the now’ perspective in mind, the transition between formative education in elementary and secondary school serves as a significant point of departure for all students in their educational journeys. Hunter (2004) remarks that the transition between elementary and secondary school (particularly in HPE) is a time marked by several visible physical (puberty) and invisible changes (such as the [re]formation of identities) that can have durable consequences; including the participation in HPE, sport and physical activity in secondary school. Given the increasing rates of attrition among boys in Ontario secondary school HPE, examining experiences from adolescent boys’ in elementary school as they transition into their final year of institutionalized HPE in Ontario can potentially provide significant insight into understanding whether the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement are consistent with or differ from the experiences reported by secondary school boys. What remains to be investigated and the purpose of this research then, is the unique opportunity to empirically pursue and conceptually develop the mechanisms that invite and incite HPE (dis)engagement among elementary school boys of all physical abilities as they transition into secondary school. As a knowledge translation effort, these findings should add to the HPE knowledge base to inform teaching practice and curricular policy both in elementary and secondary school. Ultimately this research is concerned with advocating for the re-conceptualization of HPE in an effort to meet the diverse needs and health and well-being of all boys who peregrinate the nooks and crannies of HPE.
1.02 Research Purpose and Research Setting

By providing a contextual in-depth understanding and analysis of contemporary HPE, the purpose of this thesis is to present, describe and critically assess the elementary school HPE experiences of adolescent boys located from in one elementary school in Toronto. Since this research was a grounded theory, ethnographic study, at the conclusion of the first phase of fieldwork, the following questions were by developed to guide the purpose of the research.

1. Based on elementary school HPE experiences, what are the mechanisms that invite and or incite HPE (dis) engagement among adolescent boys who are transitioning into their final year of compulsory secondary school HPE in Ontario? How do one’s elementary school HPE experiences relate to their anticipated participation in secondary school HPE?
2. How are practices of masculinity constructed, negotiated and performed in HPE at this particular school?
3. How might practices of masculinity at a single gendered, all boys independent school relate to the enjoyment and experience of HPE among boys of all abilities?
4. Taking into account the research space, the teachers therein and the study participants, what might an integrated sociological/theoretical model of HPE participation look like and how might it be utilised by educational stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, curriculum designers/policy makers and coaches?

The research was carried out at an independent single gendered elementary school (Junior Kindergarten to Grade eight) for boys in Toronto, Ontario (Canada). To maintain the confidentiality of students and teachers, the independent school will be referred to as The Toronto Boys School (TBS). Strictly based on my own observation and not from data obtained from administrative staff at TBS, the majority of students were Caucasian, while some boys were representative of non-white ethnic backgrounds. With tuition in excess of $ 25,000 per annum, TBS students represent an exclusive population of boys who likely are from families with upper-middle and high incomes in terms of their socio-economic status. It is necessary to note however
that TBS also offers financial aid to students from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds as the school strives to have a more diverse student body. As such, I was not aware of the proportion of fee-paying students in relation to those students who were receiving financial aid. While there may be a potential relationship between socio-economic status and the enjoyment and experience of HPE at TBS, in order to protect the confidentiality of students, this information was not sought.

As is commonplace in most independent/private schools, when students become members of the school community, they are sorted into a house system. At TBS, all students from Junior Kindergarten (JK) to grade eight are members of either the Gretzky, Crosby, Sakic, or Forsberg house respectively (all pseudonyms). Each student also receives a colour specific t-shirt that demarcates their allegiance to and membership of that particular house. Showcasing pride and solidarity in their particular house membership, throughout the school year, students compete at various school gatherings such as the TBS Olympics, house games, school assemblies and pep rallies to accumulate house points. When speaking to the school principal about the house system, he proudly remarked that the curricular framework in place had specifically been developed to provide the boys with a sense of belonging, camaraderie, school spirit, ‘healthy’ competition and opportunities for leadership. The house system then is deeply engrained in the school culture, in the academic and co-curricular program at TBS, and, it closely intersects with HPE, sport and physical activity.

Among the independent schools in Toronto, TBS is widely known for its academic excellence with a strong focus on teaching academic numeracy and literacy skills for boys during their formative years. In addition to its goal to strive toward academic excellence, TBS prides itself in its dedicated focus on HPE, sport and physical activity, which occurs through
competitive school sports, intramural sports and mini intra-curricular tournaments organized by
HPE teachers. During a typical school week, students at TBS participate in HPE at least twice a
week and depending on the rotating school schedule, students can participate in HPE class up to
three times a week. The overt focus on HPE, sport and physical activity is accentuated by the
fact that the school bodes state of the art athletic facilities. Specifically, a large gymnasium with
lots of sporting equipment, cardiovascular training equipment such as tread mills, stationary
bikes and rowing machines, a rock climbing wall located in the gymnasium, an outdoor tennis
court and a large outdoor field that typically is used for soccer, rugby, football, softball.

What sets TBS apart from other independent and public schools is that fact there are two
HPE specialist teachers in every class. One teacher takes the ‘lead’ in the class while the other
actively facilitates instruction and HPE programming. At the time of my research, in total, there
were three male and one female teacher who taught HPE at TBS and the programming was
largely centred on cardiovascular and muscular endurance. For example, each and every class at
all grade levels commenced with an interval based run at different speeds. Here the boys ran
forwards, backwards, side to side, and at times jumped over obstacles such as benches. This
warm-up run always included sprinting the length of the gymnasium when instructed by one of
the teachers to go ‘hard’. Interestingly, during the warm-up run, teachers reminded students that
they would be ‘rewarded’ for their hard work and effort by running quickly around the makeshift
indoor track of the gymnasium. The reward during the warm-up run was to jog slowly on the
outer part of the track while other students were sprinting during the interval based portion of the
run. These warm-up runs around the gymnasium typically lasted anywhere between seven and
thirteen minutes for all HPE classes. At times, the amount of running time was shortened by
teachers when it appeared that the entire class was running and participating at a vigorous
intensity. In contrast however, when students were not paying attention to teachers and did not appear to exhibit hard physical effort during the run, more time was added. As such, the total amount of running time varied between each class, depending on students’ effort on a given day. Following the completion of the warm up run, students more often than not were sweating and breathing heavily, which is not surprising given their challenging aerobic and anaerobic musculoskeletal and cardiovascular systems workout.

In addition to these interval based warm up runs, students between grades three and eight (8-13 years of age) engaged in monthly fitness testing (the mile run, maximum push-ups and maximum sit-ups). These fitness results were charted at the end of each testing competency and all boys were strongly encouraged to physically exert themselves further in order to try to achieve a higher degree of physical fitness. Particularly among the grade 8 boys, (the group of boys most widely represented in this study) the mile run times were compared among peers and former TBS students who held the records for this battery of fitness tests. This pedagogical focus on physical fitness at TBS is perhaps best accentuated by the fact that one day a week was always devoted for fitness specific training prior to the HPE lesson. As such, the boys went from one station to another (resembling circuit fitness training) completing the exercise that was designated at that particular station. While there was some variation in the fitness activities between the JK class and the grade eight class, the exercises for the most part were the same and included: abdominal muscular endurance (planks), agility training, muscular strength training and endurance training of the upper (push-ups) and lower (squats, lunges) limbs of the body. Among the younger boys (between JK-three), the fitness training circuit included climbing on the rock wall and pulling one’s body weight across the wooden benches that are most typically found in gymnasium.
In terms of the curricular program at TBS, as in most HPE classes in both independent and public schools, sports and low organizational games were employed to achieve curricular outcomes with students. ‘Traditional’ sports dominate HPE, which include: soccer, football, basketball, ball hockey, volleyball, badminton, European handball, t-ball/softball and at times dodge ball. Interestingly from the analysis of the HPE curriculum at TBS, while there were slight variations in activities, nearly all of the same sports were taught to the boys year after year. It should be noted however that intermediate students (grades seven and eight) received a sport elective whereby the boys have an opportunity to sample less common HPE activities at TBS such as: cricket, yoga, field hockey and cross-fit. From the context of this particular school and HPE environment, and given the dearth of research regarding the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among boys in elementary school, I anticipated that conducting research at a single gendered all boys school would afford me with a unique opportunity to develop a nuanced theoretical and substantive understanding of boys’ experiences in contemporary HPE.

CHAPTER 2

2.01 Review of Literature

In this chapter, the review of literature further demonstrates the need to conduct research on boys, bodies and pedagogies. Drawing from sociological, educational psychology and exercise psychology literature at times, I delve into the interrelationships of scholastic transition, the rates of participation and withdrawal in Ontario, the factors that are associated with enjoyment of HPE among both boys and girls, and the factors that have been linked to the disengagement from HPE among both boys and girls. This review of literature is concluded by discussing how gender as a social construction actively mediates one’s participation in HPE, sport and physical culture.
2.02 What is Transition?

The critical interactions between social experiences and social structures serve as trajectories that (re)shape children and youth as they traverse and construct meaning of the social world. Marked by various social and biological changes, these liminal points in life and or “rite de passage” (Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan, 1996, p.16) therefore serve as significant points of departure typically associated with the process of ‘growing up’. Current dominant, normative, biological and psychological conceptualizations of a ‘successful’ transition in research and practice are typically described as a linear and uninterrupted process. It is socially expected that children and youth will attend elementary school, transition into secondary school, transition into post-secondary education and then again transition into the work force without encountering any challenges or road blocks along the way. Hargreaves et al. (1996) describes three rites of passage that are ‘supposed’ to be present for all young people as they traverse the social world between elementary school and secondary school (in Ontario usually between the ages of 13-15 years).

These being:

1. The physical and cultural passage of adolescence itself that we call puberty;
2. The informal passage within and between peer cultures and friendship groups where different kinds of relationships are experienced and expected;
3. The formal passage between two different kinds of institutions, with different regulations, curriculum demands and teacher expectations (p.18).

Interestingly sport and HPE parallel the normative and biological understandings of scholastic transition. It is assumed that children will proceed through the rite of passage and continue to participate in sport as their bio-physical bodies (Synnott, 1993) undergo maturation into adulthood (Swain, 2006). However this biological categorical tension and social disjuncture of becoming and transitioning toward adulthood does not take into account the complex nexus of (dis)continuing habitual practices that structure the lives of children and youth. Wright and
Laverty (2010) contend that periods of transition and physical activity participation could be understood as “complex and situated, as embedded in social processes and structures, which have sustained effects on the decisions young people make and how they think about themselves in their lives” (p.136). As such in relation to this study, I came to understand transition as a complicated yet interconnected liminal point in the life course that is inculcated with several psycho-social developments and continual periods of exploration. In the sense of exploration, social agents attempt to make sense of their body, their gender and the social world on a daily basis. For girls and boys then, transitions are multi-layered, temporal, embedded in neo-existentialist social process and can vary between individuals, even if they are in the same social spaces. Pais (2000) suggests:

People travel through life on paths which double back on themselves, as a burden on the back of the travelers: the paths become their luggage, their acquired capital… The trajectories of young people are therefore more than just personal life stories. They reflect social processes and structures (p. 219).

The burgeoning trend to conduct research on transition between formal education and the transition into the workforce comes at a time when many children and youth in Ontario are staying in school and transitioning into the workforce later in life. Recognizing the role of transitions in the life course, the Government of Ontario has devoted increased attention and resources to facilitate ‘successful’ transitions. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education has an entire webpage, review of literature, fact sheet and transition program guide to encourage a smooth transition between elementary school and secondary school (see Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011). How one transition’s not only has potential academic and future employment implications but can also impact one’s overall health and well-being. Particularly among individuals with disabilities, the transition into adulthood has been identified as a significant predictor of subsequent health behaviours and health outcomes as individuals diagnosed with
progressive degenerative health conditions (such as muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis) are living longer lives (Gibson et al., 2014). Notably, Berge et al. (2007), Powers et al. (2008) and Willis et al. (2001) note that lower wages for young women, gendered vocational training and an increased likelihood for young men to seek risk-taking experiences and behaviours all have significant health implications during school transitions. As a result of these intrapersonal and interpersonal points of contention, periods of transition serve as an important and potential time to disrupt or adopt new habitual social and or health practices. For example, some individuals may choose to explore and participate in novel physical cultures or they may cease to participate in sport, HPE and physical culture altogether if they are no longer institutionally required to do so. In contrast however, and more prevalent among young boys, the transition between elementary and secondary school can also be marked with experimentation and adoption of new social practices potentially harmful to overall health and well-being such as smoking and or alcohol/drug use and abuse (Health Canada, 2011; 2012). As such, the period of transition is not static but revolves around relationships with friends, family, teachers, as well as an individual’s own gendered identity, and their sexuality and physicality, which may result in the adoption and or resistance of previous participation in HPE and physical culture.

2.03 Transition in Educational Settings

As outlined above, the predominant biological and psychological underpinnings of transition literature (Hunter, 2004) inherently assumes that all adolescents transitioning from elementary to secondary school will experience a ‘successful transition’. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010b) adolescents who experience a ‘successful transition’ into secondary school positively identify with their new school environment, they participate in extra-scholastic activities, they feel as if they belong in that space, they develop positive identities, they develop
good attitudes toward themselves and their friends, they are supported by their families, and they continue to experience academic success in the new curriculum. However, because transitions are temporal and are specific to each and every social actor transcending these educational fields, not all adolescents experience a ‘successful transition’ and those that do not may experience a variety of challenges at any given point of the transition.

In the transition literature on elementary and secondary school, there are six recurring quintessential themes that identify potential issues with scholastic transfer. First transition is associated with concerns and anxieties, whereby students fear becoming lost in a new setting, not knowing peers, not being known by existing students at the school, a sense of potential isolation and personal anxieties that they will be targeted and bullied (Bond, Glover & Patton, 1999; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). Second, there may be a repetition of school-work that was assigned in elementary school and, some adolescents experience the onset of boredom toward education in general (School of Education, 2001). Third, transitioning students express perceived emotions of uncertainty with having to manage several core subjects (math, language, science), as there can be difficulty adjusting to new pedagogical strategies presented in the classroom (Gordon et al., 1999). Fourth, adolescents can experience a plateau and or a drop in their academic progression, achievement and or learning (Sutton, 2000) if they are no longer challenged at the appropriate academic level. Fifth, there may be discontinuity in the education curriculum (Sutton, 2000) and finally, there may be increased experiences of disengagement, alienation and marginalization from school and learning altogether (Hargreaves et al., 1996) because of the increase in the number of students in secondary school. From the aforementioned literature, the purpose of highlighting the tenets of a ‘successful’ and or challenging transition is to demonstrate that the transition from elementary to secondary
school is a dynamic, yet very complex social process. Although transition typically is only associated with academic implications, as I demonstrate below, this liminal point in the life course more has implications specifically for anticipated HPE participation among adolescents in secondary school.

2.04 Transition, Dropout and HPE

The transition years between elementary and secondary school have been identified as a point in time where students’ attitudes toward schooling can stagnate and or decline since secondary school becomes a much more academically demanding environment (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Jackson and Warin (2000) also propose that the transition between elementary and secondary school plays a formative role in the development and (re)creation of one’s identity and a positive sense of self. One’s identity and self-esteem in turn have been identified as significant predictors associated with drop-out from secondary school altogether (Eccles, Lord & Roeser, 1997). Increasingly, adolescent boys have become a cause for concern in education as they continually score low in areas of literacy and are more likely to fail classes (Canadian Employment and Social Development, 2014). Furthermore in Canada, the dropout rate from secondary school is consistently higher among boys than girls (Canadian Employment and Social Development, 2014) and there also are increasing levels of attrition from HPE among adolescent boys (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010). It is too simplistic to blame boys for their own academic challenges and increasing levels of HPE attrition because, the challenges of engaging and retaining young boys in HPE and in education more generally as they transition from elementary to secondary school may be related to the social structures and an overall lack of financial investments that currently are in place in schools. Swain (2006) notes that following the transition into secondary school HPE in the United Kingdom, HPE undergoes
a paradigm shift from play-based learning approaches to a much more structured and competitive level of instruction provided by specialist teachers. This structured and competitive sporting focus outwardly segregates boys based on their physical abilities (Swain, 2006). As in all subject areas, compared to their academically and sport inclined peers, boys who have difficulty keeping up with their peers and or passing standardized testing may be more prone to dropping out of secondary school (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b) and HPE altogether (Evans, 2004).

Moreover, the social and schooling practices that demand adherence to social expectations of performing a dominant masculinity both in elementary and secondary school can also influence one’s decision to withdraw from HPE as boys’ transition. As men converge toward a neo-existential ‘masculinity crisis’ (Atkinson, 2011), adolescent boys with low levels of self-esteem, increases in body image issues (Atkinson, 2011) and overall confusion of what a boy in this day and age is supposed to look, feel, sound and smell like, adolescent boys who transition into secondary school ostensibly face distinct social and HPE curricular challenges from both their peers and teachers. As proposed by Markula & Pringle (2006):

In the transition from boyhood, where few injuries occurred in rugby and all males were encouraged to participate, to teenage years where participation was no longer mandatory and rugby was played with greater physicality, rugby was discursively transformed from a ‘sport for all males’ to a ‘man’s sport’ (p.113).

Thus boys who do not perform boy ‘correctly’ are often marginalized in HPE and actively contemplate HPE withdrawal in secondary school as a result of their ‘deficits’ in masculinity, a masculinity that is inherently valorized in HPE and in the education system more broadly.

2.05 Rates of Participation and Attrition in Ontario Secondary School HPE

In Ontario, the HPE curriculum mandates that students must participate from grades one to nine (see Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a). Once students achieve the ‘mandatory’ HPE
course credit in grade nine, they are no longer obliged to participate in scholastic HPE. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the steepest rates of decline in secondary school HPE participation occurs between grades nine and ten among both boys and girls. In a 1998 Ontario study, it was reported that HPE participation decreased from 95% enrollment in HPE to 63% between grades nine and ten (Allison & Adlaf, 2000). More telling a 2006 study reported that HPE enrolment decreased from 97.9% in grade nine to 49.6% in grade ten (Dwyer et al., 2006a). In the education psychology literature, there are commonly cited reasons for these extremely high rates of attrition, which include the fact that HPE is not a core academic credit and therefore is perceived as contributing little to prepare students for post-secondary education and or the workforce, there is a lack of time in the school schedule as students pursue academic endeavours, there is a lack of interest to further pursue HPE, and some students justify withdrawing because they participate on school teams and or extra-scholastic physical activities (Dwyer et al., 2006b). While the proposed reasons for withdrawal outlined above provide us with some insight into the factors that may be associated with drop-out and disengagement, they do not take into account the socio-contextual factors that mediate the enjoyment and social construction of experience in HPE.

2.06 Retaining Participants in HPE

In the exercise psychology and educational sociology literature, scholars note that motivation (Fox, 1991; Mandigo & Couture, 1996), enjoyment of physical activity (Motl et al., 2001; Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000; Silverman & Subramaniam, 1999; Trost et al., 1997), enjoyment of HPE (Brustad, 1993) and physical competence (Cairney et al., 2012) are all significant predictors and correlates of HPE enjoyment and participation. Perhaps one of the most important factors that are associated with the enjoyment and experience of HPE is one’s ability to have fun (O’Reilly et al., 2001). As noted by O’Reilly et al. (2001), fun is a loaded
word that masks previous experiences in HPE and is often synonymous with enjoyment, yet can also serve as a potential predictor of continued participation and or withdrawal from HPE.

Griffin, Chandler and Sariscsany (1993) propose that fun typically is achieved through an organizing structure that is centred around skill development, opportunities to seek and experience mastery or success and a decreased emphasis on domination and winning. Portman’s (1995) seminal ethnographic study of HPE experiences among low-skilled elementary school children demonstrated that fun, enjoyment and positive experiences were formulated when “the activity was easy to perform because the low-skilled students could already do it” (p. 449).

Having fun and experiencing success is a process that is embodied and experienced through the pleasurable aspects of simply moving (Bean & Kinner, 1989; Whitehead, 1988) the unified mind, body and spirit in HPE. These intrinsic experiences of movement are similar to what Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1988, 1990) called flow, whereby there is full immersion in the activity with complete focus and absorption into the current state of being. As suggested by Griffin et al. (1993):

...children find physical activities fun when personal objectives and intrinsic factors such as skill development, improvement, optimal challenge, control over the environment, intrinsic motivation, opportunity to participate, and constructive feedback are emphasized over extrinsic factors such as winning (p. 58).

Not only are intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation important to enjoy and continue with HPE, Siedentop (1994) notes that the curriculum itself plays a fundamental role in engaging and retaining children and youth. As a dominant teaching paradigm, most HPE curricula in Westernized, industrialized contexts draw heavily from team sports. The sports based curriculum has been heavily critiqued for its substantial overemphasis on winning, domination, segregation and instalment of gender ideals (Kirk, 2010), where there is a tacit and explicit perpetuation of hierarchical structures that privileges the dominant group while actively working to subjugate
others who do not conform (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010). As noted by Siedentop (1994) and Ennis et al. (1999), a culturally and gender relevant HPE curriculum such as the Sport for Peace curriculum (Ennis et al., 1999) functions to serve and enhance opportunities for students to participate in an equitable environment. With a focus on conflict negotiation, increased responsibility for students and increased care for others, the Sport for Peace curriculum aims to empower students to take ownership and promote inclusion rather than the dominance of others. For Ennis (1999) and Ennis et al. (1999), the Sport for Peace curriculum in HPE was pivotal in re-engaging girls who became disengaged from HPE. Thus as described in this section, HPE practices that are embedded in the curriculum play a fundamental role in attracting and retaining children and youth of all abilities in HPE.

2.07 Factors Influencing HPE Withdrawal Among Girls and Boys

Research has noted that experiences of rejection and exclusion (Ball, 2003; Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012), scolding and aggression (Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012), repeated experiences of failure and bullying (Lake, 2001), a lack of variety in physical activities (Chernysh & Crossman, 1994), dreaded fitness testing (Luke & Sinclair, 1991), inability to identify and build rapport with the HPE teacher (Chernysh & Crossman, 1994), and a belief that HPE teachers favour elite athletes in their class who play on school sports teams (Dwyer et al., 2006b) are all seen contribute to HPE withdrawal. Furthermore, Cairney et al. (2012) suggest that children and youth with low levels of self-perceived competence in HPE also express low levels of enjoyment. More telling, an over-emphasis on competition and the frequent over use of sport as a dominant teaching paradigm in HPE reproduces and perpetuates the embodiment of hierarchical classroom structures that widen the divide between physical abilities (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010). This inherent divide between physical abilities ultimately privileges the fit,
active, gendered healthy body (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010) and can discourage HPE participation among children and youth who are perceived to have less physical ability. As a meta-narrative that consistently re-appears in the literature on HPE withdrawal, individuals who experienced domination either at the hands of their peers, the curriculum and/or their teachers (Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012; Strean, 2009) see withdrawing from HPE as a logical solution to avoiding these experiences of domination, rejection and exclusion.

2.08 Negative HPE Experiences and Withdrawal among Girls

Historically speaking, girls have been associated with steep decreased levels in physical activity and HPE participation during adolescence (Barr-Anderson et al, 2008; Cockburn & Clarke, 2002; Ennis, 1996; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Garrett, 2004; van Daalen, 2005). Some of the perceived ‘barriers’ that prompt inactivity and dropout from HPE reported by girls include: lack of motivation (Robbins, Pender & Kazanis, 2003; Saxena, Borzekowski & Ricker, 2002) challenges with perceived competence (Sallis et al., 2000), lack of self-confidence and challenges with self-concept (Culp, 1998), the implementation of many traditionally ‘male HPE activities’ (soccer, cricket, basketball) that are much more significant culturally for boys in the United Kingdom (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001) and a curriculum that historically has not been gender relevant (Ennis, 1999). In particular, Ennis (1999) and Flintoff & Scraton (2005) note that subscription to dominant gender roles and maintaining ideals of femininity, if not hyper-femininity, also act as a significant barrier to continued HPE participation.

2.09 Femininity, HPE Participation and Lack thereof

Throughout the life course, Flintoff and Scraton (2005) argue that girls are often socialized by parents, teachers, peers, coaches and the curriculum into activities that emphasize personal appearance rather than aggressive, ‘brute strength’ activities. In HPE, sport and physical
cultural fields, scholars have noted that girls are pressured to conform to stereotypical and normative constructions of femininity (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005; Cole, 1993; Laberge 1995; McGall, 1992; Penney & Evans, 2002; Wright, 1999). This discursive and normalized construction of femininity encourages girls to strive for thinness, passivity, good appearance, heterosexuality and resisting engagement in ‘male’ dominated activities such as weight lifting (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). Schools in particular serve as key socializing and genderizing spaces whereby heteronormative gender relations are encouraged and policed by teachers and school administrators alike (Thorne, 1993). The intersectional social identities of race, class and ability/disability emphasize normative gender relations in HPE and scholastic contexts at large. Bain (1975, 1976), Fernandez-Balbo (1993) and Fusco (2006a) argue that gender in schools (and more specifically HPE) is mediated through the hidden gender curriculum in education. As such, segregating boys and girls within these bounded HPE spaces (Thorne, 1993) has become a naturalised discursive event whereby girls are marginalized by the highly competitive and aggressive sport-based physical education program (Satina et al., 1998).

With these pervading gender discourses in HPE, perhaps it is unsurprising that some girls remarked that excelling in physical activity and HPE is not an attribute that they strive to achieve (Gibbons, Susut & Fenton, 1999). Additionally some girls have noted that they actively choose to retain stereotypical gendered dispositions in schools in order to remain feminine instead of being physically active in HPE (Dwyer et al., 2006b). Particularly in co-educational HPE settings, girls have voiced significant concern, self-consciousness and displeasure with their bodies when participating in HPE (Dwyer et al., 2006b). Paradoxically, girls who withdraw from and or resist HPE participation are identified as the problem (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001) which in turn (re)produces discourses of idealized normative motherhood and femininity.
(Azzarito & Solomon, 2005). As argued by Azzarito and Solomon (2005), the gender vortex of subordinated femininity, and the binaries of what it means to be a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’ will continue
to operate and reproduce gendered understandings of social life until HPE and institutionalized
education more broadly moves beyond essentialist notions of gender roles.

2.10 Masculinity Theory

Equally and increasingly problematic for young boys, the social construction of gender
can operate as a significant mediator of their conceptualizations of their own body image, health
practices and participation in HPE. As a growing body of knowledge, many sociologists, gender
studies researchers, historians and political scientists have turned their attention towards the
social construction of masculinity and the broader intersectionalities of power, privilege and
domination (whether perceived, symbolic or real). In the last 25 years alone, there have been
significant developments around what it means to be a boy/man and the potential relationships or
affordances/constraints that influence our understanding of masculinity altogether. With
Connell’s ground breaking work (1995, 1998, 2003) and further developments in masculinity
literature (see Atkinson & Wilson, 2002; Kehler, 2004; Kimmel, 1990; McCaughtry & Tischler,
2010; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Swain 2005; Young, 2000), it is now widely accepted that
masculinities can be understood as temporal social constructions that are not ubiquitous and are
specific to cultural settings. Regardless of social class, the physical body becomes the initial
marker of what constitutes or indeed does not constitute a boy or a girl (Wellard, 2009). Despite
popular beliefs, masculinity is not an unwavering trait that one has or does, rather there are
simultaneous multiple masculinities present during any given social interaction. As purported by
Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), instead of understanding masculinity categorically as a static
entity, multiple masculinities (i.e. hegemonic, subordinated and marginalised) are present in any situation with diverse groups of boys/men, particularly in schools and HPE (Warren, 1997).

In relation to this study, I align and present understandings of masculinity through Bourdieu’s (2001) and Connell’s (2009, 2012) relational theory and understanding of gender. Connell (2012) contends that gender is “multidimensional: embracing at the same time economic relations, power relations, affective relations and symbolic relations: and operating simultaneously at intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional and society-wide levels” (p. 1677).

Through an analysis of masculine domination in Kabyle, Bourdieu (2001) posits that masculine domination has been ascribed a ‘natural’ status in many of the institutionalizing social structures of the world. These gendered dispositions become embodied and inculcated into the habitus of individuals who reside in that particular social context. Thus gender relations for Bourdieu are embedded in an interrelated cycle of observation, somatization and naturalization (Bourdieu, 2001) that can act beyond the direct level of human consciousness because they are so deeply embedded and naturalized in social structures and social life. With this perspective in mind, and although hegemonic masculinities are associated with power and privilege typically subordinating those who do not conform, it cannot be discounted that some agents within social fields actively seek (whether symbolic or physical in nature) resistance and retrenchment from domination as they struggle to ameliorate their social position in the field (Bourdieu, 2001).

While it can be argued that Bourdieu’s analysis of gender relations in Kabyle are now outdated and potentially difficult to apply to countries who have sought to establish gender equity, we cannot discount the interrelatedness of observation, somatization and naturalization as conceptual tools that can help analyze social structures, societies and institutions that valorize dominant constructions of gender.
As a social construction, gender is subjected to the wider macro social movements influenced by both men and women, actively constructing and dictating the relational understanding of masculinities on a day to day basis. Lesko (2000) writes “masculinities are not individual psychologies but socially organised and meaningful actions in historical contexts” (p. xvi). With Connell’s and Messerschmidt’s (2005) understanding of relational gender and multiple masculinities in mind, masculinities can (and often) operate in a hierarchical manner, whereby some social actors achieve dominance, induce subordination and in turn are rewarded with hegemonic status. Because masculinities can be understood as an ongoing performance (Butler, 1990; 1993; Goffman, 1959), it is important to note that masculinities are precarious and contextually bound to each specific locale. As such masculinities become embodied whereby the physical and non-physical body centrally has a role in “becoming, enacting and managing the self” (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010, p.179) in all facets of social life. In other words, embodiment is a social process (Elias, 1978) whereby the embodiment of masculinity is a nexus of social process and practices. This relational understanding of multiple masculinities and the body is perhaps best expressed by Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) who argue that:

The common social scientific reading of bodies as objects of a process of social construction is now widely considered to be inadequate. Bodies are involved more actively, more intimately, and more intricately in social processes than theory has usually allowed. Bodies participate in social action by delineating courses of social conduct; the body is a participant in generating social practice. It is important not only that masculinities be understood as embodied but also that the interweaving of embodiment and social context be addressed (p.851).

Employing masculinity theory as a relational and embodied social construct, multiple masculinities in HPE (hegemonic, subordinate and marginalized) are closely related to socially engrained binaries and patterns of social stratification (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010) that
construct and are constructed by the social world and the social fields that adolescent boys inhabit. With this theoretical lens, I explore the relationship between masculinities and the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys as they transition into secondary school.

2.11 Masculinity Theory and HPE

In recent years, elite youth sport and HPE settings have undergone intense scrutiny and analyses of masculinising structures, processes and interactions have proliferated. Repeatedly, scholars (Connell, 2008; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Light, 2008; Millington et al., 2008; Pringle, 2008) have noted that sport and HPE privilege dominant, hegemonic masculinities, while concomitantly marginalizing boys who do not ‘measure up’ and do not meet narrowly defined constructions of ‘boyness’. At the centre of the construction of gender in HPE are teachers who can reinforce and or challenge dominant conceptualizations and enactments of masculinity. Brown (2005) demonstrates that HPE teachers in training (student teachers) also reinforce a gendered habitus in their respective classrooms. As such, some boys are taught and lauded by teachers and peers to reproduce a mantra that advocates dominant masculinities whereby “Real men don’t eat quiche, real men don’t cry, real men don’t apologise, real men don’t say splendid... real men display power, aggression and strength” (Light & Kentel, 2010, p. 133). Affiliated with heterosexuality and partly circumscribed through the hidden gender curriculum in HPE (Bain, 1975, 1976; Fernandez-Balbo, 1993; Fusco, 2005, 2006a, 2006b), these ideologies and hegemonic forms of masculinities are typically implemented through team sports whereby the body is seen as a project (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010) that needs to be subjected to training, manipulation, and exercise. In order for bodies to be rendered ‘competent’ for lifelong physical activity, at the mercy of kinesiological ontologies, team sports are implemented to achieve the
desired movement competencies that are circumscribed by the HPE curriculum. As argued by Connell (1995) and Theberge (2003), the continued emphasis on sport in HPE, as vehicle to achieve curricular learning outcomes functions to present and preserve social constructions of gender and gender identities. Thus for Paetcher (2003), HPE acts as a vital social arena that actively constructs, valorizes and consolidates (in) visible points of separation between dominant/ subordinate masculinities and femininities.

Not only does sport play a role in the construction of gender in HPE, Wellard (2009) adds to the discussion on gender remarking that “the sites where physical education is located, such as the gym, sports hall or playing field, function as the context for displays of hegemonic forms of heterosexual masculinities and the subordination of others or alternatives” (p. 69). Thus these specific locales are entrenched with and continue to reproduce traditional understandings of what it means to be a boy or a man, such that there is a continuous assumption that all boys naturally should gravitate toward sport and HPE (Wellard, 2009). In the typical HPE setting there are of course multiplicities of physical abilities and masculinities that are institutionally inscribed and played out on a daily basis. McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) note that between two urban middle schools in the United States of America, boys enacted several dominant masculinities that are championed and culturally expected in the HPE field. These dominant traits being: athleticism, strength, musculature, fitness, competitiveness, aggressiveness, social popularity and a lack of compassion toward boys who embodied ‘other’ forms of masculinities. Other privileged masculinity traits that have been noted in previous physical education research include: speed, power, warrior type mentalities where perceived injury risk is at a minimum and an overall lack of empathy for other students and opponents (Bramham, 2003; Connell, 2008; Davison, 2000; Drummond, 2003; Gard & Meyeen, 2000; Hickey, 2008; Larson, Fagreel &
Redelius, 2009; Light, 2008; Millington et al., 2008; Parker, 1996; Pringle, 2008). These privileged masculinities are hegemonic in nature since they are supported by the hidden gender curriculum and physical HPE spaces where classes are located (Wellard, 2009). Although there are multiple masculinities at play during any given situation, the hegemonic form almost exclusively takes precedence over ‘other’ versions of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Swain, 2006).

By way of contrast to these dominant masculinities and valorized physicalities, boys who embody ‘alternate’ or non-dominant masculinities are typically marginalized in sport-based HPE curricula and classrooms in westernized and industrialized countries. Within this privileging structure, perhaps it is unsurprising then that these dominant sporting settings abuse and ostracize boys who embody alternate masculinities, body types and physical abilities that aren’t recognized and or valued (Gard & Meyeen, 2000; Hickey, 2008; Millington et al., 2008). Millington et al. (2008) suggested that boys who embodied and expressed ‘Chinese masculinities’ (identified as a small and weak body that embodied feminine qualities) in HPE were subjected to overt and tacit domination by students who identified as ‘White’ with perceived hegemonic masculinities. More concretely, Pringle (2008) remarks that boys who performed alternative masculinities and did not subscribe to dominant masculinities instilled through rugby, were subjected to frequent verbal and non-verbal bullying, whereby non-dominant boys were hung on coat hangers in the locker room, laughed at and had their heads submerged into toilets. While there likely is variability between institutional HPE contexts, Strean (2009) proposes that negative HPE experiences resulting from how physical abilities and alternate masculinities are policed and suppressed (rather than celebrated) result in withdrawal from sport and physical activity during adulthood. Wellard (2009) notes that sport participation among children and youth has a profound impact on the development of the masculine identity
and the desire to participate throughout the life course is influenced by one’s experiences of sport and HPE. Thus, as suggested by Connell (1995), rather than celebrating multiple masculinities in sport and HPE, a dominant, continual, unquestioned masculinity “can so often be perceived as acceptable or even natural” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. vii). In this sense and as proposed throughout this thesis, as a mechanism of HPE (dis)engagement, understanding the multiplicities of physical abilities and masculinities that are celebrated, valorized and or marginalized is important for contextualizing the inner workings and contemporary experiences of HPE among adolescent boys.

2.12 Independent Schools, Masculinity and HPE

Expressions of hegemonic masculinities and narrowly defined ideologies of what it means to be a boy are particularly underlined in independent (private schools) institutional school settings. It is here that traditional masculine identities, values and constructions of sporting physicalities reign supreme (Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson, 2014). Light and Kirk (2000) contend that elite independent schools in Australia are “characterized by the preservation of tradition and explicit efforts to connect current practice with a past that confirms them as institutions serving the privileged” (p. 166). As a means to visibly and non-visibly differentiate children and youth who attend publicly funded schools, independent schools and the social practices therein outwardly serve as methods for social distinction. The quest for social distinction is achieved by instilling class specific attitudes, physicalities, deportment, methods of speech (Shilling, 1992), and a valued masculinity is instilled into boys typically through sports such as rugby (Light & Kirk, 2001) rowing (Light & Kirk, 2000), soccer (Swain, 2006) tennis (Shilling, 1992), lawn bowling, horseback riding, polo, sailing, yachting (Shilling, 1992) and golf. For Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), sport is closely associated with the “quintessential
manifestation of the masculine ethos” (p.60) in schools and has important significance in the “celebration and reproduction of the dominant codes of gender” (Connell, 1996, p. 217).

Within independent schooling environments, there are rigorous codes of competition, discipline and submissiveness to superiors such as coaches and teachers (Light and Kirk, 2000; 2001). Additionally, as a method to formulate social distinction, physically and mentally demanding voluminous training in HPE and scholastic sporting activities have been designed to build aggression and superior physical force (Light & Kirk, 2001). Building on an ethos of dominance and superiority, Light & Kirk (2001) remark that at one independent school in Australia, a ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ culture was present. At this particular Australian independent school, juniors expected to be ‘masculinised’ and policed by the senior rugby players through hazing rituals and the instilment of a ‘no pain, no gain’ mentality. As such, these masculinizing practices all serve as distinct methods to groom ‘desired’ masculinities among the socially elite that become exchanged in adulthood. Light and Kirk (2001) demonstrate that the former rugby players from the independent school they studied exchanged their masculine capital and sporting prowess for social and financial resources and as adults, earning prestigious and high paying work positions. Indeed sporting experiences, physicalities, along with the desired traits instilled by the social elite function to reinforce an ‘authentic’ masculinity in HPE and continue to reproduce social advantage.
CHAPTER 3

3.01 Epistemological Positioning and Theoretical Background

This chapter explores the epistemological, philosophical and theoretical structures that underpinned the design, interpretation, analysis and representation of data that is presented in this thesis. While for the sake of academic representation I introduce epistemology and Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital, habitus, practice and symbolic violence as separate categories, they are dialectical in nature and inextricable from one another. Special attention in this section will be devoted to the cross integration of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of physical and cultural capital, whereby I introduce a novel concept of physical cultural capital. It is proposed that one’s ability to accrue, mobilize and convert physical cultural capital is closely related with the formulation of a habitus of participation or marginalization in HPE as adolescent boys’ transition into secondary school.

3.02 Epistemological Orientation

To situate this research study and the results that are presented therein, it is necessary to define and identify the epistemological orientation that guided this research study. A branch of philosophy, epistemology is “The theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). Theories of knowledge possess their respective assumptions, claims and pre-suppositions about the world that enable and or constrain the construction of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ as we know it. Here classical antimonies between objectivism/subjectivism, structuralism/existentialism, theoreticism/phenomenology, functionalism/ethnomethodology and scientific realism/anti-realism as the keys to understanding the world come to mind. While I am still wrestling with how I understand the world epistemologically, theoretically and methodologically, it would be irresponsible for me not to
recognize and acknowledge that I have undergone a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962) over the years. Transitioning from my previous training in a bio-physical, science based physical education and teacher preparation program to a social reading of reality in the last few years markedly influenced my own understanding of the social world in this study. Of course my own epistemological positioning influenced the entire research process; from the first stroke of the pencil that jotted down an idea about the research study, through to the last day of fieldwork, data analysis and writing of this thesis.

In this study, an interpretivist epistemology was employed to understand experiences and meaning making processes from study participants. An interpretivist epistemology is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of approaches to qualitative research traditions, which include: hermeneutics, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Crotty, 1998). Drawing from neo-Kantian ideologies, interpretivists’ posit that subjective human action and meaning can be sought and elicited from social actors. Furthermore, an interpretivist epistemology concomitantly recognizes that reality is socially constructed, fluid, relational, negotiated within/as culture and mediated through social settings and relationships among sentient and non-sentient beings. Thus, validity or truth about the social world does not emerge from a single static objective reality; it is actively sought and elicited by the researcher. As proposed by Angen (2000) “interpretative researchers assume that reality as we know it is constructed intrasubjectively and intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings garnered from our social world” (p. 385). These meanings, and in turn representations of ‘reality’, are developed socially and constructed through experience and are not separate from the subject or object of inquiry. The contestation of the truth and the meanings therein are negotiated through dialogue with the social world. Resultantly truth is transient, co-constructed, subject to negotiation and interpretation.
between social actors, and can be subjected to reinterpretation at any time (Kvale, 1996). To elicit meaning making processes and experiences, qualitative naturalistic methods such as participation observation and interviewing are typically employed. It is also not uncommon for interpretivist researchers to collect artefacts from the field of study and utilize them as a source of data in conjunction with extensive participant observation and interviews. In adopting an interpretivist epistemology, I accept that the co-construction of meaning and reality cannot be separated from the context (Angen, 2000) and this dynamic recursive relationship between the life world and the intersubjective interpretations of the world in turn construct social reality for both the researcher and the researched.

Given the epistemological orientation emanating from interpretivism, I approached knowledge and reality as multifaceted constructs that are localized and residing within the individual, yet are influenced directly or indirectly by external social structures. As such, acknowledging that reality is subjective to human experience in corporeal time and space and can be studied intersubjectively and intrasubjectively, in this thesis, I propose the omni-presence of multiple realities rather than a single objective reality that is present at any given time. In line with an interpretivist epistemology, this study was not concerned with the development of a single objectivity reality to enhance the ‘validity’ of the study, however, rigorous fieldwork and data analysis that “sociologically captured” (Atkinson, 2012b, p. 26) the experiences and meaning making processes from adolescent boys were applied. The data and epistemological position presented in this thesis is a reality that I constructed, crafted and interpreted through the realities of students and teachers. Further reading of this thesis will construct yet another reality and understanding of these localized, case specific interactions and observed performances in HPE. I acknowledge that through a careful selection of methodology, research methods and
interpretation of data, this interpretivist epistemological perspective in turn influenced a reflexive, rigorous consideration and articulation of the research question and proposed findings. To evaluate and transparently demonstrate how I conducted my research, my rationale for extending Bourdieu’s concept of physical and cultural capital into physical cultural capital and how I arrived at the conclusions that I propose in this paper, I dedicate significant space and ‘air time’ to illustrate the HPE experiences of 15 adolescent boys. Given that this research was intentionally inductive in nature and adhered to principles of grounded theory, a theoretical framework was not applied at the outset of the study, rather, Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital, habitus, practice, symbolic violence and my extension of physical cultural capital were co-constructed from the data.

3.03 Bourdieu’s Conceptual Tools: An Overview of Embodied Subjectivities

Bourdieu’s most prominent theories of field, capital and habitus as conceptual thinking tools are an elaboration of his attempt to understand and construct the visible yet invisible social world through social practices that account for both social structure and human agency (Jenkins, 1992). Bourdieu described and characterized his work as constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu, 1989) and he described in detail that within the social world, there are objective structures that tacitly or explicitly enable and or constrain human action/behaviour; often times superseding the consciousness of human beings. These objective structures through dominant explicit or tacit practices, resources and values (capital) guide and provide schemes of perception, thought and action (habitus) in social spaces (fields) (Bourdieu, 1985a; 1989). As noted by Bourdieu (1984) and Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992), the relationship between field, capital, habitus and practice is relational, temporal and dialectical such that, these conceptual tools should not be employed in isolation without taking into account the theoretical systems and the social situations that
constitute them. In analytic terms, Bourdieu (1984) outlines his theories through the following formula:

\[
\text{(habit}us \text{)} \text{(capital)} + \text{field} = \text{practice}
\]

Bourdieu’s relational analyses of power and social distinction provide analytical procedures to denote, understand and explain social action as they relate to human behaviour in particular social contexts. In this thesis, I refer to Bourdieu’s theories as thinking or conceptual tools because Bourdieu opposed the use of classical interpretations of theory without contextualizing the agent immersed within the social situation and/or social practice. These conceptual tools (field, capital, habitus, practice and symbolic violence, to which I have added physical cultural capital) help researchers understand how individuals and physical bodies engage in the social world. Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984, 1990a) keen awareness of the interdependency of gender and corporeality is evident in his conceptualization of the body as simultaneously and inseparably existing both in nature and in culture. He notes: “the body is in the social world, but the social world is also in the body” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 152). Through his separate yet concatenated research endeavours, Bourdieu’s research suggests that bodies are and/become inculcated with culture and one’s engagement in culture and social practice profoundly shapes an individual’s disposition toward action in specific social fields. Behaviour and action in turn are influenced through sets of structures and tastes based on one’s ability to access various material and non-material resources in social fields. Particularly where the body becomes the focal point of empirical investigation(s) in physical cultural and disabilities studies, Bourdieu’s conceptual tools recognize the influential and intersectional social structures such as schools, sport, media, family and medical institutions that (re)produce culture, practice, and society at large (Bourdieu, 1985b, 1998; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).
Having said this, it is important to understand that the conceptual tools of field, capital, habitus, practice and symbolic violence should be seen as unified, rather than disjointed complex interconnections directed at understanding the social world. Thus, each conceptual tool proposed in this thesis does not act/work in isolation, rather, they individually contribute to the collective understanding and interpretation of the mechanisms that promote HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys and their anticipated participation in secondary school HPE. In the remainder of this chapter, I provide a detailed overview of the conceptual tools that were employed in this research study.

3.04 Field

Bourdieu’s introduction of the concept of field into his arsenal of conceptual tools was a direct manifestation of the classical dualistic dilemma surrounding structure and agency (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu’s concept of field recognizes that all social spaces and places are fields in and among themselves, and contribute to the larger field of society as a whole. By way of example, Bourdieu identified educational, governmental, religious, familial, artistic, literary, scientific, philosophical and economic fields (Bourdieu, 1985b, 1998). As partly autonomous social arenas, each field operates by and through the (re)production of logic, practice and structures that often are tacitly imposed and embodied by participants therein (Bourdieu, 1985b). Using the analogy of a game to illustrate the concept of field, Bourdieu states:

A field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents of institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.97).
In order for the field to function, “there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the habitus that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.72). As such, fields are comprised of both individuals and institutional objective structures governed by sets of interrelationships that determine the type and degree of motility for each social actor within. In this Bourdieu (1998) suggests:

> [t]he notion of space contains, in itself, the principle of a relational understanding of the social world. It affirms that every "reality" it designates resides in the mutual exteriority of its composite elements. Apparent, directly visible beings, whether individuals or groups, exist and subsist in and through difference; that is, they occupy relative positions in a space of relations which, although invisible and always difficult to show empirically, is the most real reality (p.31).

Adopting Bourdieu’s concept of field, each social field and subfield shapes, and is shaped by the actors within. As noted by Schilling (1993a) all fields “contextualize people’s daily lives and contribute to the development of their bodies” (p. 129). The concept of field can be conceptualized as social spaces imbued with tacit and or explicit privileging values and hierarchical structuring structures that are entrenched through logics of practice. In these fields, social agents seek to acquire resources (capital) while concomitantly forming sets of dispositions that dictate thought, action and behaviour (habitus). Since each social position within is defined by the logic and structure of the field, not all social actors are afforded the same resources to access particular fields. As a result of the inegalitarian distribution of power, as both dominant and non-dominant groups strive toward achieving and maintaining privileged positions by actively pursuing the ‘prizes’ that the field offers (Bourdieu, 1990b), Bourdieu contends that fields are a site of constant struggle for field specific resources (capital) and power between the dominant and non-dominant groups. More concretely he remarks “a field defines itself by
(among other things) defining specific stakes and interests specific to other fields and which are not perceived by someone who has not been shaped to enter that field” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.72).

The common interests that are embedded in social fields are directly related to the fact that each social agent continually attempts to ameliorate their social position toward superiority, rather than subordination (Bourdieu, 1990a). Since the distribution of resources (capital) are in a state of flux and arguably are not a fixed finite element, fields as a site of constant struggle expose individuals to seek, acquire, mobilize and convert these forms of capital into action and relative power. With this, rather than interpreting fields as a static system that circumscribes resources, thoughts and behaviours, fields (and in particular physical cultural fields such as HPE) should be interpreted as fluid yet structured systems that configure in dynamic ways, as resources (capital) are developed and acquired within and between fields. Individuals with greater volumes of capital concurrently are afforded increased opportunities to acquire, accumulate and convert field specific capital(s); which in turn positions these individuals favourably with field specific power. As Bourdieu (1998) has noted, playing the game through participation (to seek capital) results in the tacit agreement of reproducing the game (field) because each individual agent conforms to the belief that there are resources in the field that should be sought. This ‘objective complicity’ (Bourdieu, 1993) lies in the heart of a field’s structure and is concealed through (in)visible struggles that ensue between agents. This formal and informal struggle in the pursuit of resources reproduces dominance as the privileged forms of capital and social positions are not subverted.

Bourdieu’s concept of field is a valuable resource which enables researchers to delve into the inner working(s) of social spaces, cultures and practices. Keeping Bourdieu’s concept of field in mind, the intersecting field(s) that are relevant to this study include the school as an institution
(the HPE classroom) and other physical cultural spaces (hockey arenas, basketball courts and martial art dojo’s) that teach students to learn, embody and express sporting physicality’s onto the corporeal.

### 3.05 Capital

As outlined above, the social world is comprised of numerous fields and subfields, each with their own structure and objective historical relations that permeate through various social positions (Bourdieu, 1986). The access to certain fields, social positions and the ability to be a ‘dominant player’ in the game is determined by one’s degree of capital. For Bourdieu (1985b) “like the aces in a game of cards” (p.724), capital is closely associated with power and privilege.

In any given social field, capital can be conceptualized as a resource that is ‘up for grabs’ and associated with an agent’s desire to attempt to gain relevant and field specific capital or power to climb the ranks toward hegemony, rather than subordination. As such, each field is embedded with specific capitals that are sought, acquired, mobilized and exchanged, and these degrees of capital only function in relation to each specific field. Bourdieu (1989) notes:

> A capital does not exist and function but in relation to a field: it confers a power over the field, over the materialized or embodied instruments of production or reproduction whose distribution constitutes the very structure of the field, and over the regularities and the rules which define the ordinary functioning of the field, and thereby over the profits engendered in this field (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989, p.39).

As I explained above, a person’s or a group’s position and degree of motility (Bourdieu, 1986) in a specific field is manifested and dependent on the amount and field specific capital at their disposal (Gibson & Teachman, 2012). Capital then could be interpreted as a resource that concurrently empowers and or actively subordinates individuals with “the capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others” (Calhoun et al., 1993, p.4). To further
contextualize the concept of capital, Bourdieu (1986) provided three fundamental forms: economic capital (sheer volume of currency), cultural capital (embodied, objectified or institutionalized cultural resources such as educational credentials), social capital (social relations within and part of a particular social group) and symbolic capital. By way of example, the nuclear family, religion, political, individual or collectivistic morals can all serve as forms of cultural capital that may generally be valued in society.

Just as each form of capital is socially inscribed with hierarchical distinctions, Bourdieu (1986) underscores that: “economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital” (p.252). Not only is economic capital at the crux of Bourdieu’s analysis of power, he outwardly posits that economic capital is much more apparent and stable in our current capitalist, globalized society (Bourdieu, 1986; 1987). In economic language, economic capital is much more tangible than cultural capital as agents in the social world invest their time, money and resources to usually seek some desired tangible end result. In other words, culture does not usually serve as a form of common currency that is ubiquitous in Westernized, globalized capitalist societies; instead economic capital drives the world by reproducing power and privilege to the socially elite. To ‘reap the benefits’ of any accumulated form of capital, it must be converted from a symbolic form to a marketable material form. The conversion of capital in turn (re)positions one’s role in the field and dovetails with one’s dispositions (habitus) toward action and behaviour in the field. As such for Bourdieu, capital in part plays a central role in determining thoughts, behaviour and action (schemas), as individuals traverse a variety of social fields from the first day of life. Thus the process of enshrining a social acumen of capital begins in childhood (Shilling 1993a) as some parents are capable of instilling dominant dispositions of appropriate
behaviour, comportment and educational standards as the keys to the locks that turn the social world.

Recognizing that “the body is in the social world, but the social world is also in the body” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 152), the body (hexis) in and of itself is a site of power, status and privilege and acts a cornerstone to provide access to various corporeal and non-corporeal resources. While Bourdieu (1978, 1981) considered the body as a form of cultural capital (an embodied cultural resource), recognizing the body’s corporeal and embodied centrality in society, Shilling (1991, 1992, 1993a, b, 2004) extended Bourdieu’s notion of bodily capital into physical capital to “adequately capture” (Shilling, 1991, p. 654) and understand the body and its social location as a source of capital in its own right. For Shilling (1993) the body as a form of physical capital is seen as a “possessor of power, status and distinctive symbolic forms, which is integral to the accumulation of various resources” (p.127). Particularly in HPE, sporting and physical cultural environments, bodies occupy a prominent position and can be interpreted as an “art canvas that becomes inscribed in different social contexts, is full of cultural meaning, and is subjected to the gaze and interpretation from others, influenced by culture and geography” (Jachyra, 2013, p. 843). As such the body in/as physical capital delves much deeper than just simple visible biophysical conceptualizations of the body and reflects how the social is embedded and expressed onto the corporeal in all facets of social life.

Similar to Elias’s (1994, 1996) descriptions of civilization, mass control and pacification of the body, Shilling (1991, 1992, 2004) proposes that physical capital also includes but is not limited to the methods and activities in which agents seek to manage, shape and present their bodies through social ‘tastes’, styles of walk, dress, and talk. Physical capital is also centrally associated with Bourdieu’s concept of taste. Taste (Bourdieu, 1984) functions as a disposition
that guides interests, participation in particular physical and non-physical cultures, opportunities
to access specific social spaces, consumption of particular foods, clothing and borrowing from
Goffman (1959), the presentation of the self in everyday life through physical and non-physical corporeal
corporal means. More precisely, tastes and physical capital in and among themselves are
inextricably related to one’s social positioning, acting as structuring structures that dictate and
divide social positioning(s) (Bourdieu, 1984). Perhaps best expressed by Shilling (1991), he
notes that “taste is materialized within the body, serves to naturalise and perpetuate the different
relationships that social classes have towards their bodies, and is central to the quality and
quantity of physical capital open to individuals” (p.655). It is here that figural interdependencies
between the body, tastes, the social/cultural environment that (re)produces bodies and various social constructions (such as class, race, gender, (dis)ability and sexual
orientation) maintain an inegalitarian stranglehold on the opportunities to accumulate and
exchange physical capital. This unequal distribution and conversion of physical capital then
reproduce social inequalities, maintaining legitimacy among hegemonic groups as “individuals
have different opportunities for converting physical capital into other forms of capital” (Shilling, 1991, p.656).

By way of theoretical extension, Coles (2009) argues that age, ethnicity, health and sexuality
also serve as examples of physical capital in the meta-field of masculinity. Taken together, as
agents traverse and engage in physical cultural fields (and in all areas of social life more
broadly), there is a constant struggle and negotiation to define the social ‘worth’ of their bodies
in an effort to be afforded symbolic value (Shilling, 1991), and opportunities for the conversion
of physical capital. Shilling (1992) posits that the accumulation of physical capital in all fields
and facets of social life can be converted into other forms of capital such as economic (acquiring
money in professional sport), cultural (fame) and social (status). However unlike economic and cultural capital, regardless of social class, physical capital cannot be directly transmitted, inherited, and or purchased (Bourdieu, 1986; Shilling, 1992). Given that all socio-cultural and physical cultural fields are evolving social spaces with their own ‘rules’ and norms which determine the social worth of one’s body, Shilling (1991) notes that the value and ability to convert one form of capital to another is temporal and is not a guaranteed return on a particular (bodily) investment. To this end, in an effort to legitimize the social status of their physical and non-physical body, individuals with less capital depend upon the dominant players in the game (field) to recognize that their specific capitals are worthy in the field (Shilling, 1993). Shilling (1992) proposes:

The most important factor affecting the relative values of physical capitals at any one time, though, is the ability of the dominant class to define their orientations towards the body and lifestyle as superior, worthy of reward, and as, metaphorically and literally, the embodiment of class (p. 14).

The ability to convert one’s physical capital can be transient and largely dependent on one’s social positioning in the field since agents within can only invest the specific forms of capital that are readily available to them. Physical capital then is developed through the dialectic interrelationship between one’s social location (availability of material circumstances), one’s habitus (dispositions/cognitive structures that influence if not pre-dispose behaviour) and taste (individuals seek life-styles that are guided by material restraints such as money) (Shilling, 1991). These social prerequisites are integral to the development of a class specific form of physical capital that exhibit differing values between dominant social groups and the working class (Bourdieu, 1984, Shilling, 1991; 1992; 2004). For example Bourdieu (1984) contends that individuals from the proletariat develop an instrumentalist perspective toward the body such that the body is a ‘means to an end’ with no time or necessity to engage in ‘body
work’ to cultivate the body outside of its basic elements of necessity (manual labour). Since their bodies are not nearly as privileged as individuals from the dominant classes, individuals from the working class experience difficulty accessing, acquiring, mobilizing and converting physical capital into other forms of capital. As a result of this subordination, even if individuals from the proletariat acquire alternative capitals that seek to circumvent domination, there always remains a possibility that an individual’s particular physical capital will not be recognized by the dominant group (Shilling, 1991).

In stark contrast to instrumentalist perspectives surrounding the body, the dominant classes (socially elite) manage the physique, dress and appearance of the body that distinguishes them from others; investing both time and material resources in class specific self-forming activities such as sailing, equestrian, polo and mountaineering (Bourdieu, 1978; 1984). In this sense, the body for the dominant class is a continual project that invites and incites the sculpting of the body as a dominant symbol of power and status that is valued in society, and in turn, is afforded physical capital. Thus the body and physical capital serve as a form of hidden privilege which reproduce dominant social positioning and social inequality (Shilling, 2003). As demonstrated through Bourdieu’s research above, the body and physical capital are not only relevant in sporting and physical cultural spaces but extend into all aspects of social life since the body is full of cultural meaning and subject to omni-present (re)interpretation in all social spaces and places (Jachyra, 2013).

While the concept of physical capital has increasingly become prominent in physical education pedagogy and sport literature (see Aldous, Sparkes & Brown, 2014; Armour, 1999; Brown, 2005; Hills, 2007; Koca, Atencio & Demirhan, 2009; Sparkes, Partington & Brown, 2007; Wright & Burrows, 2006) Shilling (1992) notes himself that the analysis he provides is
highly speculative given that “too little has been written on the importance of the physical as a form of capital for it to be anything else” (p. 3). Even though Shilling (2003, 2012) follows up with more a contemporary analysis of how the body as a form of capital is positioned, negotiated and capitalized in sport and society more broadly, there are few accounts of Bourdieu’s examination into the role of culture, gender and children in the theoretical construction of physical capital. Moreover in Bourdieu’s work, there is a strong emphasis on social reproduction, an underestimation of the potential roles of gendered bodily ‘orientations’ and a rigid application of ‘corporeal trajectories’ (Shilling, 2003) that are assigned to bodies as a result of one’s social position, habitus, cultural capital and taste. As a result phenomenological understandings of the ‘lived body’ (Turner, 1992) are largely absent whereby the formation and conversion of capital(s) are often presented as complete disembodied and unconscious processes.

Apart from Bourdieu’s (2001) *Masculine Domination* thesis that is centred on a circular causality of observation, somatization, and naturalization of gender relations, the agent’s role in the formation of habitus, social action in fields and the pursuit of various forms of capital are largely absent in Bourdieu’s work. Even in Bourdieu’s and Shilling’s conceptualizations of embodied cultural and physical capital respectively, the agent’s role in the understanding their own degree of capital and the capitals that are valorized and/or privileged in HPE, sport and physical culture are not foregrounded. Perhaps this could be attributed to the disembodied sociological and theoretical presentations of research that were pervasive during Bourdieu’s early years in the academy. Alternatively however and more directly tied into Bourdieu’s conceptual tools, is the illusio (investment in maintaining the order of social fields), unconscious social practices (doxa) and a bodily habitus (hexis) that co-creates capital specific dispositions of action and behaviour. While the unconscious and disembodied contestations of social
reproduction through practice are central to Bourdieu’s conceptual tools, the adolescent boys in this study actively discussed phenomenological accounts of the lived body in HPE and the physical cultural spaces they traversed.

As a result of the grounded theory approach in my research, three phases of participant observation, the participant interviews, and the emergence of Bourdieu’s relational conceptual tools of field, capital, habitus, practice, symbolic violence and gender relations during analysis emanating from this study, the concept of physical cultural capital emerged as a theoretical mechanism to explain HPE (dis)engagement. Immediately below, I outline physical cultural capital as an interpretation and elaboration of Bourdieu’s and Shilling’s analysis of the body as it relates to sporting and physical cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1988) and the mechanisms that invite HPE (dis)engagement among boys who are transitioning into their final year of institutionalized HPE in Ontario. To be sure, I am not attempting to replace Bourdieu’s or Shilling’s conceptualizations of the body and the conceptual tools of physical and cultural capital; rather just as social fields, forms of capital and one’s habitus are afforded symbolic value and are subject to change over time, the emergence of physical cultural capital as a concept driven from the findings of this research represents an elaboration of the wider social processes that are concomitantly ongoing in the emerging field of physical cultural studies.

3.06 Physical Cultural Capital

The concept of physical cultural capital takes into account the ‘lived experiences’ of agents, their social positions, their (in)visible bodies, engagement in social practices and polarized gender logics as mediators of participation (and or lack thereof) in HPE, sport and physical culture. Theoretically situated within physical cultural capital is the proposition that social agents are not completely unconscious social actors rather, rather they are agents who
actively objectivize and subjectivize the ‘social worth’ of their bodies, physical abilities and the valorized forms of capital in physical cultural fields. Thus not only are social agents (including children and youth) ‘aware’ of the social worth of their (in)visible bodies, agents actively observe and seek to somatize (embody) the forms of capital that bear the highest rates of exchange in HPE and physical cultural fields. In a reductionist sense, *physical cultural capital* is a symbolic and intangible resource or tool that is associated with power/privilege, practices and governing logics imbued within physical cultural fields dictating corporeal practices and subjectivities.

Whether tacit or explicit, each physical cultural field is inextricably tied into the ‘desired’ form(s) of capital, logic(s) of practice, expression(s) of gender and social hierarchies that reproduce power and privilege to the dominant actors within. These dominant forms of *physical cultural capital* have been naturalized in HPE (appearing to be natural, albeit being a social construction derived through practice and discourse) both consciously and unconsciously mediating how (active) bodies are organized, experienced and represented. Thus whether consciously perceived or not, the body is constantly on display and acts as a significant resource to accrue the valorized forms of *physical cultural capital* in HPE and all other intersecting physical cultural fields more broadly.

The driving force that led to the formation of the concept of *physical cultural capital* emerged from the narratives and meaning making processes that were presented by adolescent boys of varying physical abilities as each and every adolescent boy who participated in this study traversed multiple physical cultural and sporting fields both within and outside of the HPE context at TBS. Similar to Coles’s (2009) proposition, that there are multiple masculinities at play that can be ‘selectively employed’ in different social fields, I posit that there are also
multiplicities of *physical cultural capitals* (high and low) which are formed and become enshrined both within and beyond the daily petty contingencies of HPE at TBS. The value of *physical cultural capital* in HPE however is also contingent on the structures and practices (doxas) of the field (HPE) as some forms of *physical cultural capital* inherently bear more value than others. Furthermore because the value of *physical cultural capital* is contingent on the structures and practices within social fields, if there is an upheaval and or subversion of structures and practices, the valorized forms of *physical cultural capital* are subject to change as well. Arguably then, *physical cultural capital* should be conceived as a typology and or more specifically, a spectrum of capitals which include but are not limited to high (dominant) and low (subordinated/marginalized) forms.

At one end of the *physical cultural capital* spectrum, individuals who subscribe to the defined logics of the field, the desired corporeal expressions of gender and championed degrees of physicality in HPE at TBS are afforded high *physical cultural capital*. The opportunity to acquire high *physical cultural capital* in HPE is amplified when individuals participate in sports and physical cultures outside of the school context. Particularly when the logics, structures and practices of HPE align with the logics, structures and practices of extra-curricular sporting endeavours, the opportunities and frequency of acquiring, mobilizing and converting *physical cultural capital* concomitantly increases. For example, adolescent boys at TBS who participate in extracurricular competitive ice hockey not only learn the functionalist and tactical aspects of playing ice hockey (put the puck in the net), they also develop a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990a) and the socio-cultural nuances that act as resources of power, privilege and distinction. More interesting, boys who participate in ice hockey in general are lauded by their peers and teachers alike for their competitive sporting prowess, their hard working attitudes and preferred
levels of physical fitness; as they typically were the most physically fit and demonstrated competence in the desired movement patterns that were also expected by the HPE teachers. Thus these boys become immersed in cultures that celebrate an ethos of competition and domination over others, a strong (rather than soft) sense of rugged masculinity, and the development of warrior type mentalities whereby boys are taught to ‘never quit or never surrender’. Taken together, because the values that are instilled in competitive ice hockey also align with the desired values of HPE participation, gender expression and domineering physicalities at TBS, regardless whether boys played at the first tier of competitive (house league select or A) or at the highest tier (AA and AAA), their mere participation in the ice hockey outside of the school context served as a resource that afforded these boys with high physical cultural capital.

Although ice hockey was the most overt and frequent example of sporting fields aligning with the structures, practices and values of HPE at TBS, adolescent boys participating in rugby, basketball, soccer, American football, cross-country and Nordic skiing outside of the school context were also afforded high physical cultural capital. In these spaces, one’s body size, shape, strength, skill, physical ability, ‘appropriate’ body weight, physique and a high degree of fitness rather than fatness (Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson, 2014) were all symbolic and physical manifestations of high physical cultural capital. As such, given that the HPE curriculum at TBS is centred on sport-based pedagogies that value practices and governing logics of symbolic/explicit domination and hegemonic gender expressions, adolescent boys who have acquired high physical cultural capital outside of HPE concurrently hold physical cultural capital in HPE as a function of distinction, power, privilege and domination over boys who demonstrate alternative masculinities and physicalities. Since alternative masculinities and physicalities are not valued at
TBS, non-dominant boys are *afforded low physical cultural capital* and are actively subordinated/marginalized.

At the other end of the *physical cultural capital* spectrum are boys who do not measure up and ‘fail’ to conform to the logics, practices, expressions of physicality, performance of gender and movement competencies that are valorized in HPE at TBS. Boys who demonstrate a ‘deficiency’ in self-confidence, passivity and an indifference regarding the stringent competition and winning on a daily basis in HPE are afforded *low physical cultural capital* in this social space. Additionally, even if boys embody alternative *physical cultural capitals* through participation in activities such as dance, yoga, dodge ball, taekwondo or kung fu outside of the HPE context, given that these alternative social fields do not align with the values that are deeply engrained into the social fabric of HPE in TBS, these alternate albeit legitimate physical activities are not socially recognized as a ‘valid’ form of capital in a sport based HPE environment. As a result, boys who participate in alternative activities and embody the ‘wrong’ movement competencies and expressions of hegemonic masculinity are afforded *low physical cultural capital* and are actively subordinated and marginalized (whether physically, socially or symbolically) by teachers and peers alike. The reflection and reproduction of the dominant sport-based curriculum at TBS limits the possibility of subverting domination and converting alternate *physical cultural capitals* toward domination rather than subordination. However since adolescent boys as social actors actively objectivize and subjectivize the social worth of their bodies, they seek to ameliorate their social positioning by observing and attempting to somatize the valorized forms of *physical cultural capital* in the field.

Within the typology of *physical cultural capital* in HPE, there is a liminal point between high and low *physical cultural capitals*. This liminal space acts as a place and time for
negotiation and or resistance as social agents attempt to ameliorate their social position from subordination toward the ranks of power and privilege. Concurrently, social agents who have achieved domination (*high physical cultural capital*) work towards maintaining their domination in the field. Given that *physical cultural capital* is in a constant state of flux and is subject to negotiation between the practices and logics of physical cultural fields, this liminal space serves as a point of departure whereby social actors may selectively attempt to challenge/resist the dominant forms of *physical cultural capital* that are valorized in HPE in an effort to legitimize their ‘version’ of *physical cultural capital*. Conversely however, agents who do not succeed in subverting the dominant forms of *physical cultural capital* in HPE complicity work toward embodying and expressing the dominant *physical cultural capital*(s) that have been valorized in HPE and physical cultural fields. The double bind of either resisting and or conforming to the valorized *physical cultural capitals* in HPE is an active, embodied and partly conscious process exercised both by the physical cultural field and the individual agent. This process occurs through the nexus of observation, somatization and naturalization (Bourdieu, 2001) of *physical cultural capitals*.

Just as Bourdieu posited that gender relations become engrained in our social fabric through a circular causality of observation, somatization and naturalization (Bourdieu, 2001), Bourdieu’s conceptualization of gender relations is omnipresent in physical cultural fields as adolescent boys seek the accretion of *physical cultural capital* toward domination, while obviating subjugation in HPE. As a scheme of perception “embedded in the body-self complex” (Brown, 2006, p.169) that “constructs anatomical difference” (Bourdieu, 2001, p.11) between bodies, each adolescent boy (whether dominant, subordinated or marginalized) observes and appraises the ‘social worth’ of their own body, their physical abilities/physique and their social
position in the field. Not only do agents observe the social worth of their own bodies, they actively observe, compare and evaluate their bodies against their peers trying to make sense of their dominant, subordinate or marginalized social positioning in HPE. Like the looking-glass self (Cooley, 1902), in the repeated observation of the practices, governing logics of the field and championed forms of physical cultural capital in HPE, the process of observation socially constructs and confirms physical cultural binaries of the masculine/non-masculine, strong/feeble, aggressive/passive, fit/fat and the physically competent/incompetent body in HPE. Since the body ‘constantly is on display’ and is subject to the scientific gaze of performance, measurement and evaluation through physical fitness testing, body size, shape and appearance in sport and HPE, social agents observe the dominant forms of capital that have been circumscribed in HPE and physical cultural fields and attempt to somatize these valued forms of capital in order to ameliorate or retain their dominant social positioning.

The process of somatization (embodiment) of the valorized physical cultural capitals occurs within the liminal examination of one’s ‘social worth’ in HPE. Given that physical cultural capitals are unequally distributed, are constantly in a state of flux and are subject to re-evaluation each and every time an individual traverses physical cultural fields, adolescent boys’ who have embodied both high and low physical cultural capitals transcend this liminal point of somatization. In the forms of dispositions (habitus) that guide schemes of perception, action and behaviour in HPE, it is here that there is an internal yet external interplay and negotiation of the valorized physical cultural capitals in HPE. All agents internally, reflexively evaluate whether they will seek to acquire, persist with and or reproduce the valorized physical cultural capitals to retain and or ameliorate social positioning in HPE. Alternatively, agents also evaluate whether they could/should attempt to subvert domination from the narrowly defined valorized forms of
physical cultural capitals in an effort to ameliorate their social positioning in HPE. Yet these internal reflections of one’s own observed degree of physical cultural capital are concomitantly constrained and influenced externally out of the agents control by the social field through the practices, governing logics and valorized forms of physical cultural capital(s) therein. As such, if the valorized forms of physical cultural capital (hard, masculinity, physically fit, athletically coordinated, participant in sports and muscular) continually are reproduced, boys who have already embodied high physical cultural capital retain their dominance in HPE.

In contrast however, boys who have embodied physical cultural capitals that are not valued (soft, feminine, unfit, uncoordinated and lanky) experience a disjuncture between continued participation or withdrawal (by avoiding participation in various ways) from HPE. As a result of the incompatibility of internalized dispositions and the current arrangements of physical cultural capital in the field, this dialectical confrontation (Bourdieu, 2005) results in an outcome that can transfigure the field and the valorized forms of physical cultural capital therein and or the dispositions of actors. However, since the practices and governing logics of HPE tend to focus on sport and gender as a pedagogical tool to achieve curricular learning expectations, the dialectical confrontation (Bourdieu, 2005) results in the transfiguration of dispositions among boys with low physical cultural capital rather than the HPE space as a social field. Taken together, because these valorized forms of physical cultural capital have been naturalized and are observed by agents of all spectrums of physical cultural capital as natural, rather than constructed and learned through practice and discourse, boys with low physical cultural capital are the ones who are subordinated. To actively avoid subordination, a habitus of withdrawal in elementary school HPE is formed. Indeed, an agent’s ability/opportunity to accrue, mobilize and
convert physical cultural capital is directly related to the formation of a habitus that supports continued HPE participation and or withdrawal among adolescent boys.

3.07 Habitus

Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus attempts to resolve the classical structure versus agency dualism as he attempts to demonstrate the ontological complicity that has come to define our polarized understanding whether behaviour and action are self-initiated or dictated by external social structures and forces. The concept of habitus could be understood as the product of one’s social experiences in the world. As proposed by Jarvie and Maguire (1994) habitus entails “culturally learning, refining, recognising, recalling and evoking dispositions to act” (p. 186). The habitus then is located within the individual, yet embodies structural, social and cultural discourses that actively percolate among individuals and social fields. In Bourdieu’s own words he defines habitus as:

... relational in that it designates a mediation between objective structures and practices. First and foremost, habitus has the function of overcoming the alternative between consciousness and unconsciousness... Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself “as a fish in water”, it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted (Bourdieu in Wacquant, 1989, p.43).

As individuals traverse and interact with social fields, the structure and available resources (capital) dynamically both consciously and unconsciously dictate their behaviour. Through these critical interactions with both the members of the field and the logics of practice of the field, individuals become “endowed with the habitus” (Bourdieu, 1993, p.72). In essence, habitus is an intermediary link that becomes ingrained within an individual following repeated and consistent exposure to sets of social conditions that become imprinted onto a set of perceptions, attitudes and inclinations that mediate practice, action, thought and behaviour. As noted by Laberge
these repeated experiences form “dispositions and schemes of perception and appreciation” (p.136) and function in structuring and reflecting an individual’s choices and lifestyle through the expression of action and comportment in social fields. As noted by Bourdieu (1990a) “habitus is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is” (p.73). As such, one’s ever evolving habitus manifests itself through the development of tastes enveloped in the history of social practices (Bourdieu, 1990b) depending on their social positioning in the field as individuals strive for distinction (Bourdieu, 1984, 1998b). Taken together, habitus does not just unreflexively dictate action and behaviour, but is also central in the schemes of perception such as thought, understanding, motivation, and perception (Bourdieu, 1990b). As a complete concept then, habitus can be understood as the embodied cultural, social and physical world that partly influences the behaviours and actions of actors in various social fields. As with all of Bourdieu’s concepts, habitus should be seen as a relational tool, rather than a mechanistic and statistically probable concept that can predict behaviour in certain social situations. Rather than determining behaviour, habitus only acts as a guide providing a set of dispositions that are inculcated through learned social experiences. As noted by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) habitus is:

an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal! (p. 133).

With this relational understanding in mind, while habitus is durable but not eternal and is subject to change over time, habitus however is deeply embedded in the self and continues to operate even if the formative conditions of the habitus have been dislodged (Bourdieu, 1997). To this end, one’s habitus is malleable as agent’s progress from childhood to adulthood however, the degree of malleability heavily relies on one’s social positioning and ability to obtain, access, and
exchange capital in social fields. While some have critiqued Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as mechanistic (see Kauppi, 2000) with an overly deterministic focus on social reproduction (see Jenkins, 1992), I employ Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as a tool that seeks to explain the interactions among students, teachers, their social environment and the behaviours exhibited therein at TBS.

3.08 Practice

As noted by Calhoun (1998), Bourdieu proposes that human action is perceived to be deeply ingrained within social and cultural contexts and it is irreducible to attribute behaviour to either one without acknowledging the other. Culture becomes embodied and expressed onto the corporeal through the participation in every day social practices that are (re)produced through the dynamic social interactions of field and the various forms of capital that are embedded in the formation of dispositions (habitus). It is through practice within given social structures that the habitus emerges, yet the perceptions and actions may supersede conscious control of the agent. Bourdieu proposes “Habitus reveals itself... only in reference to a definite situation. It is only in the relation to certain structures that habitus produces given discourses of practices” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 135). Thus for Bourdieu, practice is “the product of a habitus that is itself the product of the em-bodiment of the immanent regularities and tendencies of the world (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.138). Practices are neither objective nor subjective but rather are produced through the iterative interaction of the agent and the ‘rules’ of the game (social structures). With this, individuals in social fields may not always be completely aware of the reasons that contributed to their particular social actions or behaviours (Jarvie & Maguire, 1994). Although movements and actions may initially seem conscious, they are repetitively embedded through practices and the logics of the field that become ‘second nature’ and are undertaken
unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b). In essence agents within social fields learn the practical logic of the game (field) and their behavioural dispositions and attitudes are a reflection and concurrent by-product of the social conditions that ‘produced them’. In this way, concurrent with capital and habitus, practice can be seen as a factor that influences an individual’s position within a field, as agents develop a sense of the structures of the field and often accept it as the way it is naturally supposed to be (Bourdieu, 1985b).

3.09 Symbolic Violence

Building on Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital, physical cultural capital, habitus and practice, symbolic violence is an important conceptual tool that I would argue has largely been ignored by some physical cultural scholars when employing his conceptual tools. Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence offers a practical and theoretical understanding of instances of domination, misrecognition and manipulation that ‘naturally’ occur within fields as participants seek to acquire the valorized forms of capital. Although not physical in nature, symbolic violence subjects agents in social spaces and places (fields) into the reproductive vortex of social inequality, as power that either privileges or subordinates agents is legitimized (Bourdieu, 1989), misrecognized by social actors and is perceived as natural and unalterable (Bourdieu, 2001). Resultantly by understanding social constructions as natural, symbolic violence is (re)produced and plays an active role in taken-for-granted assumptions and practices (Swartz, 1997) that enshrine and maintain economic and political power relations; further perpetuating inegalitarian social positions. Bourdieu (2001) contends that symbolic violence is:

A gentle violence, usually imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition) recognition or even feeling. This extraordinary social relation thus offers an opportunity to grasp the logic of the domination exerted in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognised by the dominant and the dominated—a language
Symbolic violence is perhaps the most evident and well-illustrated in Bourdieu’s highly criticized book, *Masculine Domination*. Drawing from his ethnographic research on the Berbers of Kabylia, here Bourdieu proposes that male order (androcentrism) in North Africa takes hold and monopolizes the universal such that practices, ideologies and distributions of power are grounded so deeply and embedded in taken for granted social structures and positions. This taken for granted social construction in turn justifies and retains men’s domination and superiority over women. The socially constructed assumed biological notion of sex in the Kayble society has privileged men over women and these gendered social dispositions guide the formation of a habitus of domination among men, and a habitus of inferiority among women. As such this gender dualism perpetuates an ongoing symbolic violence against women, since not all women are afforded the same resources to access and convert their gender specific capital(s) in social fields. While Bourdieu acknowledges that second-wave feminism has been instrumental in dismantling some of the objective structures that normalize individual dispositions in modernized societies, he posits that until agents recognize their complicity in embodied institutionalized notions of domination (such as gender), symbolic violence will continue to perpetuate and reign supreme.

**CHAPTER 4**

**4.01 Research Methodology**

In this chapter, I argue that a grounded theory, participant observation-based methodological approach was best suited for the exploration of the central questions posed in this research.

Engaging with the social world during the ‘here and the now’ served as a methodological pillar in this study as I actively sought and (co)constructed meaning making processes, experiences and
interpretations of HPE from adolescent boys on a daily basis. The research methodology that was selected and described below dovetails with the epistemology and theoretical tools that inform the findings of this research study. In what follows, the first half of this chapter conceptually outlines the role of grounded theory, ethnography and child-centred research methodologies. I also engage in a discussion of core qualitative methodological issues such as trustworthiness, representation, reflexivity and the ethical/power relations that are omnipresent when conducting ethnography with children.

The second half of this chapter meticulously outlines the methods, process of data collection and analysis. More specifically, I detail my entry into the research site, the three phases of participant observation, recruitment of participants, the active interviewing technique as a data collection strategy, post-interview strategies and simultaneous data analysis that proceeded to the emergence of physical cultural capital; an extension of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of cultural and physical capital.

4.02 Grounded Theory

Although it will be further discussed in the data analysis section of this chapter, it is important to highlight that grounded theory was carefully selected to inform the reflexive interpretivist methodology. The story presented from this research emanates from a classical inductive study that adhered to principles of grounded theory. Influenced by symbolic interactionism, grounded theory is a research method that is closely connected to ethnography as a research methodology that discovers social processes in data, followed by conceptual and theoretical abstraction (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). As noted by Strauss & Corbin (1990):
Grounded theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis pertaining to the phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in a reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (p.23).

The iterative processes of ethnography and grounded theory complement one another and develop theory (instead of apply) from the data and the multiple social realities therein. With this method at the outset of any study, researchers have very loosely defined research objectives and interests, which then are developed through methods of data collection and analysis. As outlined by Glaser (1978), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss (1987), grounded theory studies exhibit the following characteristics:

- there is simultaneous data collection and analysis
- categories are developed through the process of coding and emanate from the data instead of a pre-existing hypothesis about the data
- theory is developed during each step of data analysis
- the use of analytic memos provide a medium between the coded data and the first draft of the interpretation
- theoretical sampling in the field relates to developing a theory in that social space and not for wide scale population representation
- a literature review is conducted only after engaging with the iterative process of data analysis

Employing ethnographic methods such as participant observation, active interviews and content analysis (the HPE curriculum/lesson plans at TBS) to unearth and make sense of social processes, ethnography as a methodology was employed in order to connect meanings, relations and practices that were actively constructed by both students and teachers on a daily basis. The execution of an ethnographic grounded theory was employed to examine beyond research that has simply examined the barriers and facilitators of HPE participation. In addition, a grounded theory approach was implemented to try and develop new substantive/conceptual knowledge and theory emerging from the data rather than simply applying theory to the data that was collected,
reproducing previous qualitative research. This idea of concept elaboration (Atkinson, 2012a) is perhaps best expressed by Popper (1957) who noted: “it is easy to obtain confirmations, or verifications for nearly every theory-if we look for confirmations” (p.3). While on the surface it appears that the researcher approaches the research questions and research space atheoretically to understand the world as a tabula rasa (blank slate), whether consciously or unconsciously, this arguably is impossible to do so since previous academic and non-academic training and social experiences in all facets of life impact the processes of data collection and analysis. While conceptual theories were not driving this research study, the principals of grounded theory guided my practice in the methods of data collection, the selection of data to be included in the analysis, the intersectionalities of realities that were co-constructed in the data and the decisions that were made to create a story to be told by the participants and, eventually, to the reader.

4.03 Ethnography

Building on the interpretivist epistemology outlined above, it was my fundamental belief that through full immersion without theoretical pre-conceptions or knowledge of the research setting, this pursuit would render a rigorous case study account of the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement. For the purposes of this research study, ethnography was not conceptualized or simply employed as an instrument of data collection, rather, ethnography was my methodological lens into the social world. Ethnographic approaches in all areas of qualitative inquiry and especially in physical cultural studies (PCS) are proliferating and have spawned scores of ethnographic based research endeavours in recent years. Similar to the burgeoning trend of interview based research in the social sciences, anthropology, disability studies and PCS as an epistemological lingua franca in qualitative research (Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson, 2014), ethnography knows no substantive bounds. It is not uncommon for researchers in disciplines of
anthropology (see Geertz, 1980; Malinowski, 1922), sociology (see Anderson, 1999; Willis, 1977) sport sociology (see Waquant, 2004), psychology (see Ginsburg, 1997), religious studies (see Saliba, 1974) and education (see Swain, 2006) to employ ethnography as a methodology to seek multiple intersectional 'realities' of the social world. In totality, ethnographic studies in scale and scope have increased since their canonical inception in anthropological research with the development of auto-ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Hockey, 2006), visual ethnography (Hindmarsh & Heath, 1998), post-modern ethnography (Muggelton, 2000), feminist/institutional ethnography (Smith, 1987) and virtual or netnography (Wilson & Atkinson, 2005).

At a very basic conceptual level, ethnography is an inductive qualitative research endeavour that employs participant observation as a mainstay tool to delve into detailed descriptions and interpretations of practices, experiences and the inner workings of a particular group, sub-group, culture or sub-culture. The definition of ethnography offered by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) is a good segue to what ethnographies typically look like, sound like and or feel like. They note:

In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions—in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (p.1).

Concurrent with long term engagement with participants and the research setting in an effort to “sociologically capture” (Atkinson, 2012b, p.26) an understanding of a particular culture or social space and the interactions therein, ethnographies typically span several months if not years. Depending on the purposes and objectives of the research, when an ethnographer conducts ‘fieldwork’, participant observation is a cornerstone of ethnography whereby the researcher can
become a part of the group that they are studying with varying degrees of engagement. May (1997) proposes that participant observation probably is “the most personally demanding and analytically difficult method of social research to undertake” (p.138) as participant observation requires complete physical, emotional, spiritual patience, endurance and perhaps at times, a partial or complete transfiguration from the habitus of daily ordinary life in order to ‘fit in’ with the research context under study.

Personal involvement and one’s role during an ethnographic venture can range along a continuum. As an active participant, the ethnographer can be fully involved in the culture or research setting, completely participating in all aspects. For example, Wacquant’s (2004) study of pugilism accentuates the role of the complete participant in the field such that he became a boxer himself, embodied pugilistic characteristics and expressed them corporeally as a competitor in the national Golden Gloves competition in the United States of America. In opposition to the complete participant, the ethnographer can be situated on the periphery strictly observing the inner workings, interactions and subsequent behaviours in a particular time and space without ever directly taking part in the research setting. This participant observer role is analogous to a video camera mounted on a wall that observes any and all movements and interactions at all times. Inherently, I do not believe that any one of these participant observer roles should be championed over another; rather, they all have merit and are guided by the research questions and objectives of a given study. Gold’s (1958) typology of participant observer roles detail the spectrum of involvement when a researcher is immersed in the research setting or culture. These include:

- the complete participant (fully participating in the setting)
- the participant as observer (the individual is part of a group but not does not participate in all aspects of an activity or setting)
the observer as participant (minimal involvement in the social setting and tends to watch from the side)
the complete observer (strictly observing the setting, culture and or interactions without participating with the members who ‘naturally’ are part of the setting)

Routinely a typology such as the one proposed by Gold above can be interpreted as a static model and process that suggests researchers should confine their roles to the sole embodiment and maintenance of one these roles during fieldwork. Yet, since human beings are social creatures and negotiate their role in the field (and more broadly in society) through their interpretations of other human beings and the social cues that are present (and or indeed not present) in that space, I suggest that the ethnographer transcends and experiences all of these roles at some point during fieldwork. As such throughout the ethnographic venture, this lateral mobility should not circumscribe a rigid and static interpretation of these roles as the ethnographer delves into meaning(s) and interpretation in social fields. This dynamic, recursive interweaving of participant observer roles is similar to what Swain (2006) called semi-participant observation during his school based ethnographic study. During fieldwork, Swain (2006) as the complete observer ‘hung around’ on the periphery of the playground and solely observed his study participants playing in the school playground. When he transitioned into the classroom setting, his role changed as he helped students with their seat work and at times joined the lesson as a student. In sum we can speculate that Swain’s ability to transcend between participant observer roles from ‘friend’ to ‘teacher’ during fieldwork likely facilitated the process of building rapport with children and, concomitantly encouraged him to pursue unchartered territory as a result of his multiple roles in these social spaces.

Identifying the social and cultural intersectionalities that are under investigation, ethnography produces first-hand ‘insider’ empirical accounts from the field of study in its
‘natural’ setting. Concurrent with participation observation as a tool to collect data, ethnographers employ interviews, diaries and photographs (Reeves, Kuper & Hodges, 2008) to further explore and collect data on the observed phenomena that were witnessed or experienced during fieldwork. Gathering accounts through interviewing from participants who regularly participate in a particular social setting or culture enables the researcher to co-construct the data, developing a deeper, rich, descriptive, and theoretical understanding of the social space or culture under study. These social interactions/relations, social reactions/behaviours and cultural practices are then interpreted conceptually through the elaboration of existing theories or the development of new theories (through grounded theory) to explain human social contexts. Taken together, when referring to the term ethnography, it operationalizes that the researcher is ‘au centre milieux’ and enveloped in the middle of what they are critically studying as they unpack the linguistic, semiotic and textual representations of specific life-worlds. This interpretivist approach to understanding human action and behaviour falls in stark contrast to positivist understandings of human beings and behaviours, actions and interactions that are experimented on, tested and verified in bounded social spaces which traditionally have been commonplace in psychology and the ‘natural sciences’ (Masey & Walford, 1998). Thus ethnographies can serve as a valuable resource to explore and conceptually develop research areas that have been under-researched and are devoid of an empirical, conceptual or substantive basis.

4.04 Ethnographies Involving Children

Although ethnographic studies conducted with children and or adult participants share several commonalities, it is nevertheless important to recognize that the approach to conducting ethnographies with children can be different, particularly in educational contexts.
For Masey and Walford (1998), there are seven core elements that must be present to be considered ethnographic when studying children. These elements being:

1. The research involves the study of a cultural context asking: “What does it mean to be a member of this group? What makes someone an insider or an outsider here? How does this work? How do people do this”? (p. 5).
2. The study involves more than one method of data collection to seek a multidimensional understanding of the research setting.
3. The ethnographer reasons that “observation of culture in situ” (Denscombe, 1995, p 184) over an extended amount of time through the process of enculturation in the field is an optimal method to understand the culture.
4. The researcher recognises that he/she is the primary source of data; however, the researcher is continually reflexive, evaluating his/her ideas, decisions and questions that are asked throughout the research process.
5. The researcher provides high status to the accounts provided by the participants, concomitantly cognisant that the researcher serves as the highest authority and determines the selection of statements and claims gathered from the research findings. The researcher does not rely on a pre-conceived framework or theory to be tested in the field but rather explores their interactions with participants to “discover and create analytical frameworks for understanding and portraying that which is under study” (p. 9).
6. During fieldwork and analysis, there is an active recursive process of understanding data and the (re)formulation of interpretations and theories, as new data is drawn out by the researcher.
7. The research has the intention to disseminate knowledge about a specific culture, context, or people therein, rather than trying to generalize findings beyond their meanings.

4.05 Child-centred Research and Ethnography

In conjunction with these seven core elements of ethnography proposed by Masey and Walford (1998) above, since this ethnography was conducted with children and young adolescents, a child-centred approach to the research design and subsequent data collection was applied. Sociologically speaking, child-centred research methods recognize that children have agency, are competent social actors and actively co-construct the world with adults. Specifically their ‘voices’ and interpretation about other children and the social world should be included in research and all spheres of social life (Clark, 2011). As remarked by Clark (2011):
Child-centred research, which is less concerned with the universal, developmental acquisition of capabilities, instead asks how children as active human beings, as agents, experience existence in the social present. The link between child and context is recognized and set into relief in child-centred inquiry (p.16).

Similar to typical methods of data collection implemented during ethnographic studies involving adults, child-centred researchers collect data through participant observation, interviews, focus groups and visual methods (such as show and tell, photographs and or illustrations) (Clark, 2011). As researchers attempt to delve into “a direct view of children in action” (Clark, 2011, p. 44), participant observation in child-centred research is foregrounded and increasingly has successfully been employed by seminal child-centred researchers (see Bluebond-Lagner, 1978; Briggs, 1998; Corsaro, 2003; Fine, 1987; Thorne, 1993). Child-centred participant observation typically is inductive in nature and stresses the importance of reflexivity, empathy and open-mindedness as researchers and children synergistically work toward developing trustworthy and empowering relations (Lanclos, 2003). Barker and Weller (2003) propose that child-centred research delves into research ‘with’, rather than ‘on’ children. A central tenant in child-centred research during fieldwork and interviewing is the role of reflexivity and the recognition of power imbalances (whether perceived or real) that exist between children and adults (Fine, 1987). Through reflexivity, a child-centred approach strives to build and maintain rapport with participants, attempting to address inherent power imbalances (Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson, 2014). As such, the researcher brackets their adult positions (Clark, 2011) and genuinely attempts to engage as a ‘friendly adult’ (Fine, 1987) or a trustworthy companion that seeks to “fit into children’s social frameworks by softening adult presumptions and resisting on taking on power-infused adult privileges” (Clark, 2011, p.53). In addition, the researcher plays a hybrid role situated as an observer and an adult friend who respects and encourages children’s participation in the absence of “the usual trappings of power”
(Clark, 2011, p. 53). Although it is arguably impossible to completely eliminate power differentials between adult researchers and children, striving toward building rapport during fieldwork and interviews is an effective strategy to help children contextualize the researcher’s role in the classroom and their daily lives.

During fieldwork, child-centred researchers attempt to scale down and soften the role of adult suppositions of domination and the imposition of behavioural intervention(s) such as disciplining children (Thorne, 1993). This typically includes acquiescing to children’s behaviours such as telling dirty or inappropriate jokes, ignoring directions from teachers, wrestling/pushing other students and or urinating outdoors on the school grounds (Clark, 2011). The only exception to tacitly allowing students to ‘do as they please’ so to speak is when a child’s safety is at risk or in imminent danger (Clark, 2011). Some researchers have argued that in order to truly understand children’s daily lives and experiences, it is necessary to scale down to their level; essentially, becoming a child (Corsaro, 2003; Davies, 1989; Mandell, 1988). This purist least-adult role (Mandell, 1988) advocates that the researcher avoids all adult like roles when in the field such as resisting to tie children’s shoes, pushing kids on swings and fixing toys (Clark, 2011). Yet as noted by Mandell (1988), the least-adult role isn’t easy to establish, nor always feasible, especially when conducting participant observation in school-based settings whereby school educators may seek assistance with daily tasks and operations both inside and outside of the classroom.

4.06 How old is too old: Child-Centred Research

With child-centred research methods, there is no age range that dictates the appropriateness of the method since age is a social construction and can vary between cultural contexts. Generally speaking, according to the United Nations Convention in the Rights of the
Child, a child is any human being below the age of majority, typically 18 years old (United Nations, 1989). My purpose in implementing child-centred research is twofold. First, given the inductive nature of my grounded theory study initially conducting participant observation with all HPE classes from JK to grade eight (ages 4-13 years old), I sought a comprehensive ethnographic method that would help me to try and understand the daily lives and meaning making processes from these boys; actively listening and observing to what was said and unsaid in this particular HPE space. Second, as a researcher entering a different physical cultural community, social space and school culture, as an ethnographic tool to interpret and extract meaning (Geertz, 1973), I attempted to be open to students’ and teachers’ experiences during fieldwork in an effort to gain a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the research environment. Even though the findings discussed in this paper mainly elicit the voices and experiences from boys aged 12-14 years, I found that child-centred research methods were particularly important when exploring HPE experiences with boys who were perceived as having less physical ability.

4.07 Trustworthiness

As positivist epistemological foundations regarding objective truth(s) maintain its stranglehold as the dominant way of knowing in research and Western circles of academia, classical assumptions and questions of objectivity and trustworthiness of data have made their incursion into qualitative research. Triangulated qualitative studies along with the creation and advocacy of evaluation criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been critiqued as neo-positivist. While this study is triangulated in nature since I collected and analyzed data through participant observation, interviews and lessons plans/curriculum at TBS, given the interpretivist epistemology of this research, I do not claim to arrive at a single objective truth that can be universalized to all
adolescent boys or assume that adolescents’ everyday lives are measurable (Knobel, 1999). Rather, I present case specific contextualized personal accounts and the multiple truths presented in and through a specific theoretical understanding of the social world that can be used to advance our knowledge regarding the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement. With that said, I do not discount the centrality and importance of epistemological, methodological, and theoretical rigour and have explicitly devoted significant time and space in this thesis to transparently demonstrate how the entire research process was constructed, analyzed and reported to the reader. As such engaging with the field, prioritizing student voices and analyzing HPE lesson plans/curriculum enabled me to provide an in-depth understanding of the complexity of participating in HPE at TBS.

4.08 Representation

Classical questions of representation and issues surrounding the techniques of representation come to the fore in qualitative research. For Hall (1997) representation entails the “production of meaning and concepts in our minds through language” (p.17). Mental representations such as concepts, classifications, as well as relationships between people and objects, which are mediated through language, constitute representation (Hall, 1980). Jacques Derrida contends that “there is nothing outside the text” (Derrida cited in Fox, 1994, p.163) as he proposes that language and discourse are not neutral conveyers of knowledge; rather both the meanings and discourses extrapolated by the researcher, through language are a construction of the experiences of others. For example, this thesis has several ‘voices’ embedded within the text and some that are more apparent than others. This thesis is a collaborative construction stemming from the voices of research participants, my understanding of the research environments, the
thoughts and opinions of my supervisor, as well as the reader, all who shape their own understandings of this research.

Furthermore, ethnographic research techniques justify the pursuit of a methodology embedded with generic concepts and processes that represent a particular life world. In this way, the representation of the actors within this social space is not necessarily concerned with generalizing data through statistical modelling or the universalization of the findings; rather, representativeness is achieved by studying the concepts and processes of HPE (dis)engagement among the participants in a particular social space. Despite my many attempts at trying to convey meaning from the meanings that were expressed by participants, given the technical expectations of academic writing in my own graduate department, this thesis falls into the trap of traditional research writing by providing a linear progression of ideas from one section to another. Thus parts of this thesis and in particular the analysis sections include fragmented analyses of individuals and the research context to illustrate specific points. More telling, some ‘voices’ from participants are used in greater depth than others. While I just outlined that this thesis is a collaborative effort that has resulted in its textual representation, I acknowledge that as the author, I have the final decision to include, emphasize or exclude the voices of these young adolescent boys. Again I suggest that this thesis is simply one set of interpretations and representations of the meaning making processes and experiences at TBS and argue that all of the representations here are temporal and subjected to representation through my own subjectivity.

4.09 Reflexivity

The purpose of this section is not to confess the entire research process, rather my intention is to help contextualize and guide the reader to try and align themselves with my
research findings. With the inundation of research papers outlining and prescribing the
importance of reflexivity (primarily in postmodernist traditions) in qualitative research, what
often remain remains to be discerned and often not presented is the process of reflexivity and its
overall contribution to the research study as a whole. In other words, it is not uncommon in
qualitative research that researchers acknowledge that they were reflexive, yet they provide no
account about how they understood or employed reflexivity and what they were indeed reflexive
of. Conversely however, I acknowledge that there are many qualitative researchers who clearly
outline the role of reflexivity in their research and overtly demonstrate the position of the
researcher’s subjectivity in the collection and analysis of data.

While the term reflexivity has inherited a spectrum of connotations, for the purposes of
my study, reflexivity was understood and deployed as a tool of methodological rigour that
prompted deeper introspection of: epistemological positions; research decisions; research
methods; wording of research questions; questioning of my assumptions about the research
setting before, during and after fieldwork; and my intersectional identities such as race
(Halberstam, 1997), social class (Manderson et al., 2006), gender (Sallee & Harris, 2011),
ability/disability (Gibson et al., 2013), age, sexual orientation (Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson,
2014) and physical capital (Shilling, 2004) as variables that may have influenced the content of
the data collected and generated during fieldwork and interviews.

Reflexivity also accounts for the realities represented during the pursuit of ‘truth’ that I
describe in this paper through the co-construction of data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995;
Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). This rather laborious albeit integral component of this research
study was documented and logged in a reflexivity journal. For Lincoln & Guba (1985), a
reflexivity journal is a very effective guide that provides a dedicated space to reflect on what’s
happening or indeed not happening at any point during the research process. During fieldwork, I wrote in my reflexivity journal immediately after I finished writing my field notes. To be sure, the reflexivity journal did not take up nearly as much time and space as my field notes, but I found it a very worthwhile exercise that helped me analyze my own interactions and movements within the field on a particular day.

Equally, throughout the process of interviewing, the reflexive journal served as an outlet for me to document how my positionality as a white, young male conforming to stereotypical notions of masculinity may have influenced the process of data generation and the co-construction of narratives with respondents. In the reflexivity journal, I noted that my positionality as a young, white male conforming to stereotypical notions of masculinity may have been problematic with some boys but also may have served as a significant symbol to other boys. Throughout the interview process, as soon I had some time post-interview to sit down and collect my thoughts, my entries critically reflected on the types of questions I asked and I detailed the interaction(s) that I experienced with a particular respondent; especially if they seemed reticent, at ease, or anxious. Taken together, the reflexivity journal served as an intermediary outlet between field notes and analytic memos to coalesce what and how I was seeing the data throughout the research study. Indeed, through frequent reflexivity during both fieldwork and interviews, I am confident that I was able to elicit a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the socio-contextual factors that invite and incite (dis)engagement in HPE at TBS.

Paradoxically, while I acknowledge the central importance of reflexivity in my research and in all scientific research endeavours for that matter, I share with Fine (1999) and Gans (1999) that ethnographies should devote more focus to social exploration, rather than self-
exploration during the processes of participant observation and interviews to capture the inner workings of the field and the participants therein.

4.10 Ethical Considerations and Power Relations with Children

As suggested by Clark (2011) and Thorne (1993), remaining cognisant about the fact that children are highly competent social beings that actively and concomitantly co-construct the world with adults is important to remember during all stages of the research process. Like Denzin and Lincoln (1994), I fundamentally believe that developing a rapport and mutual trust with children during fieldwork pays great dividends and can help children feel at ease in the interview space. Yet, despite adopting the ‘friendly adult’ role (Fine, 1987) and my best intentions working with and developing rapport among children of all physical abilities in HPE, my positionality as a ‘friendly adult’ in the HPE classroom nevertheless did not eliminate inherent power differentials. One of the challenges of conducting an ethnography as an assistant HPE teacher is that one embodies power in the process. Although I overtly disclosed and reminded the students that I was a researcher at TBS, did not discipline students, did not teach lessons, never physically wore TBS teaching/coaching attire, and intentionally only wore clothing with the University of Toronto insignia, it is nevertheless possible that I was perceived as a teacher because I spent a considerable amount of time in and around teachers on a daily basis. In the same vein, as an assistant teacher in HPE, I frequently and consciously had to remind myself not to reproduce and impose teaching dogma, pedagogies and ideologies of the fit and active body at TBS onto the students; and I noticed that this increasingly became a challenge as I spent more time in the field. Yet the use of my field notes and reflexivity journal as an outlet for thoughts, contemplations and emotions served as a technique to remain cognisant of the research purpose with the boys at TBS.
4.11 Research Methods in/as Data Collection

Participant observation and interviews are the foundation of this research study and were employed as a method to extend current quantitative and qualitative descriptive research that explores the barriers and facilitators to participation in HPE, physical activity and physical cultures among children and youth. This section reviews the methods (participant observation and active interviewing) that were employed in this study to extract the meaning making processes which resulted in my research findings. Not to be confused with methodology, by methods, I refer to the techniques, procedures and strategies that I used to observe, interpret and analyze the data I generated during a 6 month ethnography with multiple phases of fieldwork conducted over a two year period. Taken together, I posit that the process of data collection and the methods employed therein dovetail with one another and are mutually irreducible. Resultantly, these two sections are presented together as a unified rather than disjointed textual body.

4.12 Negotiating Access into the Research Site

Gaining entry into a culture or social setting is one of the cornerstones of ethnography and depending on the research setting and purpose, gaining entry can be either very easy or very difficult in some cases. For example if the researcher has already developed a relationship with potential known and unknown gate keeper(s) in the field, or has developed a rapport with key informants, it is likely that the researcher will initially be granted access to the ins and outs of the research setting. In contrast when attempting to enter the field without access to gatekeepers and key informants, the process of building rapport, establishing and maintaining competence between the researcher and the researched is of upmost importance (Ely, 1991). The process and challenges of gaining entry during ethnography can be amplified in institutionalized contexts.
such as schools, prisons or mental health care facilities such that institutional gate keepers and administrators may want to limit outward exposure and knowledge dissemination of certain practices, beliefs and behaviours therein. In the context of this research study, access to TBS was gained through a written memorandum of agreement between the University of Toronto and an independent boys’ school. While this written memorandum of agreement provided me physical access into the school, the process of building trust and rapport among the HPE teachers and more broadly teachers and administrators in school should not be discounted. Before even stepping foot into the research site, I recognized that it would be of central importance to ‘hang out’ in the school daily with the teachers and the students so that they felt comfortable with my presence.

Building rapport with teachers went smoothly after our initial discussions about my previous experiences as a competitive varsity athlete, research interests, my HPE teaching background and experience teaching/coaching children and youth in physical education, and competitive sport contexts. My previous experiences in all three domains served as a significant resource and perhaps served as a symbolic form of capital that enabled me to build trust and rapport with the HPE teachers. While there was no formal negotiation about my role in the classroom, it was mutually agreed upon that I would act as an assistant HPE teacher in all classes. My role then as an assistant teacher was to facilitate the set-up of activities, encourage student participation or keep score when students were participating in HPE activities. Although I was ‘in charge’ so to speak, I played no role in developing and implementing lesson plans, disciplining students during HPE class or anywhere else in the school, and or engaging with playground supervision.
A strategy I employed with the HPE teachers was a transparent approach. At the outset of the study I disclosed the purpose of my research, always made my preliminary field notes and ideas accessible to HPE teachers and engaged in debriefing sessions throughout the day providing the teachers with an overview of what I witnessed and or experienced throughout the day. Quite simply, I ‘bounced ideas off’ teachers when they sought my input on a particular activity or issue. These debriefing sessions typically occurred after class or during recess time if the teachers did not have outdoor playground supervision. I found that these debriefing sessions were invaluable as they helped me to really get know each teacher, their pedagogical approaches and their insights about the role of HPE in Ontario elementary schools.

Since this ethnography entailed multiple phases of participant observation, I used e-mail as a point of contact with both the HPE teachers and the research institute manager at TBS to inform them about the progress of my research and what I intended to do when I was in the ‘field’ each week. Although it may seem tedious, complete transparency with the teachers and the research institute manager enabled me to establish and maintain rapport throughout the research process as they were always informed about my timelines for participant observation and or interviewing.

Finally, as an entrance and exit strategy, my contribution to the research site in terms of ‘giving back’ was to provide an external evaluation of the HPE program for TBS. This evaluation was completed at the end of the last phase of fieldwork and was given to the school as a token of my gratitude to the HPE department for allowing me to immerse myself in their lives on a daily basis. This evaluation was designed to inform the HPE department about students’ perspectives and experiences of the current HPE program in an effort to develop best practices. From my point of view, by spending considerable amounts of time with the teachers sharing the
HPE office, eating lunch together in the staff lounge and just simply conversing with them, the process of building rapport with these HPE teachers was facilitated and was an integral component of this entire research study.

4.13 Participant Observation

The foundation of this study, complete immersion in the field, is perhaps best expressed by Goffman (1961) who states:

Any group of persons... develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable and normal once you get close to it... a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject (p. ix-x).

In this study, participant observation helped me contextualize the events and interactions between students and teachers at TBS and concurrently served as a major and vital source of data collection. While some researchers’ may credit and attribute more importance to interviews than participant observation during ethnography in their attempt to conceptually and substantively understand a particular phenomenon of study, participant observation in this study ultimately guided me toward developing interview questions that assisted me with interpretation of the data I was seeing and co-constructing during fieldwork. As a tool to understand the HPE context and resulting behaviour(s) exhibited by students, throughout the process of participant observation and in an effort to extract meaning from participants given to this social space, I sought to elicit what Geertz (1973) called ‘thick description’. Thus during the first few days of fieldwork, I observed and wrote down some of the following details: the layout of the gymnasium; location of the HPE offices; equipment in the gym such as treadmills, rowing machines and stationary bikes; scholastic championship sport photos and athletic banners; contents on the walls (such as equipment for heart rate calculation) posted in the gymnasium; the people in this space and their ascribed roles and statuses; the physical use of space (a large soccer field, also used for softball
alongside a tennis court) that has been dedicated to HPE and sports teams; the HPE uniform; the interactions between students, their peers and their teachers; and specific verbal and non-verbal interactions and behaviours from both students and teachers.

I carried out participant observation over a two-year period, which resulted in six months of fieldwork (see Table 1 below). Given the inductive nature and initial wide scope of the study, I was situated as a participant as observer (Gold, 1958) acting as an assistant HPE teacher with all HPE classes (Junior Kindergarten to grade eight). I was fundamentally involved in the set up and take down of activities, encouraged student participation and kept score when the students were participating in scrimmages. It is important to note however that I did not teach HPE classes or discipline students. I decided to become an assistant HPE teacher because I believed that it would be a great way to get to know each student individually, rather than solely hanging out on the periphery all the time with all classes. Spradley (1980) remarks that the participant as observer is afforded an insider perspective to the research setting, but can also step back and detach themselves from the inner working of the social space when needed. From the very beginning of fieldwork (see Table 1 below), I disclosed my status as a researcher (overt ethnography) to the students and invited students to call me by my first name (Patrick) so that my role as an assistant HPE teacher was not conflated with ideologies of power, authority and domination. While there was initial excitement among the students at TBS to have a visitor and an assistant HPE teacher, this excitement quickly dissipated and my status as an ‘outsider’ faded into the background. I simply became Patrick or that guy from U of T.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Phase 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strict participant observation</td>
<td>Participant observation and five interviews completed</td>
<td>Participant observation and ten interviews completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although I always consciously attempted to engage as a ‘friendly adult’ (Fine, 1987), at times, I was unwillingly forced to intervene as ‘an adult’ when misunderstandings between students arose. Although it is arguably impossible to remain a ‘neutral’ observer in the field, I strived to only intervene with student behaviour only when their immediate safety was in jeopardy. However, when I felt I had to intervene, I always sought assistance from HPE teachers to further resolve the misunderstanding(s). Another significant tension that I experienced in the field was remaining impartial to both the teachers and the students, without jeopardizing my relationship with either group. For example, I was reluctant to point out any student misdemeanours to the HPE teachers as I did not want to undermine the teacher’s authority and presence in the classroom. I also reflexively questioned how reporting student misdemeanours would affect my relationship and rapport with the students and the effects it would or would not have when I was ready to recruit students for interviews.

### 4.14 Fieldwork- Phase 1

Initial participant observations (Phase 1) commenced in January, 2013 and I was at TBS four days a week with all HPE classes. During this first phase of the study, my focus was to strictly engage in participant observation and not worry about conducting interviews with participants. To capture the daily events at TBS, my interactions with students and teachers
entailed fervently listening, watching, writing, sharing and discussing my thoughts and opinions with students and teachers. Since I was working with several classes each day, during the first phase of fieldwork, field notes served as a vital outlet to detail my thoughts regarding the events and behaviours that I observed within this social setting throughout the day. My observations included writing down everything that happened on a particular day; especially novel events and or interactions that I witnessed among different teachers and students across a range of grade levels (JK to grade eight). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) explain “it is difficult to overemphasize the importance of meticulous note taking” (p, 179) since field notes are a significant component of participant observation and ultimately can have a key component in the formulation of interview questions and data interpretation. As suggested by Goffman (1989), field notes should be written throughout the day if possible providing an account of what was said or unsaid, the participant behaviours/interactions and any and all events that seemed interesting. While it may not be practical to take complete notes during HPE classes, jotting down thoughts about what I observed and youth’s behaviours served as invaluable and, enabled me to recount the major occurrences at the end of the day.

Typically I rushed to write down some thoughts during each class, at the end of a class, during student recess, during lunch time and finally at the end of the day as soon as I departed the research site. To facilitate the copious amount of field notes that I was taking, I developed a writing system and procedure that helped me encapsulate all of the events on any given day. For example during the morning recess, I recounted the events that occurred that morning with the previous two or three classes. Throughout the lunch hour, I allotted 15-30 minutes daily to elaborate on the notes that I had jotted down previously. In the course of the afternoon recess, I recaptured the events that I witnessed with the afternoon classes, and finally at the end of the
school day, I recapitulated all the observations of that day and elaborated on the notes I made in my journal. The notes more often than not were able to trigger my memory to a specific event and or interaction, which were elaborated further in my field notes. As advocated by (Goffman, 1989) I stopped writing field notes only when I was duplicating content within the notes. Unless I had other university commitments (such as teaching tutorials, attending seminar sessions or coaching varsity baseball), I typically wrote my field notes at a café near TBS as soon as I left the school. While Becker (1970) and Prus (1996, 1997) note that detailed, in-depth description of field notes can take anywhere between three to six hours recounting the day’s events, I often stayed at the café for three to four hours a day and continued to write until I could not write anymore. The final component of the field note taking procedure that I developed and employed was reading over my field notes from the previous day as I was commuting to TBS. This memory recall practice allowed me to add further detail to some of the events that I described the previous day, while also adding any events that eluded my mind during the initial writing of field notes. This reunification with my notes from the day before also served as a healthy reminder of the events and interactions I witnessed previously and prepared me to potentially further observe some of these behaviours upon my return to the field. Of central concern, maintaining an open mind to “sociologically capture” (Atkinson, 2012b, p.26) new data was an integral component of data collection and was elicited through reflexive considerations of the data I was collecting. By analyzing my notes from the previous day before re-entering the research site, I scrutinized the data I was observing and my method of representation in the field notes.

After a month in the field, I slowly started identifying a particular group of boys to study and further understand their HPE experiences. Looking back at my field notes, some of the
commonalities that continually came to the fore through a thick description of the research context included notes on: the class activities, how they varied between classes and teachers, and how some of the activities and approaches to HPE were the exact same from JK to grade eight; a record of which students participated and or withdrew on a given day; a detailed description of which students were fully engaged in the class activities and notes on which students regularly sat out or were late to class; the interactions between students and especially those who were able to execute the desired movement competencies at TBS with ease; and the interactions between students of all abilities and their teachers in this particular HPE space. Based on some of the interesting interactions that I witnessed in the field among students and teachers, I refined my participant group to boys who were in grades five to eight (9-13 years of age). As fieldwork continued, toward the end of Phase One (end of February, 2013) I decided to centre my study on the grade 8 cohort. My rationale for this was three-fold. Firstly, this group of boys demonstrated an extremely high level of competition amongst each other, especially during team sports that essentially became individualized. Secondly, I observed a great divide in physical ability and levels of participation among this group of boys whereby some students clearly exhibited many years of sporting experience demonstrating a high level of physical ability in HPE, while some boys were less able. ¹ Lastly as noted in the introdution of this thesis, there is little written how boys enjoy and experience HPE in Canadian physical education programs. A quick search of HPE literature revealed that there is a dearth of research that has explored HPE experiences and

---

1. In this study boys are classified as dominant (higher end of the physical ability spectrum) and non-dominant (perceived lower end of physical ability spectrum) based on their observed physical abilities (moving with competence and confidence), the degree and frequency of participation, and their interactions with peers and teachers. As a characteristic of dominance and high physical cultural capital more broadly, all dominant boys participated in interscholastic and extra scholastic competitive team sports while non-dominant boys rarely participated in team sports both at TBS and outside of the school context. As another classificatory strategy, during the interview, each adolescent boy was asked to self-identify with their perceived level of physical ability in HPE and was asked to provide a rationale for their selection of that particular physical ability level. The self-identified ability levels were consistent with the observed interactions and degrees of participation that I propose throughout this paper among both dominant and non-dominant boys.
mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement as adolescent boys’ transition from elementary school into their final year of mandatory institutionalized HPE in Ontario. Thus given the development of these novel insights and the role of grounded theory in this study, the research design was altered to further explore the three novel insights listed above. The ethnographic study was designed to extend a two year period with two grade eight HPE classes (grandaunts of 2013 and 2014).

4.15 Fieldwork-Phase 2

I returned to TBS from May to June 2013 and only attended grade eight HPE classes which were held 2-3 times a week on a rotating schedule. Since I had worked with this group previously and with child-centred participant observation methods at the fore, I sought to re-familiarize and continue to build rapport with the students. As I watched, listened to, and continued to take detailed descriptive field notes day in and day out, these students enabled me to closely observe the inner workings of their class at TBS. For example observing which boys dominated the class through playing time (approximately 19 students) and attention from teachers taught me a great deal about the direct verbal and non-verbal interactions that occurred in this particular class. In contrast, observing and trying to understand which boys who were on the fringe lines of HPE as outsiders looking in (approximately 9 students) increasingly became a challenging task; but this task provoked me to find innovative strategies to try and understand their social worlds and HPE experiences.

Until I was comfortable asking students of any ability to participate in a ‘formal’ interview that occurred outside of the HPE classroom, for the first three weeks of May, I strictly engaged with participant observation. Again my role was established as an assistant HPE teacher in the same capacity (encouraging student participation, keeping score and setting up activities) as the previous phase of fieldwork. Although I went from observing ten classes down to one
class, I continued to write copious field notes with the procedure outlined in Phase One. Two weeks after re-entering the field, I tried to judge whether I was a ‘good fit’ (Clark, 2011) with the boys at TBS. In review of my field notes and reflexive journals, I found that I established the ‘friendly adult role’ (Fine, 1987) with the dominant boys who played on school sports teams, participated in competitive sport outside of school and were the fierce contenders and regular participants in HPE (higher end of the physical ability spectrum). On a daily basis during class time and particularly before the start and end of HPE class, these boys regularly chatted with me about their thoughts, opinions and experiences of HPE. Part of our discussions always involved the students asking me about my thoughts, opinions and experiences in HPE. On numerous occasions I was asked about:

My thoughts about their HPE teachers (this was a recurring question with all boys); whether I thought certain female teachers at TBS were attractive; asked for guidance and clarification of sport tactics and bio-mechanical principles of movement patterns; sought my input about resistance training exercise regimes and exercise programs; asked me who I thought was the best athlete in the class in a range of different sports; asked me what sports and physical activities I like, participate in and or follow. Additionally these dominant boys told me inappropriate jokes that they likely wouldn’t share with their teachers; ‘updated’ me on student gossip; encouraged me to ‘fool’ around in class by throwing or hitting baseballs/softballs as far as I could; and encouraging me to throw American footballs to them as they were running the routes they learned previously in class and or throwing the football down the soccer field as far as I could.

Through these interactions with this dominant group of boys, I perceived that I was ‘in’ and was integrated into their circle (Clark, 2011). My challenge however was to reach out to the rest of the boys in the class, and particularly the perceived non-dominant boys.

As plain and banal as it sounds, if there was a lull during HPE class, I used this time to try and facilitate a discussion with some of the boys who were perceived as having less physical ability. These discussions were centred on asking these boys if they had a favourite sport or physical activity, a favourite subject in school, their social interests and or what they like to do in
their spare time. Trying to achieve the ‘friendly adult’ (Fine, 1987) role with this group of boys, each day I endeavoured to ‘check in’ with these boys so to speak at least once asking them how their day was going. Additionally, I consciously avoided using sarcastic jokes, since that was a commonplace activity from one of the HPE teachers. The first few times I spoke with the non-dominant boys, called them by name and followed-up with them about their favorite activities, I received a very positive reaction; often coupled with a smile. Perhaps because I provided them with undivided attention and remembered their favorite activities when we conversed, they felt that they were no longer lost in the crowd among the other dominant boys. With the non-dominant boys, my interpretation of being ‘in’ occurred when they referred to me as buddy and not Patrick, asked me how my day was going on a daily basis and autonomously followed up on some of the things we spoke about the previous day. Some days I wittingly had to do some back ground research on physical cultures that I was not completely familiar with such as taekwondo, judo or tchoukball to ensure that I had facts at my fingertips when these boys asked me questions about their participation in these particular physical cultures.

Spending valuable time with boys who exhibited a wide range of physical abilities rather than solely relying on descriptive interview based accounts of experiences helped me contextualize the everyday inner and outer workings of HPE at TBS. As participant observation continued toward the end of the academic year at TBS, during the last week of May (after 4 weeks of fieldwork) I finally felt comfortable asking some of the boys to participate in a formal interview. In total, I recruited five boys to participate in pilot interviews that took place in the middle of June 2013. Further details about participant recruitment and interview strategies are listed in this chapter below.
4.16 **Fieldwork - Phase 3**

The last phase of fieldwork at TBS occurred between January and March 2014 with an undifferentiated approach to participant observation as the previous two phases of fieldwork. This third phase of fieldwork however, consisted of a new cohort of grade 8 students (graduands 2014) and although I spent some time working with these boys during the previous year (when they were in grade 7), I was back at stage one in terms of building rapport and developing trust among this group of boys.

As with the previous two phases of fieldwork, I spent my time with boys of all physical abilities since I planned to interview both dominant and non-dominant boys. Similar to my experience during Phase 2 with the other grade eight class, dominant boys typically hung out together and initially seemed interested of my presence in their class. I was asked several times about my sporting experiences as a child, my experiences as a former varsity athlete and my opinions about the status and playing abilities of professional sports teams in Toronto such as the Toronto Maple Leafs (National Hockey League) and the Toronto Blue Jays (Major League Baseball). The boys who exhibited high physical ability (dominant boys) were typically athletically inclined, participated in scholastic athletics and also participated in competitive sports and physical activities outside of school. Some of these extra-scholastic activities included: skiing, ice hockey, baseball, cross-country running and basketball. Again, I felt that I was able to build rapport with the dominant boys with ease, as we often spoke informally in a joking-type manner. If anything, some of these boys were overly comfortable with my role in their classroom and some of the boys jokingly tried taunting me on several occasions. Particularly three boys seemed to have no problem teasing me. Consider the following three excerpts:
“Hey Patrick, I heard you’re a goalie but you must suck since a coupon could save more goals than you can” (Aloysius)

“I thought you played hockey Belak, common and try to score on me you plug” (Penny)

“You shoot like a girl! My grandma could shoot harder than you can” (A-Rod)

These chirping (trash talking) events as it was described to me by one of the boy’s happened most frequently in the absence of teachers and typically occurred when the class was transitioning from one activity to another. While on the surface these sorts of interactions may seem problematic, rather than punishing these students and or reporting their ‘deviant’ behaviours to teachers, I would simply try to redirect these boys by changing the subject if I was still working with that particular group in an effort not to jeopardize my rapport with this group of students. Reflecting on these episodes of chirping in my reflexivity journal, I noted that chirping was very overt among boys who played competitive hockey and substantially increased during the hockey unit, as opposed to the Olympic and volleyball teaching units. I questioned whether the frequency and overt nature of chirping from these three boys (all who played on competitive hockey teams for TBS and their respective club teams) was somehow related to the stereotypical embodied characteristics of masculinity and dominance that were expected of them as competitive hockey players and were expressed in the corporeal context of HPE. Yet the net impact of my subjectification to these chirping events however enabled me to penetrate deeper into their lived subjectivities in HPE during interviews; particularly with one of the boys (Aloysius) who was referred to as ‘chirp’ or ‘pest’ by his peers.

Trying to understand how boys of all physical abilities enjoy and experience HPE and the socio-contextual factors that promote (dis)engagement, I was cognisant of building rapport with the non-dominant boys as well. I was also well aware of the fact that this process would take much more time and a slightly different approach than I used with the boys who were on the
higher end of the ability spectrum described above. Perhaps fortuitously, on a daily basis I spoke with boys who were sitting out of HPE on a particular day. While their reasons for not participating ranged from a diagnosed injury by a health professional, through to forgetting part or the entire TBS HPE uniform (at times accidentally and at other times deliberately), I utilized this ‘dead’ time to get to know some of these boys on a more personal level; especially some of the boys who sat out of HPE for weeks on end. I typically spoke to the boys who were not participating during the warm-up run, which was anywhere between seven and fifteen minutes in duration at the beginning of class. Habitually, when HPE was held in the gymnasium, boys who were not participating assumed their ‘positions’ on the stage in their school uniforms, either socializing with one another and or utilizing the stationary cardiovascular machines such as the treadmill, rowing machine or bicycle. With no specific agenda, our informal conversations were about the zealousness of participating (and or in this case, not participating) in HPE, the purpose of my research, and my presence/role at TBS. At times it seemed as if I was under interrogation by the some of these students as they sought to understand my role at TBS and more specifically in their classroom. Yet I did not see this as a problem at all and speculated that during their daily petty contingencies (Goffman, 1961) of institutionalized education, they were simply trying to make sense of my adult status as friend or a foe.

In addition to the strategies employed during the HPE class warm-up time, when students were participating in the skills and drills session of the class, I would actively circulate in the gymnasium among the boys with less perceived abilities and ask them if somehow I could assist them, to either understand a concept of the game or demonstrating how to hold a hockey stick for example. Despite my best intentions with this approach, some of the boys could have easily perceived me as an authoritative adult speaking to them in a top-down way about what to do; a
pedagogical preference that I witnessed at TBS. In an effort to minimize such interpretations, throughout the duration of the class, I would only ask them if they needed my assistance once, unless they sought my assistance. At times when some of the boys simply stated that they did not need any further assistance in any capacity, I respected that and continued to assume my role as the assistant in the class with some of the other boys. In retrospect non-dominant boys seemed to respond positively to this approach and often thanked me for my assistance, which was reassuring. Once these boys started asking me for clarification consistently and were open to talk about sport, physical activity and even board games, I sensed a mutual development of understanding, trust and rapport.

Despite the fact that I was immersed in my third stint of fieldwork at TBS, I noticed that my role in the HPE classroom progressed into a much more of a dynamic one. Upon analysis of my own interactions through field notes, reflexive journals and extensive memoing throughout the course of this study, I noticed that my role in the field during Phase 3 progressed from a somewhat static participant as observer role in Phase 1 of fieldwork (Gold, 1958) to a much more malleable, integrated and recursive role in the HPE classroom. There were times when I was fully participating in HPE (complete participant), shooting basketball hoops, or passing the ball with some students before class started. There were other times where I found myself completely off to the side or on the stage (complete observer), observing the class on my own instead of keeping score or encouraging student participation. There were also times within a 60-minute HPE lesson that I transitioned from an observer as participant, to a complete observer, through to the participant as observer and the complete participant. This recursive movement through these roles was not consciously premeditated and or developed a priori before attending TBS on a particular day, rather when in situ with a group of 32 boys, the significance of the
social situation working with the same group of children naturally dictated how I moved around this social space. Perhaps this dynamic role in HPE can be attributed to my previous teaching and coaching experiences in sport and HPE, facilitating my ability to move within this social space with ease and without hesitation. Indeed, this fluid movement between Gold’s (1958) typology of research roles enabled me to build trust and rapport with all students seeking to become the ‘friendly adult’ and contextually describing (or sketching) a ‘thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the HPE environment at TBS. It was only then at that point that I felt comfortable and ready to ask some boys to participate in ‘formal’ interviews.

### 4.17 Getting to Know You: Interviewing Adolescent Boys

The second major method of data collection was a formal, individual in-depth interview with some of the boys at TBS. In this context, I refer to these interviews as formal because they occurred outside of HPE classroom in a dedicated time and space during which I hoped to deepen my understanding of some of the data I had observed during fieldwork. Participant interviews whether they are open, structured or semi-structured are one of the prototypical methods of ethnography, as scholars seek to deepen their understanding of the research site and its members who are immersed in the environment. Interviews provided an opportunity for me to follow-up on, build on, and further explore some of the data that was collected during participant observation. As noted by Swain (2006), participant observation and interviews are dialogic; actively influencing and informing one another in the construction and interpretation of meaning. With children and young adolescents, the interview can serve as a gateway into a new world of insight to further understand their daily lives, challenges and experiences in school based and non-school based settings. Since interviews with children can hardly be predictable (Clark, 2011), similar to the goals of child-centred participant observation listed above,
reflexivity, open-mindedness, rapport building, empathy and bracketing adult suppositions of power and dominance are central tenets when interviewing children and young adolescents (Lanclos, 2003). Since there is great variety in interview styles simply based on interviewing experience, interviewer’s personality, concurrent with experience working and speaking to children, Clark (2011) combines some of Ginsburg’s (1997) ideas to propose 19 guidelines for a successful child-centred interview. These being:

1. Don’t invite multiple kids when you intend to interview one.
2. Check out the equipment and setting beforehand if possible.
3. Spend time with the child to get to know them at the outset.
4. Provide privacy.
5. Clearly explain the interview process.
6. Bring to the interview specific, age-appropriate tasks.
7. Start and end with an easy task.
8. Vary the tasks over the course of time.
9. Sensitively make your way within a child’s zone of proximal development.
10. Show sincere human warmth.
11. Monitor the child’s affective state.
12. Encourage, don’t belittle.
13. Seek to understand, rather than judge.
15. Look and listen.
16. Pick up the child’s language.
17. Repeat and explore.
18. If you must hint, do so carefully.

While on the surface these guidelines may seem prescriptive, they should be interpreted as guiding tools to be potentially employed when interviewing children and young adolescents. Of course these are simply guidelines that may play a role in developing a fruitful in-depth interviews that attempts to go beyond simple surface level ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘I don’t know’ responses from reticent participants. Most importantly however, each and every interview with a child is different and unique in its own right such that interviewers should not expect to come across perfect, standardized verbal and emotional responses from participants.
### 4.18 Why Interviews

Individual interviews as opposed to focus groups and or group interviews were selected in this study for several reasons. First an individual child-centred interview provides the researcher with a dedicated time, positive, safe, and equitable space to further explore the child’s perspectives and experiences as a HPE participant. Given that my research was designed to seek a detailed understanding of their HPE experiences, I sought to interview boys who were perceived to exhibit both high and low physical abilities in HPE. Finding a safe place for the boys to share their stories with me was primarily established for boys who were perceived to be on the lower end of the physical ability spectrum, as I thought that this group of boys might be reticent to participate in focus groups with individuals of mixed or similar ability levels.

Although I agree with Goffman’s (1989) suggestion to conduct interviews in “multi-person situations” (p.131) since the ‘extra’ person from the field can act as an oscillator between fictional and non-fictional accounts, in this case study working with boys of all abilities, I thought that this strategic method would have been more of a problem than a resource. I believe that the presence of another person or indeed group of persons during the interview or a focus group for that matter would have severely limited some participants from disclosing their experiences, and as such, participants may have only provided with me guarded accounts of their HPE experiences in an effort to prevent public humiliation. While on the surface it may appear that I assumed that boys on the perceived lower end of the physical ability spectrum would not be interested in participating or even could potentially become reticent during focus group sessions, based on my experiences teaching HPE and coaching children, engaging children and youth to participate in HPE class or in an interview necessitates an approach that does not publicly shame or blame these children for their HPE abilities. Thus an individual interview was
selected to include their perspective in this study, rather than marginalizing them further in HPE research and schooling environments.

4.19 Recruitment of Participants

The sampling procedure that I adopted was a convenience or criterion purposive sample (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As with all research studies, the researcher makes decisions about who and or what will be included during data collection. In this study my criteria for participation in the interview were very loosely based as I drew from child-centred research methods. Thus any grade eight student at TBS who wished to participate was encouraged to do so. While each and every student in the class received a study participation package, ultimately, I could only interview the boys who returned the appropriate institutional consent forms. Because I sought to elicit the perspectives from boys across the HPE physical ability spectrum in an effort to understand how their experiences may have been similar or different, the challenge was finding a temporal procedure for recruitment that would recruit all participants that I wanted to talk to at TBS. Given that I seemed to build trust and rapport rather quickly with the dominant boys, they were interviewed first. Furthermore as I outlined in the participant observation section of data collection, building rapport with the non-dominant boys required a differentiated approach that required significant time and patience. Reflecting on their lack of participation in HPE, I decided that in order to try and make sense of their experiences, a patient rather than an overzealous approach to building rapport was necessary. In both Phase 2 and Phase 3 of fieldwork, the same approach to recruiting interviewees was applied.

4.20 The Active Interviewing Technique

Once guardian consent and student assent forms were returned and verified by the research manager at TBS, interviews were scheduled. I met with the interviewees shortly after
HPE class at TBS during lunch-time. On average interviews were 30 to 45 minutes in length and prior to the start of the interview, I reviewed the assent form with each student, explained what the interview would entail and reminded them that there would be a digital tape-recorder on the table beside me. The interviewing strategy that I adopted was the active interviewing technique, which resembles semi-directed questioning to elicit a range of personal experiences and perspectives about HPE at TBS. The active interview strategy builds on Husserl’s (1970) philosophy whereby he posited that objects and experiences do not passively impress themselves onto humans; rather they are elicited through human consciousness and subjective experience.

As such the active interview sought to “incite narrative production” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p.18), encouraging participants to delve into detailed thought processes and responses about their experiences and interpretations of the world. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) note that the active interviewer “intentionally, concertedly provokes responses by indicating—even suggesting—narrative positions, resources, orientations, and precedents for the respondent to engage in addressing the research questions under consideration” (p. 39). In other words, an active interview acknowledges that the interviewer and the interviewee “play interdependent and equally complicit roles in the construction of narratives” (Atkinson, 2003, p. 83) as the researcher endeavours to elicit a wide range of perspectives on a certain topic or salient issue of study.

As a central tenet of the interviewing strategy, throughout the interview, the researcher strives to develop an informal conversation and a discussion with the interviewee that is enveloped with a rich description of personal experiences and meaning making processes. Thus it is not uncommon with this interviewing strategy that the interviewer at times shares their status and their own experiences about the particular area of study, however, the interviewer does so
cautiously, ensuring that they do not dominate the conversation. For example, when a former major junior hockey player who played in the Canadian Hockey League (CHL) interviews current and former hockey players about their experiences and perspectives in an effort to spearhead the development of a labour union for current players in the CHL, the interviewer would at times share his experiences, thoughts and interpretations as a player in the league to facilitate an environment of open dialogue and mutual exchange of ideas and emotions. As such the interviewer’s insider perspective renders the active interviewing technique in this case a significant and valuable resource, potentially encouraging the interviewees to share more intimate details of experiences as non-unionized athletes who were exploited for their bodies, skills and abilities in capitalist ice hockey markets (see Grygar, 2013).

The structure of an active interview is guided by an interview schedule that is loosely structured with open-ended questions. However as noted by Atkinson (2003), the interview questions included in the interview guide simply act as a potential template for discussion, and not a rigid, prescriptive framework that requires strict adherence. As a result, it is not uncommon that once the interview commences, the interview takes a path of its own, transcending several topics and areas of interest related to both the interviewer and the interviewee. To dig deeper than the prototypical structured, semi-structured or open interview, some scholars have employed the active interview strategy by playing the uninformed (Becker, 1954) or conversely, aggressively questioning and challenging participants throughout the conversation resembling the ‘good cop, bad cop’ persona (Hathaway & Atkinson, 2003). Of course, these aforementioned aggressive and skeptical interview tactics may be extremely valuable in certain areas of research but are perhaps not applicable while interviewing children and young adolescents. While from the outset it may seem that the active interviewing technique is a ‘faux pas’ with children and
young adolescents and in direct opposition to child-centred research, the interviewing technique in this study was employed as a strategy to further co-construct children’s HPE experiences without skeptically and aggressively questioning the participants (Hathaway and Atkinson, 2003) or ‘playing dumb’ (Becker, 1954). Since little is known about the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys in elementary schools, I sought an interviewing strategy that would encourage candid, rich descriptive accounts, situated within the context of HPE at TBS. Resultantly, the active interviewing technique was deliberately selected as a strategy for boys who were on the high end and low end of the physical ability spectrum in an effort to encourage participants to empathetically reflect on their HPE experiences at TBS. In turn, this interviewing strategy possessed great flexibility and encouraged me to transcend a wide range of questions and responses that were related to the creation of the meta-narrative outlined in this study.

With this interviewing strategy in mind, rather than presenting the interview as an interrogation of HPE experiences, I sought to conduct an interview that resembled an informal discussion with the boys. By asking the boys how they feel about participating in sports, HPE and physical culture more broadly, I was able to initially judge whether a participant was going to openly or reticently participate in our discussion. I was also prepared to work with the fact that a participant may try to avoid discussing their experiences and feelings altogether. If I sensed that a participant was initially reticent, we spent much more time with introductory discussions surrounding the interviewee’s interests and about who I was as a researcher and former participant in institutionalized HPE, sport and physical culture. Part of facilitating an open discussion with adolescent boys includes speaking with them as if you are an adolescent. For example when a participant used profane language during the interview, I carried on the
conversation without scolding them about their choice of diction. However, I did have to remain cognizant of not using vulgar language myself in order to maintain an ethical and professional environment with the boys.

All participants were interviewed one at a time and each interview began in a fairly uniform fashion as I asked each interviewee how many years they have been students at TBS and whether they were physically active outside of school (see Appendix C). These ‘small talk’ type questions were implemented to encourage the participants to start thinking about insights and experiences as they related to sport, physical activity and HPE participation. An intentionally open-ended question followed the first few as I asked: What did you think of today’s class? At this point, respondents reflected on the class from their perspective which was immensely valuable, as I was able to trace and make sense of what I was seeing and indeed not seeing during class time. While the active interview in principle is loosely structured, there were a few key questions that I asked when the respondents described their specific HPE experiences. I ‘confronted’ (Baker, 1998) respondents asking them to discuss how they would self-identify about their physical abilities at TBS. If the respondents stared at me perplexedly and went quiet for an extended amount of time, I prompted them to think about their abilities from a set of four categories that I suggested which included: low, medium, high and or other. Of course instead of settling for an inadequate reflexive response, I asked the respondents to think about examples that descriptively illustrated their identification with that particular physical ability level.

A significant portion of the interview thereafter consisted of a discussion that centred on the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement and how their current self-identified physical ability level, social identities and experiences in elementary school HPE might be associated with the desire to persist with and or withdraw from HPE in secondary school. During our discussions, to
facilitate a child friendly environment and an aura of mutual exchange that centred on narratives about the enjoyment and experience of elementary school HPE, at times I continued or initiated a conversation by discussing my own thoughts and interpretations as an outsider looking in. For example with one respondent, I stated “I noticed that you started up the dodge ball game and Mr. Woodcock (a pseudonym) appointed you as team captain, something I haven’t seen in my time working with you guys at TBS. What was that experience like?” This mutual disclosure likely facilitated trust and rapport building between the study participants and myself. Additionally, a few boys, and particularly those boys who self-identified as having low physical abilities, expressed gratitude for my recognition of their efforts and achievements in reaching HPE developmental milestones. Now this is not to say that their teachers did not recognize their efforts in HPE. Rather, I believe that given the nature of my detailed participation observations and the opportunity to highlight their triumphs, pitfalls and works in progress during the interview, I can safely speculate that respondents felt they were recognized for their HPE endeavours from a ‘friendly adult’, especially one who was not going to assign them a letter grade on their institutional report cards. Interestingly, while I suggested and highly encouraged each interviewee to express their thoughts and experiences through visual representations (drawings, poetry, and photos), all participants partook in the verbal interview.

4.21 Post-Interview Strategies: Transcription and Participant Follow-up

In all interviews, I used a small digital tape-recorder and also jotted down notes that detailed participants’ facial and bodily expressions during certain questions. For example, I noticed when one of the participants was enthralled about providing examples about his positive sporting and HPE experiences, he stood up from his chair and wandered around the room narrating his experiences to me aloud. In addition, I noted that providing some participants with
the interview guide (modified from the one included in Appendix C) itself seemed to limit outward expressions of anxiety, as often voices transitioned from a quivering nervousness to a relaxed tone.

At the time of the interviews, I was only conducting participant observation in the grade eight class and was able to immediately transcribe the interview verbatim upon the completion of the interview. With the addition of some notes that I had jotted down during the interview, the transcripts were returned to participants by the next HPE class (within the next two school days). While there is some debate about the role of member checking in qualitative research (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002; Mays & Pope, 2006), my purpose to include respondent validation was done to provide participants with an opportunity to edit sensitive and or life traumatizing events out of the transcript record that they did not wish to be included in the study. Interestingly rather than removing information, all boys had something to add to the interview and asked me to add more detailed information into the transcript. For instance, one respondent who discussed his enjoyment about dominating other students provided me with further examples of the instances whereby he bullied the non-dominant boys in the class. Furthermore, a participant who initially was somewhat reticent but appeared to be more at ease when I provided him with the interview guide (modified from the one included in Appendix C) substantially added more detail about some of the challenging experiences he had encountered in HPE. As a result, participants reviewing their respective transcripts gave me further insight into the lives of these adolescent boys at TBS.

4.2.2 Data analysis

This section delves into the process of data analyses that situated the research findings presented below, and ultimately shed new light onto the extension of Bourdieu’s conceptual tool
of capital into *physical cultural capital*. Unlike quantitative research, there are several ways of analyzing qualitative data, however there is no one method of analysis that has been championed in qualitative research (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Given that this research was an ethnographic grounded theory study, the analysis of the data logically then was underpinned through principles of grounded theory. Although grounded theory is a general research method and doesn’t ‘belong’ to a particular school of thought or research paradigm, it has been widely adapted, modified and altered since its canonical inception by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Even the original founders (Glaser and Strauss) disagreed on the application of grounded theory in all facets of research and as a result published separate iterations of the method. Despite the epistemological differences between Glaser and Strauss, methodologically speaking, this study adhered to Glaser’s (2001) guidelines of data analysis developed through constant comparison and the systemic rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories to develop theory or at least sets of interrelated theoretical concepts.

As outlined previously on page 59, grounded theory is an active recursive process that requires the researcher to move forward and back throughout the processes of data collection and analysis. As a result, as I was conducting fieldwork and interviews during the three phases of data collection, I was simultaneously trying to make sense of the data I was collecting and how it related to my research questions and study purpose. As suggested by Glasser (2001), this process of making sense of the data collected is initiated by open coding all data, and I coded for data that revolved around behaviours, experiences and interactions in the field from the adolescent boys, HPE teachers and the direct manifestation of the HPE environment. Codes in this sense were ideas and meanings I provided to the data from embodied verbal and visual experiences in
the field. Since I was overwhelmingly gathering voluminous amounts of data from just one phase of fieldwork, open coding helped me to try and make sense of what was going on in the field altogether. Given that the study initially commenced with the observation of ten HPE classes, through open coding and constant comparison or constant (re)interpretation of data, I was able to identify the purpose and my substantive area of study. It was not until the end of the first phase of *in situ* participant observation that the method of open coding and constant comparison opened my eyes to the interactions, competitive nature and paucity of research that investigated HPE experiences among grade eight boys who were transitioning into their final year (grade nine) of institutionalized HPE in Ontario, that I decided to focus on this particular HPE cohort.

For the sake of representation, analysis in research studies may appear to be a linear process, but, the analysis in this study was by no means linear. Rather, it included several instances of false diversions that required me to rethink, problematize and revisit the data I was analyzing. Taken together, analysis was an evolving process that was continual, repetitive and comparative in nature, rather than blitzkrieg and straightforward. Here interpretive memos (and throughout the entire process of analysis more broadly) enabled me to try and deduce potential relationships with other codes in the data that I was collecting. Particularly at the conclusion of data collection during Phase 2 with five pilot interviews in hand, the data started to make much more conceptual sense; as extra-curricular physical cultural experiences intersected closely with individual HPE behaviours described by participants. As data collection continued during Phase 3, I continued to open code field notes, interview transcripts, reflexive journals and interpretive memos until four open codes came to the fore: *complacency/acquiescence* and *domination/capitalization*. These four complimentary open codes and dualistic themes of physical abilities and HPE participation at TBS prompted me to further explore the mechanisms
of HPE (dis)engagement. More specifically, I was intrigued to further understand how some boys, who self-identified with high physical ability, spoke highly of interscholastic and extracurricular HPE sporting experiences and aligned identities of dominance in HPE among their peers. For the boys in this dominant group, the mere thought of no longer participating in secondary school HPE, sport and physical activity was something they could not fathom. In contrast however, what intrigued and surprised me was that some grade eight boys were already actively contemplating ceasing their participation in HPE, sport and physical activity participation if they ‘didn’t have to do it’. It was here that open coding ceased and I moved into selective coding to co-construct core categories emerging from the main research question in the study being: Based on elementary school HPE experiences, what are the mechanisms that invite and or incite HPE (dis) engagement among adolescent boys who are transitioning into their final year of compulsory secondary school HPE in Ontario? How does one’s anticipated participation in secondary school HPE related to HPE experiences in elementary school?

With the selective codes of complacency/acquiescence, and domination/capitalization and a focused research question in mind, I sought to develop conceptual clarity by sub-coding data. For example I sub-coded for forms of complacency/acquiescence and domination/capitalization from curricular and sporting practices at TBS, mental and bodily social identities and schemata’s that were exhibited by the students and their participation (or lack thereof) in sport and physical culture outside of the HPE context. To delve into the mechanisms that invited and incited HPE participation, I continued to interview boys from a wide range of HPE physical abilities who I imagined would have very different HPE experiences. I also started to think about the moral panic surrounding the physical (in) activity levels of adolescents in Canada and, what potential factors motivate young adolescents to persist
with and or contemplate dropping out of HPE as soon as they institutionally are allowed to do so.

Concomitantly, I frequently (re)evaluated how bodies were being taught to move, act and understood at TBS by purposefully focusing my field observations, interviews and analysis of the HPE curriculum/lesson plans on activities of acquiescence or domination.

Once I felt that the ethnography was no longer yielding new data about complacency/acquiescence and domination/capitalization (data saturation), it was at this point that I moved toward theoretical abstraction in sociological literature. Again, since this study was an ethnographic grounded theory study, I sought to develop rather than simply apply a theoretical framework and make my data ‘fit’ in. As a result, the data I collected about complacency/acquiescence and domination/capitalization drove the analysis and the extensive memos served as a space for interpretations of the embodied HPE physicalities and experiences. To reach theoretical abstraction from these embodied social experiences that were reified and expressed onto the corporeal (Jachyra, Atkinson & Gibson, 2014), I explored several theories that I thought would help me further conceptualize and operationalize the data I gathered. Some of these theories included: Norbert Elias’s theory of the hinge within/as figurational sociology; Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical theory and HPE as a total institution; Judith Butler’s theory of performativity as it relates to the performativity of gender and bodily movements in HPE; Michel Foucault’s theories of bio-power, bio-pedagogy and technologies of power/domination; and Henri Lefebvre’s production of space theory. Ultimately however, Pierre Bourdieu’s research on power, domination, reproduction, and social struggles that actively ensue through domination/subordination (whether tacitly or explicitly) was chosen to unpack the data and the contexts described by study participants.
As I continued to dig deeper and glean through the data, I came to grips with the magnitude of the intersections of HPE participation (and lack thereof), participation in physical cultures outside of the school setting, processes of multiple masculinities (i.e. hegemonic, subordinate and marginalized) and current HPE practices at TBS and saw how they could be tied into Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of field, capital, physical capital, habitus, practice and symbolic violence. More telling, the behaviours/interactions that I observed and documented during fieldwork and the narratives that were co-constructed during interviews dovetailed with Bourdieu’s (2001) thesis of masculine domination, whereby he posited that gender relations, structures and behaviours are observed, somatized and become naturalised in society; a circular, deeply engrained causality in the maintenance and reproduction of gender order. These analytical tools were not only central to observing the symbolic and embodied gender relations in HPE at TBS, but also played a formative role in explicating how boy’s actively seek to acquire, mobilize and convert capital, which as I argue below, serves as the overarching concept in this research that ultimately mediates a habitus of HPE (dis)engagement. Thus these critical interactions between the physical body, culture, gender, distributions of power and HPE participation as sources of capital, along with Bourdieu’s analytic tools of gender domination (observation, somatization and naturalization) formulated an elaboration of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools of physical and cultural capital into physical cultural capital.

In what follows, physical cultural capital as an extension of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools should be seen as a unified, empirically grounded, and theoretically informed relationship surrounding the nexus of the body in/as physical culture and the (un)conscious power relations that mediate within. With this conceptual tool in mind, below I map out the intersectionalities of
masculinity and corporeal physicalities that serve as dispositions toward HPE (dis)engagement in the school lives of 15 adolescent boys.

CHAPTER 5

5.01 Coming out to Play: Mechanisms of HPE (Dis)Engagement

This chapter presents the mechanisms that I saw as associated with HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys of varying physical abilities at TBS. Specifically, this chapter elucidates the intersubjective and intrasubjective meanings that were assigned to HPE and the associated pleasures and pains of participating. Concomitant with the deeply engrained HPE practices located in this particular social field, through the observation, somatization and naturalization of the valorized forms of physical cultural capital, adolescent boys actively (re)produce dispositions (habitus) toward participation and or withdrawal from HPE. By uncovering the meanings adolescent boys attribute to elementary school HPE experiences, a discussion is facilitated regarding their anticipated participation in secondary school HPE. To this end, in an effort to contextualise the study findings and the theoretical naissance of physical cultural capital, this chapter commences with an introduction of the study participants and teachers, followed by the mechanisms of HPE engagement, the mechanisms of HPE disengagement and concludes with the discussion of anticipated HPE participation in secondary school. Although the findings and integrated analysis of HPE participation are presented as three separate subsections of this research project, they should be interpreted as three concatenated sections that underscore the inextricable relationship between the practices and governing logics of this particular social field and the degree to which physical cultural capital becomes integrated into the formation of a habitus of HPE (dis)engagement.
5.02 *Introducing the interviewees*

To contextualize the research findings of this ethnographic case study surrounding HPE (dis)engagement, localizing how bodies were organized, represented and how boys experienced HPE at TBS, I begin by introducing the interviewees and my rationale to do so is threefold. First and as repeatedly argued throughout this thesis, children and young adolescents are social agents in their own right and independent of adult preconceptions of what it means to be a child in contemporary society, they actively construct and negotiate their own understandings of the social world. As such before I attempted to understand their life worlds theoretically, descriptively illustrating a ‘day in the life’ of each and every child in this study enabled me to understand how a habitus of (dis)engagement in HPE at TBS is (re)formed.

Second while it is now a widespread practice to claim that qualitative research gives ‘voice’ to participants and particularly to marginalized children and youth, often voices remain selectively muted however as researchers have ultimate control of the data, cutting and pasting their narratives into our research as we see it fit best. Unfortunately there often is little account of who participants actually are and their life stories/experiences outside of the interview context. Concomitantly, I also acknowledge that there is excellent qualitative research that includes participants lives, voices, and stories beautifully, and in this thesis, I strived to achieved that balance with the implementation of child-centred research methods. Finally, by introducing each interviewee, the descriptive and theoretically informed groundwork is laid out and these descriptive narratives highlight how boys engage and or resist participation in ‘body work’ as central components related to the acquisition of *physical cultural capital*, and the formation of a habitus of HPE (dis)engagement at TBS. All names presented hereafter in this study are pseudonyms selected by the study participants.
**Khanseb**

Khanseb has been a student at TBS since grade seven (2 years). He was a reserved participant in HPE often only interacting with Sebastian, and was often observed on the sidelines of HPE. When his classmates were choosing teams, he typically was selected last by team captains and when he was participating, it appeared as if he simply was going through the motions. In his grade eight year, he participated on the TBS track and field team as a shot putter. Outside of school, Khanseb was an avid participant in taekwondo, participating at least three times a week. He remarked that at times he strategically integrates some of the skills he learned in taekwondo into HPE as a marker of his sporting identity. During our interview, although he acknowledged that he strongly disliked being selected last (or at least at the end of the pack), he stated that being selected last has become normalized for him, accepted and expected each and every class.

**John**

John has been a student at TBS for all of elementary school JK to-grade eight (10 years). Unless he was injured, or participating in other sporting endeavours away from school, he always participated in HPE at a high intensity. At TBS, he actively participated on the track and field team, cross-country team and ice hockey team. He also held the record for the fastest mile run time at TBS. Outside of the school context, John played competitive squash and was a part of the University of Toronto Track and Field club for cross-country. John was one of the most popular boys in the class and it seemed as if there always was intense activity around him in HPE.
Sebastian

Sebastian has been a student at TBS since grade six (3 years) and even though it seemed to me as if he had a difficult time ‘keeping up’ with the other students in the class, he nevertheless attempted to participate in every class. In our interview, he remarked that not many students in the class know that he participates in Kung Fu outside of school and he ‘rather keep it that way’. Amongst his peer group, he was fairly quiet and did not interact with any other boys except for Khanseb. When team captains were used to formulate teams, he was also often picked toward the end. Sebastian explained that he didn’t not mind if he was picked toward the end because he did not want to slow down the other boys in the class.

Frank

Frank has been a student at TBS since grade five (4 years) and often was one of the first students in the gymnasium daily. He always participated in all activities at vigorous intensities and was always selected by a team captain in the first round (4 students per round). During his interview, he remarked that HPE is his favourite school subject and he would never miss it if he did not need to. Frank was an assistant captain on the school hockey team and also played competitive hockey outside of school which incorporates both on-ice and dry land training. During HPE, Frank socialized with the other students in his class who also played hockey both for the school team and at their respective competitive club teams.

Peter

Peter has been a student at TBS since grade two (7 years) and like Frank, was a very active participant in HPE. He often was one of the first students to come to class in uniform ready to participate. During class time, he was fully immersed in the action and was also very
quick to voice his displeasure when he thought the referee (a student or a teacher) made a call that he did not agree with. Outside of school, he played tennis and golf and during his interview he noted that if he was bored at home, he did push-ups to keep himself entertained. Peter was a social butterfly and interacted with everyone. However, he spent most of his time with the ‘in crowd’ as he described it; the boys who played hockey and were well respected by their classmates for their physical abilities and sporting achievements.

**Hugg**

Hugg has been a student at TBS since grade seven (2 years) and was the second tallest student in his class. He often came to class late and joined in half way during the seven or fifteen minute warm-up run. From the ages of 8-12, he was a competitive swimmer but since then has ceased participation. At TBS, he was a member of the rugby team and participated in Gaelic football outside of school. Despite his experiences in competitive sport, during HPE class, he often kept to himself and did not interact much with the other boys. During the ball hockey and two day outdoor broom ball unit, he was the victim of numerous incidents of verbal name calling, taunting, shoving and cage fighting (having one’s head moved around by another person who holds onto the cage of a hockey helmet). When recollecting these experiences, he said that the perpetrators were the dumb jocks in the class who sadly did not know any better.

**Snazzy cats**

Snazzy cats has been a student at TBS since grade seven (2 years) and often came late to class. Practically every day, he had difficulty locating his uniform in his locker or ‘accidentally’ forgot it altogether. There were times when he came to class well after the warm-up run was completed and the class was in the midst of completing the first activity. In his interview, he
expressed that he hates being the “fat” kid in class because he receives negative attention from teachers and students all the time. He also noted that fitness tests are “disheartening” and he seemed resolved about his degree of physical fitness that was expected of him. Snazzy cats does not participate on any school teams, nor does he participate in a sport or physical culture outside of school, however he did note that he would like to join a dodge ball league since dodge ball is his favourite activity in HPE. During HPE class and in the school cafeteria during lunch-time, he interacted exclusively with the boys who were also categorized as on the lower end of the physical ability spectrum.

**Storm**

Storm has been a student at TBS since grade four (6 years) and was a keen HPE student as he was in uniform and on time for each and every class. He was an active participant in cross-country running, soccer, basketball, and the softball team at TBS. Storm also was a provincially ranked Nordic skier who completed five days of dry land fitness training. Even though he did not play hockey, he was very popular amongst his peers and was one of the boys who often had to divide his attention among the peers who always seemed eager to talk with him.

**Penny**

Penny also was a very keen HPE student and has been a student at TBS since grade five (4 years). Although smaller in stature compared to his peers, he was slick, agile and full of energy each and every day. He played competitive ice hockey and also was a member of the ice hockey team at TBS. He was highly regarded by HPE teachers and was often asked by the teachers to assist with leadership activities. Despite being called a ‘teacher’s pet’ on multiple occasions by some of his peers, he was still well accepted by the dominant group of boys who
played competitive ice hockey. During the interview on numerous occasions, he spoke about the importance of using sport and HPE as a place to build character and mental toughness for boys.

**Eli Silver**

Eli Silver has been a student at TBS since grade seven (2 years) and appeared to be on the fringe lines of HPE. Through his interactions in class, it appeared that he had a difficult time ‘keeping up’ with some of the dominant boys. He noted that outside of the school context, he does not participate in formal organized sports or any physical cultures. He remarked that he generally tries to be active by playing street hockey with his neighbour and playing with his younger siblings in the playground after school. Interestingly, he almost exclusively socialized with the same boys before, during and after HPE class.

**A-Rod**

A-Rod has been a student at TBS since grade five (4 years) and was always an active participant in HPE. He also was an active participant in sport outside of school as well. He played competitive ice hockey at the highest level for his age category and was admitted into a prestigious independent secondary school in Toronto for both his academic and hockey abilities. Most (if not all) boys looked up and respected him, and he was almost exclusively selected first each time team captains were building their teams. In his grade seven year, he was selected as the junior athlete of the year and has also received a leadership award at TBS. It also appeared as if he received preferential treatment and a higher degree of independency as teachers often called on him to settle the class down and or assist with instructing some of the movement competencies with the boys on the lower end of the physical ability spectrum.
Anonymous

Anonymous was fairly small and thin in stature and has been a student at TBS since grade six (3 years). He did not participate in organized sport and physical activities outside of school but rather spent lots of time going for long walks with his family. In HPE, he was a generally quiet and reserved student who spent more time interacting with the teachers than he did with his peers. He often spent considerable time chatting with me when he was not playing and or participating altogether. Anonymous also approached HPE class like a strategic board game that he plays at home with his siblings. An example of his strategizing is best illustrated when the class played dodge ball. In an effort to survive in the dodge ball game as long as possible, he participated on the periphery, hiding behind others and passing dodge balls to his teammates. He never attempted to throw a ball at the opposing players nor did he enjoy being the centre of attention.

Derek

Derek was the tallest student in the class and has been a student at TBS since grade seven (two years). He participated in competitive basketball outside of school and was the captain of basketball team at TBS. He also was a member of the soccer team at TBS and was the leading scorer on the team. Whenever the class played basketball or soccer, he would always be the first one selected by the team captains. Derek was also well respected by his peers and teachers. Often when he was engaged in some sort of boisterous activity such as wrestling another student however, he was not sanctioned by teachers. Rather he was reminded about his role at the school as a leader and a student-athlete.
**Aloysius**

Aloysius has been a student at TBS since grade three (6 years) and was a member of the school hockey team. He also was a competitive ice hockey player outside of school and played at the highest level for his respective age group. In HPE, he appeared to be very popular amongst his peers and was often the first person to initiate conflict with other students. As a result, his nickname among the students became ‘chirp’ or ‘pest’ and he often was involved in scuffles with other students. He also regularly teased, shoved, wrestled and locker boxed some of the boys who were on the lower end of the HPE physical ability spectrum. He most typically interacted with the other boys who also played ice hockey.

**AJ**

AJ has been a student at TBS since grade four (5 years) and often was selected toward the end of the team captain draft. He participated in squash outside of school however TBS does not have a squash team. While it appeared that he had some difficulty with ‘finding’ his place among his peers, he usually interacted with other boys who also were on the lower end of the physical ability spectrum. Although he was fairly quiet in class, during our interview, he was very confident speaking about ways in which we can improve HPE for boys of all abilities.
### Table 2- Participant demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Self-identified perceived physical ability level</th>
<th>Interviewed during:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khanseb</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugg</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snazzy cats</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli silver</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-Rod</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloysius</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>High physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJ</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Low physical ability</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Teachers

#### Ms. Smith

Ms. Smith (a pseudonym) was a former Olympian and was the department head of HPE. In the grade eight class, she was not the ‘lead’ teacher but rather, played a supportive role in the classroom. Unless instituting a course of disciplinary action, she was soft spoken, addressed issues with students individually (rather than in front of the entire group) and rarely verbally commented on a particular student’s physical abilities in front of others. However, she was complicit in reproducing and naturalizing dominant teaching pedagogies, desired movement patterns and sporting activities that favoured the physical abilities and gender identities of the dominant boys. For example, she ensured that all boys were running at their appropriate pace during the warm-up run and when it appeared these boys were not running to their full ‘potential’
she actively encouraged them to run faster and harder. Interestingly, almost exclusively, the non-dominant boys seemed much more comfortable addressing their HPE concerns and rationales for not participating with Ms. Smith directly instead of speaking to Mr. Woodcock.

**Mr. Woodcock**

Mr. Woodcock (a pseudonym) was a former competitive athlete and was the Athletic Director at TBS. He was the ‘lead’ grade 8 HPE teacher and his pedagogical preference appeared to be much more direct and at times condescending to boys of all physical abilities. His pedagogies were focused on a *telos* of self-regulation, self-discipline and pugnacity toward competition and winning at all costs in HPE class and in interscholastic sport. He also led the fitness program at TBS at 7:30am each morning, as boys would come to the gymnasium for supplemental fitness training that was tailored for their particular competitive sport and or physical activity. Mr. Woodcock was also a teacher who instituted exercise as a form of punishment during class when boys were not listening, were disruptive and or did not appear to be trying hard enough. Equally however, when boys were participating at high intensities, he would also minimize the volume of the exercise work load. There were limited interactions between the non-dominant boys and Mr. Woodcock, as he almost exclusively interacted with the dominant boys in the class.

5.03 The Formation of a Habitus Toward HPE Engagement

5.04 Teachers and HPE enjoyment

Both directly and indirectly, school teachers fundamentally shape children’s academic and social trajectories in life. Teachers as social actors in schooling environments hold tremendous power over their pupils and ultimately can influence whether children and youth develop a sense of social and scholastic connectedness. Social and scholastic connectedness with
peers, teachers and the learning environment among adolescents is a significant predictor associated with the abstinence from substance use/abuse (Bond et al., 2007) and engagement in positive health behaviours. Teachers are fundamentally important in the formative educational development of children and young adolescents. As perhaps best expressed by Ginott (1972):

I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanized (p.46-47).

Arguably then, one of the most important mechanisms of HPE engagement are HPE teachers themselves, as they play a central role in instilling positive learning experiences and overall enjoyment of HPE, physical culture and sport. Unanimously in this study, all study participants cited that the ideal HPE teacher is responsible for ensuring that HPE is fun, fair, equal and enjoyable every class. Interestingly, in addition to the aforementioned traits of an ideal HPE teacher, as a method of HPE engagement, dominant boys (who self-identified with high physical ability in HPE) (please see Table 2 above) particularly emphasized that teachers were integral in the development and maintenance of the competitive, winning centred sporting environment that was favoured and in fact lauded at TBS. For John, Peter, Derek, Aloysius and Storm respectively, they held their teachers in high esteem, rarely questioned their ‘authority’, did what they were told to do with little resistance in order to have fun and enjoy HPE, and cited that their HPE teachers served as a daily source of inspiration:

If the teacher is boring, isn’t good at sports themselves and or doesn’t challenge us enough, gym becomes boring and that’s not what it’s supposed to be. Teachers are there to hype it up [HPE class], referee our games and make sure we have a good time each and every class. (John)
I’ve always loved gym at TBS because of the teachers. All of them are former competitive athletes. One was a former Olympian and carried the torch for the Vancouver Olympics. I know that they know their stuff and want them to push me further so that I can become like them when I’m older and not have a big belly sitting around all day like my dad. (Peter)

Overall yeah, teachers I think can make it or break it for some kids. I love it how they always challenge us, mentally and physically. There isn’t a day that goes by where Mr. Woodcock tells us a story to prepare us to be active in life. He teaches how to be mentally tough all the time. It’s not easy but something important for sure. I’ve heard it about a thousand times when he tells us each and every class that he’s very hard on us because he wants us to be prepared for high school HPE. Actually he also tells us that we will be over prepared for high school gym which I think are all signs of a great teacher. (Derek)

If the teachers are no fun, gym is no fun. It’s as simple as that. One year we had a gym teacher who was not so good. They didn’t know what to do or how we did things around here the TBS way. I guess I shouldn’t be so hard on them because they just were a science and math teacher so they didn’t really know what was going on. But man did it suck having a teacher who is worse at the sports we do than some of the kids in the class who don’t even know how to run jump or throw. (Aloysius)

Teachers always taught us to never quit, never surrender and to hustle hard and play hard in class each and every time we represent the school. Even when we are tired and feel that we might pass out because teachers are pushing us too hard, I know that they know how to just push us outside of our comfort zones to make sure that we get those health benefits of being active. Most of us also play competitive sports outside of school so our teachers are really important in ensuring that we are fit enough to participate and allowing us to learn sports and activities that will only make us better athletes (Storm).

In conjunction with the HPE curriculum and governing logics wreathed in HPE practices at TBS, teachers as social actors actively (re)construct an environment that generates dispositions toward participation or withdrawal. In this study and in relation to mechanisms of HPE engagement, dominant boys who observed, somatized and circumscribed to the desired movement patterns, ethos of competition, winning, meritocratic achievement, continual augmentation of personal levels of physical fitness and the expression of a dominant masculinity in HPE remarked that teachers played a very positive and supportive role in the development of their exuberance.
toward HPE, sport and physical activity. More specifically when discussing HPE experiences, these dominant boys almost exclusively highlighted experiences that were celebrated by their teachers. These outward memorable moments of recognition in turn further encouraged these boys to work and play hard each and every class. As exemplified by John, Frank and Storm:

It’s somewhat weird but my most memorable and positive experiences in school include my gym teachers. I’ll never forget when we were in the ball hockey unit this year and I was playing goalie in the championship game in the house games. We were winning by just one goal when the team had an empty net to score on and somehow I managed to get across the crease and make the save. I got so much praise from both teachers, that I wanted to do that each and every time I stepped foot onto the rink playing goalie for our school team. Also being honoured by the teachers for my mile run times keeps pushing me to try and run faster every time we do the mile. My mile run time has improved so much to the point where I am dumbfounded by my own abilities, but I have to give credit to Mr. Woodcock who was a runner himself and keeps helping me out with training exercises and pushing me harder in class. (John)

This year during the softball unit, I hit a home run, something I’ve never done before in my life. I have to say that the majority of the credit goes to Ms. Smith who always gave me extra practice in gym and after school because she also coached the softball team. Hitting that homerun, running around those bases and getting those high fives from all my teammates and even the teachers when I crossed the plate made me feel so good about myself and my abilities in softball and HPE. I just want to do the same thing now in softball over and over again to relive that feeling. (Frank)

When teachers make PE fun, it makes me want to come back time after time. It’s the only class in school where you don’t really have to pay attention the entire time but as long as you can make the teachers happy during the game time scrimmages, it amps me up to come back to class time and time again. I don’t always try my hardest because of my skiing training but usually when the teachers encourage me to try or play harder, I show them what I am made of. (Storm)

Interestingly, the narratives of the teacher’s role in nurturing and grooming HPE participation among boys of self-identified high physical ability (dominant boys) was exclusively positive in nature and only with detailed prompting achieved through the active interviewing technique was I able to elicit a small scaled understanding of their challenging or negative HPE experiences with teachers. However, these negative or challenging experiences were quite simply associated
with scheduling conflicts of the gymnasium (school recital or guest speaker) and these boys were upset that some of them were missing their favourite class in school. As a major mechanism of HPE engagement then, the positive associations from the dominant boys likely is attributable to the fact that teachers at TBS appeared to gravitate toward instructing and supporting the extant physical abilities of the competitive athletes in their classrooms. Teachers repeatedly discussed that their focus was to assist with everyone’s overall development in HPE. Yet, there was a notable divide in the amount of time, effort, motivation imparted onto students, and degree of enthusiasm that was provided to the boys who moved and participated in HPE with confidence and ease (i.e. the dominant boys). As contextualized in the following field note:

The boys in the grade 8 class that don’t have awkward body movements, can do the mile run and the various fitness components close to the TBS standards, participate in every class, bully other kids without sanctions imposed by teachers and are celebrated for their intra and extra scholastic activities receiving preferential treatment from teachers compared to the other boys in each class and particularly in the grade 8 class. These athletic boys who will likely continue to participate in competitive sport and appear to be the pride and joy of HPE at TBS as the athletic director remarked “I take great pride in getting these boys to a level of fitness and competition where they can win in high school and beyond”. As repeated by the athletic director of the school, the grade 8 boys he develops are the ideal students to have in secondary school HPE as they can do it all and don’t take nearly as long to learn new drills, activities and sports compared to some of the boys who were still learning the desired fine and gross motor movement patterns. Boys who can move with confidence and with ease are deemed to be ideal students because they can learn sport tactics that are taught to them with ease. They just go out and do it as the teacher asked them to most of the time. Compared to these boys who can move and do what they are asked with ease, boys who have difficulty executing the desired movement patterns actually receive very little instruction, motivation and support from teachers. As reckoned by the athletic director, boys who are in the infancy of learning the sports and HPE activities at TBS become bodies at risk because they are prone to getting hurt and or getting in the way of somebody else who accidentally or deliberately will hurt them. (Field Notes- Phase 3)

Perhaps it is unsurprising then, that boys in this study who stated that teachers served as a primary mechanism of HPE engagement were the dominant boys who have actively observed,
somatized and performed the desired movement patterns and fitness competencies valorized by the teachers and the curriculum at TBS. Because of the fundamental belief that teachers serve as an important mechanism of HPE engagement, as a ceremonial rite of passage, dominant boys spoke about the reproduction of homologous sporting activities, warrior type mentalities and a strong focus on competition and winning if these boys became HPE teachers and or an athletic director in the future.

Patrick Jachyra (PJ): If you had the chance to be the teacher and or the program director in the future at TBS or even at any school, what would your HPE class would look like, sound like and or feel like?

A-rod (AR): If I was a teacher at this particular school, I wouldn’t change much at all actually. I like the way things work around here, I would teach my students to work hard to become better athletes and competitors. I wouldn’t change the sports either because the sports we have now are really fun and everyone seems to enjoy it.

~

PJ: One day if you were a HPE teacher or athletic director, how would you run your class?

Storm (S): Well I can guarantee that we would only play sports all the time. Some fitness stuff but not as much as we do now. I would definitely keep the focus we have on competition here. It’s [competition] what drives us boys to work hard and play hard.

PJ: How about activities such as yoga?

S: No way [laughing].

PJ: Pilates or parkour?

S: Those last two are a joke and none of us don’t do any of that stuff so why would I want to torture my own students with that in the future. Sports, we play real sports here.

~

PJ: If you ever were a HPE teacher or program director at TBS or another school, what sorts of activities would you teach to your students?

Derek (D): Umm well it would probably be something similar to the sports we do here right now. It seems to work well here and it seems to me as if the students are having fun. This is only my second year here and I love HPE at this school compared to
my old school. I want to be just like Mr. Woodcock and do the same for my students like he does for us. I can’t imagine doing it any differently. Mr. Woodcock always tell us “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”.

Indeed, not only is the sport-based curriculum reproduced by both teachers and the dominant boys, it has also become naturalized as a part of the social fabric and set of pedagogical practices of this particular social space. From the HPE pedagogies, preferential treatment given to boys with high physical ability, opportunities for socialization with peers, and the impartment of the particular valorized form of masculinity, teachers ultimately play a direct role in the formation of dispositions (habitus) toward engagement in elementary school HPE. Since a social agent’s habitus is the product of history and becomes “inscribed in their bodies by past experiences” (Bourdieu, 1997, p.138), dominant boys are predisposed to react favourably and associate their teachers with HPE engagement because of the dispositions that have been inculcated into their sporting and physically literate bodies at TBS.

5.05 Socializing with Friends

Among adolescent boys of all physical ability levels, the opportunity to socialize with their friends in HPE was identified as a significant motivator to attend, engage and participate regularly. Socializing with friends includes but is not limited to trash talking, fooling around, just hanging out with one another and analyzing professional sporting events (National Hockey League, the Winter Olympic Games, National Basketball Association, The Ultimate Fighting Championship) and sporting competitions from the night before. Interestingly the interactions between boys almost exclusively occurred with peers who possess similar physical ability levels and interests in sport and physical culture, both within and outside of the school context:

My favourite subject is gym because just like we do things the way we do it on my hockey team. Gym is a place where you can build character, hang with the boys and sometimes get into trouble. I’m sure you have noticed us fooling around, chirping and trying to become the best athletes we can be. All of these things make it fun and having
your boys with you makes it even better. Even if some of the activities we do aren’t always that fun. Anything we do is always FTB [for the boys]. (Penny)

On a regular day in class, I talk to the boys I am comfortable with. Even though my friends from class here don’t all do the same activities, we’ve agreed that some sports are stupid while others like dodge ball are frigging awesome. Most times we talk about the times where we finally were able to beat some of the members of the other dodge ball teams in gym class. We also like watching sports like hockey and we’ll talk to each other about it but never do we talk to jocks or even teachers about hockey because we always get shut down and they just don’t listen. (AJ)

As a subfield (Bourdieu, 1998) of the education field more broadly, this particular HPE space promoted and in fact lauded socializing between boys of similar physical ability levels and unless boys were asked to do so by their teachers, rarely did the dominant and non-dominant boys interact with one another during the warm-up run, scrimmages, fitness testing or even after class in the change room. Snazzy cats noted:

Unless I have to, I don’t really ever talk to them [dominant boys]. I hang out with the same group of guys that I made friends with when I first got to TBS. Even in the change room before and after PE, we put on our clothes, don’t really look at each other and leave that joint. It’s really weird actually because some of the jock guys are great outside of gym class, but as soon as we step foot into gym, it’s like they’ve mutated into some other human being and pretend that they don’t know who I am. But as soon as we are back in the science or math classroom, the same boys ask me for help and or ask if they can be a part of my group to finish the assignments our teacher gives us.

After hearing this remark and observing the apparent divisions in physical ability in the second and third phase of fieldwork, I pursued this finding further and asked boys’ about their socializing tendencies in HPE. To my surprise, boys’ themselves reinforced the divided socializing tendencies that take place among the dominant and non-dominant group in HPE as something that is natural, just the way it is, and to be expected for a new student at TBS who does not play sports at the same ability level as their peers. Accordingly, boys who were students at TBS for more than three years and were proficient at sports were hierarchically positioned into a dominant group that was associated with popularity among teachers and peers alike. This inherent popularity actualized the apparent vision and division (Bourdieu, 1997) in the schemes
of the habitus and HPE engagement. In my conversation with Storm and John, they similarly remarked:

PJ: So if you are unpopular and aren’t so good at the sports you play in HPE, what is life like?

Storm(S): Yeah it’s very rough if you aren’t good at sports that we do in gym. And if you aren’t popular, man do I feel bad for you, but not so much really.

PJ: How do you define who is or isn’t popular around here?

S: Well it’s the kids who have been at the school for a while like three years or so, can play sports and aren’t sissies. Those guys are a part of the core group and the other kids who add on as the years go by are usually on the outside looking in.

PJ: Would that be maybe one of the reasons why some of the boys don’t participate much in class?

S: Maybe, I mean because they have a hard time keeping up, I’m not surprised that they don’t always participate or always try as hard as they can.

PJ: So then if you try hard and are good at sports, would you be more likely to participate in HPE more often?

S: Exactly, it’s a pretty simple math formula. Come to class, participate and try to become a better athlete and you’ll love gym class the way I do and some of the other boys do.

~

PJ: I’ve noticed that most of your classmates are always in an around the same group of guys in HPE. Is that always the case?

John (J): Yeah man. I’ve been at TBS since JK so over the years I’ve made new friends but usually guys who are similar to what we like to do.

PJ: Similar things such as?

J: Well playing sports, talking about hockey and always playing to win in class. The new boys who don’t do what we do aren’t part of our group. If the new guys aren’t good at sports, it usually slows everyone down but sometimes our teachers will split the class in half to play guys with experience and guys without experience to make the games more fun.

PJ: Do you ever talk to the other boys?

J: Well not really, but when they are on your team during the team sports such as basketball, soccer or hockey, I always remind them of what they have to do when
it's their turn to play. For the new boys who aren’t used to the TBS way, it takes a while for them to get used to it. Sometimes even, they are told to sit out of activities to help our team win. Yup, yup, yup, all we do here is win, win win, no matter what! [tone of voice increases]

To this end the meritocratic and performative logics of practice (Bourdieu, 1985b) along with the tacit and explicit rules and understandings of this particular social space (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) (pre)arrange the ‘opportunities’ for peer interaction and socialization. Bourdieu (1997) proposes that social agents “learn bodily” (p.141), and social order becomes inscribed and reified onto the corporeal by the affective relationships in the social environment. As such, while non-dominant boys did not fit into the predetermined hierarchical arrangements of this particular HPE space, despite the observed disjuncture in the privileging social reproduction of valorized physical cultural capitals (Field Notes- Phase I), as a method of HPE engagement, non-dominant boys actively configured their own socializing arrangements. Because of their reflexive and embodied liminal subjectivities that have become naturalized in HPE, non-dominant boys developed a sense of communitas (Turner, 1969); a feeling of solidarity and togetherness despite knowingly being subjected to daily overt and symbolic suffering and violence (Bourdieu, 2001). Although perhaps counterintuitive, this sense of communitas for non-dominant boys strengthened their collective friendships, renewed a sense of purpose in HPE and ultimately served as a mechanism of HPE engagement for these boys. As eloquently remarked by Hugg Anonymous and Eli Silver respectively:

PJ: Even though you just told me that HPE isn’t always enjoyable for you, what are some the things that invite you to come back to HPE?

Hugg (H):

I mean, well even though I kind of suck at sports, seeing my buddies and just hanging out with them before we are split into teams again makes me come back. AJ, Anonymous, Snazzy Cats and Eli Silver are good guys and I’ve always felt accepted and a part of their group. It’s kind of cool when I wander in class sometimes and try to hang out with some
of the popular hockey boys, that doesn’t usually go very far but even when I come back to the group, I always feel as if I am accepted and part of our little family.

~

PJ: Can we talk a little bit about what makes you or doesn’t make you come back to class each time? I mean if you had the chance and wouldn’t get in trouble to skip HPE on any given day, would you?

Anonymous: (A) Well I think what the most important thing is, is that I am able to come back and just see some of my friends. I don’t have very many in the school and even less when we are in HPE but some guys like Eli Silver, Snazzy Cats, AJ and Hugg always make me feel good about myself. I’m a small, skinny kid who is told by the teacher many times that I don’t even know how to run properly. What on earth does running properly even mean or look like? Don’t you just pick your feet up and go? Anyways my friends are the reason why I keep coming back and I think this may be because me, Eli Silver and Snazzy Cats started at TBS at the same time and made an alliance like what you see on the show Survivor and told one another that we will stick together through thick and thin.

~

PJ: I’ve noticed that you chill with Snazzy Cats, Hugg and AJ in HPE a lot of the time. Do you ever spend any time with the other boys such as John, Aloysius or Frank for example?

Eli Silver (ES): Yea usually I hang with the same group of guys you mentioned. You know, I was never really good at sports so when I was new at the school last year, I noticed and knew right away that I could never be a part of that group [boys with high physical cultural capital] because I don’t have the same body type or skills as they do. So I tried to make friends by talking to the kids who also weren’t so good at sport like me. I think it’s just the way it is around here. Guys who centre their entire lives around sport and HPE then guys like me who don’t have the same skills they do so we make our own group of friends that isn’t so focused on winning and competition. We just want to try to play and have fun and my friends help me achieve that goal.

As suggested by Allen (2003) interacting, problem solving and participating in sport and physical activity with friends is closely associated with fun, enjoyment and continued participation. The genesis of collective practices (Bourdieu, 1990b) and the acquisition of high physical cultural capital in this social space generate a homologous habitus of socialization, HPE.
participation and resistance among peers with similar physical abilities and interests in HPE, sport and physical culture.

5.06 The Role of Masculinity and HPE Engagement

Lesko (2000) posits that: “masculinities are not individual psychologies but socially organised and meaningful actions in historical contexts” (p. xvi). In a meritocratic, sport-based HPE curriculum centered on (in)visible bodily performances, the observation, somatization and naturalization (Bourdieu, 2001) of hegemonic masculinities is a significant marker of power, privilege and a mechanism of HPE engagement/participation. Considering that dominant masculinities are a form of high physical cultural capital, adolescent boys who achieve hegemonic status are often endowed with the status of high physical cultural capital. Hegemonic masculinity and high physical cultural capital however are not readily available to all and there is a constant internal and external negotiation of what counts as masculinity in and among agents themselves and the tacit and explicit logics of the field. Since adolescent boys seek to ameliorate their social positioning and status, as competent and conscious agents in their own right (Clark, 2011), adolescent boys actively observe and evaluate the ‘social worth’ of their bodies, their physical abilities and gendered identities in HPE. As exemplified by Aloysius, Storm and Hugg respectively, not only do boys observe and evaluate their own bodies in the pursuit of hegemonic masculinities, they also actively observe and evaluate their bodies against their peers and that which is valorized in physical cultural fields such as HPE.

Boys are rough and tough and they got the stuff. Real boys need to be fit, fast, strong, muscular and athletic. Real boys never give up and never surrender, they always work through whatever comes their way in gym class and in sports. I am one of the real boys and out of the 30 kids in our class, I would say only about 15 would count as real boys, the rest are soft. (Aloysius)
I’ve learned over the years that I have many good traits of being a leader. I am loud, can get people’s attention and whether people like it or not, people listen to me when they are supposed to. Another thing that makes me a good leader in gym is that gym and my skiing are my only focus. I like music and art class but really, my main purpose is gym class. Mr. Woodcock told us before that some of the life lessons you learn in gym and what it means to be a guy in this world only come from gym class and not any other subject in school. I’ve definitely learned how to become mentally tough over the years. (Storm)

Some days I wish that I was bigger, faster, and stronger. I look at my tall and bony body and I know that I’m not nearly as strong, fast or gym class minded as some of the other guys in the room. If only they had a show like the biggest loser for kids where kids like me go up there and get jacked [become significantly more muscular]. I can only imagine that if I was more muscular that I would like gym class more than I do now. (Hugg)

The construction, performance of dominant masculinities and the attainment of high physical cultural capital are partially circumscribed through the hidden gender curriculum in HPE (Bain, 1975, 1976, Fernandez-Balbo, 1993; Fusco, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) and centrally tied into the social fabric and logic of HPE masculinising practices at TBS. These masculinising practices at TBS include: frequent fitness testing, frequent assessment/evaluation of physical abilities, strict discipline instituted by teachers, strict policies regarding HPE uniforms (white socks only, running shoes, TBS shorts and approved TBS t-shirts), outright divisions of physical ability during drills and scrimmages, the valorization of warrior type/winning centred mentalities, the use of the house system, inculcation of leadership/mental toughness and the dominant implementation of competitive team sports. As an individualized categorical, yet collective relational construct, dominant masculinities act as a significant signifier of social order, a form of physical cultural capital and most importantly as a mechanism of HPE engagement for dominant boys. In fact, as highlighted below, hegemonic masculinities served as a pre-requisite for HPE engagement and regular participation:
PJ: What else motivates you to come to class and participate all the time?

J: Playing sports like a man in class. I find that when I play like a man, work hard and play hard, gym becomes much more fun.

PJ: Playing sports well in HPE, does that make you more manly?

J: Oh yeah by far, especially when you are the top cross country runner in the school and among [city] private schools. From the first day in JK up until the point that we are talking now, the teachers and my sports teams have never once talked to us about being soft. We’ve always been taught to go hard in everything we do. All day, all the time.

PJ: Do you feel being manly in your class makes class more enjoyable for you?

J: By far, when you are good at a sport and students and teachers in the school recognize you for it, it makes you feel important. After coming first in this years cross country meet, it gives you a more bragging rights among your peers and shows that I am working and training hard which is what the teachers want to see. Being fit and the school leader in the mile run also assures that I am better than other kids in the school.

~

PJ: Can you talk to me a little about what drives you to participate in class all the time?

Peter (P): Well gym is my favourite subject in school and I feel like if I don’t put all my strength, energy and focus into it when we play sports, there’s no point in participating then. There’s no time for crying and being soft in gym class.

PJ: Playing sports well in HPE then, does that make you feel more manly?

P: I would say so, you know when you could hold your own in any sport during gym class it shows you that you’re good at what you do and all that training in gym and on my hockey team make it worthwhile.

PJ: Now since you can hold your own, does that make it more enjoyable for you?

P: Well yeah of course. I would hate to be that guy who sucks at sports and is picked last. You always have a few of those in our classes. I like the feeling of dominating other kids and winning. The thing I hate the most is having a kid who sucks on our team and is always slowing us down, I can’t stand that at all.

PJ: Can you tell me more about how you dominate the other students?

P: Well, when we do the mile run I’m usually in the top five and don’t struggle while other kids can barely complete it. Also during our class workouts I can easily to more push-ups, sit-ups and medicine ball tosses than probably the weak kids combined. There is also no better feeling when we play basketball and I stuff another player and then run down to the other end and score a bucket.
PJ: Can we talk about what are some of the things that make you want to come back time and time again?

Frank (F): Playing sports, that’s the best part for sure. I’m not really into the fitness stuff but can deal with it but myself and I would guess everybody else, I’m always happy to get over the fitness stuff first to play sports later.

PJ: Is there anything specific about sports that makes you enjoy it so much?

F: I think just the fact that we always work hard. Since I’ve come to this school one thing we’ve been taught and that I really believe in is to never quit, never surrender. That hard work ethic is something everyone looks for in a guy.

PJ: Who looks for those traits in a guy?

F: Teachers, parents, coaches and girls especially. Playing sports well shows your character and who you are as a person. If you suck at gym and do not play sports well it’s automatically assumed that you’re missing part of the formula to becoming a successful guy in life.

PJ: Now, for a guy like you then, does playing sports well make you more manly?

F: When we play rough and tough sports like ice hockey yeah I definitely feel more manly even though we don’t play with body contact in P.E. Playing hockey any day with a bit of pump to get you going beats playing a sport like badminton any day. The way I see it, badminton is for the birds and girls.

As a social practice, gender is inextricably tied to the body (Connell, 1995), how the body moves and what the body can or can’t do. Influenced by broader social structures (i.e. school practices, the socially elite student body, and dominant discursive constructions of masculinity), Butler (1988) suggests that “the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives” (p. 526). In this way, practices and governing logics actively and symbolically dominate others, as “The shape, size, deportment of bodies, the ways they are positioned in relation to each other and their occupation of space all communicate powerful social and cultural meaning” (Light & Kirk, 2000, p.164). As such, boys who were ascribed and defined themselves as part of a dominant (hegemonic) masculine group (high physical cultural capital) always walked with their head up high, their
chest protruding upright and outward, spoke with distinction (rarely overtly spoke about academic activities and almost exclusively focused their identities of success around HPE, sport and physical activity) and had a distinct walking gait or swagger (walking with slow short strides intermittently coupled with a deliberate limp) compared to boys with subordinate or marginalized masculinities. Thus for these dominant adolescent boys, the observed and somatized masculine ethos of competition, hard work, winning and the physical/symbolic movement of the body both inside and outside of HPE has become synonymous with exerting a hegemonic masculinity that is hierarchically imbued with power and privilege that becomes inculcated as soon as boys step foot into HPE at TBS. Because dominant masculinities are a form of physical cultural capital and serve as a resource in this social space, it is ingrained and naturalized (Bourdieu, 2001) from an early age at this school and becomes a compulsive need for some boys. As expressed by A-Rod, Aloysius and Derek respectively:

PJ: What would your class look like or feel like if it wasn’t so focused on winning, didn’t use sports and instead your teachers taught dance in class to get you guys to be active?

AR: I can’t imagine what class would look like really. I would probably find excuses to avoid attending and not participating more often than not. Gym class is supposed to be about working hard, winning and excelling in the sports we do here at school. From the time that I’ve come to TBS, we’ve never done these weird things before that you just mentioned and I really hope it doesn’t change for the boys in the years to come.

PJ: Does it have to be this way, or is there room for improvement?

AR: I really don’t see why we need to change when it seems to be working fine to me. You know boys will be boys and the way we do things now I am sure will be fine for the boys who come to TBS in the many years to come. Everything we do around here is always FTB [for the boys].

~

PJ: Are there different ways we can maybe teach HPE to boys? Especially the boys who are still learning the sports you play at school?
A: Of course there are ways. I mean we could just split the boys up, high and low like we usually do. Half the gym with the boys who can play and half the gym for boys who suck at sports. That seems to work well for us because it keeps us all competitive. We all love to win [tone of voice ascends].

PJ: In terms of teaching different activities such as dance, parkour, tchoukball, adventure based learning in the outdoors that includes rock climbing and or small sided games cooperative games?

A: It wouldn’t be HPE class anymore and I wouldn’t call it that either. It would turn into a huge joke and we would lose to all of the other private schools in all the sports because that’s not how we do things around here. I think that it would also disappoint all the old boys and would be a major sign of disrespect to the school in general. Just because a few boys don’t work as hard or try as hard as I do, we shouldn’t change everything to make them fit in. I think most of the boys would also be really soft and gym class wouldn’t nearly be as much fun because the competition part of it will be gone. Remember what I told you earlier, boys are supposed to be rough and tough, fit, fast, strong, muscular and athletic. Oh yeah they also don’t give up and don’t surrender to anybody. Nobody I tell you. So if some of the things we do are tough, big woof, suck it up buttercup and try harder. Like our hockey coach at school says “100% of the shots you don’t take won’t go into the net”. This is something the non-sporty boys should consider and try to work harder all the time so that they can get better at gym instead of slowing us down.

~

PJ: If there was one thing you could or would change in HPE, what would it be?

D: I don’t think I would change anything. It’s all good the way it is.

PJ: What if class was less focused on always competing against one another or just playing sports for fun instead of always worrying about winning and dominating the players who aren’t so good at sports?

D: I don’t think that would fly with the boys like me who love sports and look forward to becoming rough and tough. You know with the way we do things now and the sports I play outside of school, I’ve learned to be brave and I’m not afraid to be rough and tough because I know that I’ve got the stuff [multiplicities of physical cultural capital at this school].

As illustrated above boys who were fit, fast, strong, demonstrated warrior type and resilient mentalities (no pain no gain/hustle and heart), had reduced empathy for other students and were highly skilled at sport, become endowed with high physical cultural capital and masculine hegemonic status as they represented the ideal HPE student. The formation of these hegemonic
masculinities are also deeply engrained in the school culture as dominant boys (who took pride in who they were and their abilities) were lauded as winners and were praised for their sporting efforts and achievements during formalized schooling events such as the house games, TBS Olympics or TBS sports year in review. More telling, dominant boys outwardly distinguished themselves from other boys and were also awarded with banners, trophies and individual accolades by the school for achievements such as athlete of the year award and for other ‘outstanding’ athletic achievements. As suggested by Brown (2005), teachers overtly and subtly encouraged the reproduction and consolidation of hegemonic masculinities and rewarded these valorized performances of gender accordingly. Thus “gender is embedded in the institutional arrangements by which a school functions” (Connell, 1996, p.213) and as a result, dominant boys at TBS have developed a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990a) and contribute to the stable reflection and reproduction of hegemonic masculinities. Similar to Swain’s (2006) research, although non-dominant boys attempt to subvert and permeate the deeply engrained masculine hegemony at TBS, in this particular social space, hegemonic masculinity is incredibly stabilized by the practices at TBS. For example, even though Khanseb and Sebastian have observed and attempted to somatize a hegemonic masculinity as a form of physical cultural capital as a pathway to power, prestige, social status and HPE engagement, they were unable to do so because their participation in taekwondo and kung fu respectively in this context are not afforded any recognition and or valorization. They articulated:

I used to try and fit in with the boys. I tried to play the same sports as they did outside of school so that I was cool just like them, but I was never able to fit in. I just never was big or strong enough as the other try hard students. So I quit that and was back to the start. I still suck at gym, still don’t have the biggest biceps in the class, I can’t do as many push-ups as some of the try hard students. Even though I do taekwondo now and the boys think it’s really cool that I can kick over their heads, I don’t think that they really even care. I can also bet that the teachers have no clue that taekwondo is my absolute favourite sport
and that I practice three or four times a week. When I’ve tried to talk to do some the boys to try taekwondo with me, they laughed and walked away. (Khanseb)

When I was new to the school two years ago and realized that I wasn’t so good at the sports we did, I started doing kung fu. Everyone probably thinks that I’m just this quiet little boy who sucks at sports, but they really have no idea. This year [grade eight] I suggested to the teachers that we should try to do kung fu in class because it is really tough but fun at the same time. I will never forget what they said because the teachers said we that we only do real sports here at the school. My heart dropped and I walked out of the gym office telling myself that I never want to go back to gym class again. (Sebastian)

These study findings on masculinities above are consistent with previous research findings on hegemonic masculinities in schools (Light & Kirk, 2000, 2001; Kenway & Fitz Clarence, 1997; Swain, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity as a resource that contributes to the attainment of high physical cultural capital has a high rate of social exchange and is highly valued; however it exclusive and available only to those meet the defined logics of practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and the tacit and explicit rules of social fields (Bourdieu, 1985b) that govern ‘appropriate’ behaviour. The intersection then of physical cultural capital and gender are somatized and render a gendered habitus (Laberge, 1995; McCall, 1992) of HPE engagement and participation. With the endowment of a gendered habitus in HPE among dominant adolescent boys, it is fitting that their co-construction of narratives centre around the performance of hegemonic masculinities and are inextricably tied into HPE engagement and daily participation. As illustrated above, the gendered habitus is deeply woven into the social fabric and is naturalized at TBS, as dominant boys repeatedly spoke out sternly against any alterations to the current sport-based curriculum, hierarchical logics of socializing with peers and a staunch focus on winning. As a primary site of power and privilege, a gendered habitus dovetails with the will to win and the associated ‘pleasure(s)’ of dominating others in HPE as a mechanism of HPE engagement.
5.07 The Will to Win

In both the grade eight classes that took part in this research, there was an uncanny degree and ethos of competition and domination fostered among and displayed by the boys. Among dominant boys, competition, domination and winning were cited as contributing factors that encouraged HPE engagement. An ‘every man for himself’, ‘win at all costs’ and complete each activity with ‘hustle and heart’ (Field notes- Phase Three) ideology not only was instilled on a daily basis by teachers, but also was anticipated and met with excitement from the dominant boys. As remarked by Derek:

I love gym because we get to work hard and play hard in class. At my old school, we had gym with the girls and that was no fun because we [boys] always had to slow down, pass to them and make sure we didn’t hurt them. But most of the time they didn’t even want to play and so they were just wasting everyone time [tone of voice ascends]! At TBS at least every boy has the same goal, to become a better athlete. Boys are supposed to work hard and compete hard with each other, it makes it fun. None of this lollygagging business.

These valorized sporting logics of practice that were observed, somatized and performed were particularly amplified during the house games, as dominant boys autocratically removed non-dominant boys from the playing field. Striving to win house points, the sacrifice of the weakest link for the benefit of the collective victory was naturalized by both the dominant and non-dominant boys.

When we play house games, things get a bit intense and the boys who are the best at the sport stay on for as long as they can. Usually we ask the boys if they want to go on but then tell them it is really important that we stay on if they [the boys who were just taken back off] want us to win some house points for them. Even if that means we take double and triple shifts, you got to do what you got to do to win for the team. (Aloysius)

Sometimes during house games I don’t even play much. As soon as it’s my turn to get on, I’m always asked right away to get back off to let someone else to go on. I want to win some house points so I’ve never tried to stand up to the guy whose telling me to stay off. I don’t actually remember the last time I was playing a whole lot when house points or mini gym tournaments were on the line. (Anonymous)
While on occasion teachers would intervene and ensure that there was ‘equal’ playing for everyone, their ability to monitor playing time was compromised as they often were refereeing, or score keeping the games. The teachers’ selective negligence and complicity in the lack of policing equal playing time was part of the established meritocratic structure of HPE at TBS, whereby boys were encouraged, invited and incited to ‘earn’ their stripes to see themselves as the best players through dominating plating time and by working/playing hard each and every class.

Not only do teachers inculcate this central focus on winning and domination over others through sport, as a method of HPE engagement and domination, these logics of practice at TBS are inextricable from the social fabric of this particular social space. As a self-perpetuating vortex embedded in and brought to life through HPE pedagogy and the house system at TBS more broadly, the grade eight boys in this study acceded the valued forms of winning, domination and physical cultural capital onto the younger boys at the school during school spirit assemblies, house Olympics and house colour days. Particularly during house games and the house Olympics where members of each house (Gretzky, Crosby, Sakic, or Forsberg) compete for points, the grade eight boys were responsible for coaching and encouraging younger boys to work hard, win and dominate the other teams. As explained by Penny, the grade 8 boys who are transitioning to secondary school sought to leave behind a legacy (cultural capital) that cultivates boys to take HPE, sport and physical activity at TBS very seriously:

Winning and losing in HPE makes everything fun because you learn how to build character. You don’t always win but when you lose, you learn to work harder to win next time. You examine yourself on what I did wrong and how I can improve. These are the things that we’ve been taught here from the beginning. As a house captain this year, I think the most important thing to pass onto some of the younger students is the importance of winning in sports but also the importance of building character, learning to be mentally tough and leadership. For me I want the younger boys to observe how we do things around here and then do it themselves when they get to my age. I try to always show these boys my character of hard work and winning so that they can follow in my
footsteps. I do this because one of the old boys [former students] took me under his wing and showed me the ropes of the TBS traditions when I was a small boy at TBS.

Another ritual that is employed as a method in HPE engagement and assists in the transmission of valorized scholastic values at TBS includes bringing back the old boys (former students) to speak with graduating students about their experiences in secondary school. In these motivational speeches provided by the old boys, they always highlighted their own experiences at TBS. Interestingly, old boys always spoke about the importance of honouring the giants (former teachers and students) who came before them which in turn entailed the maintenance of high levels of participation, enthusiasm and an ethos of winning/domination. Thus HPE engagement was not only associated with the potential intrinsic values of participation but also associated with respecting the school culture and transmitting a legacy/cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that is valorized by current and former students and teachers alike.

PJ: I don’t remember the last time I didn’t see you participating in HPE. What drives you to participate each and every time?

A-Rod (AR): Well not only do I like HPE, winning and playing sports, we’ve been always taught at TBS by our teachers to work as hard as we can and win out of respect to the school and the other students who came here before us. Every class I always try my best without skipping anything or taking shortcuts by cheating as that goes against the HPE code that we have here at TBS. I can’t wait to return next year to give the boys my own gym experiences from TBS and my high school.

~

PJ: What else encourages you to participate and engage in HPE time and time again?

A: I really like it when the old boys come back to our school and tell us how easy high school gym is. They tell us that the hard work we put into gym now will definitely pay off later because all of their classmates know that they went to TBS. So by pushing myself, trying to be the best I can be and winning represents everything that our teachers have been trying to teach us over the years. Really not only do I participate to get the health benefits, but also as a sign of respect to the school and those who came before me. I don’t want to be remembered as that guy who did not participate when he clearly was good enough to do so. In gym we’ve been taught the three R’s: respect for yourself, respect others and respect
the school. When you work hard, always participate and try to always win during gym class to get bigger, faster and stronger, you do so for your health, to encourage other boys to try to be healthy like you and out of respect for the school. The three R’s really are the point of HPE at TBS. It’s what we call “the TBS way”.

By citing personal and collective responsibilities to participate in HPE, it is clear that winning, domination and an ethos of participation are valued forms of physical cultural capital (resources) at TBS that are lauded by peers, teachers and the old boys alike. Additionally, the salient value of winning in HPE also extends beyond the HPE class whereby dominant boys Storm, Peter, Frank, Aloysius and A-Rod look forward to ‘some friendly competition’ on a daily basis and utilize HPE as a supplemental psychological and physical training space for their extra-scholastic sporting endeavours outside of the HPE context. This reproduction of the field not only perpetuates symbolic and overt instances of social reflection and reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984) more generally, it also renders a class/gendered based habitus. With a complete preoccupation on winning as a form of HPE engagement and a compulsive need, Frank and Storm remarked:

Mr. Woodcock always reminds us he’s preparing us for high school and our own competitive sports where we can be the best possible athletes. I think what he says is true. He tells us that we need to work hard on our physical and mental training in here to be excellent out there [outside of the HPE context]. The competition and our focus on always winning here at TBS makes sure that we can dominate the sports world and high school gym class when we leave this school. (Frank).

You know for some of us [sits up tall in the chair and flaunts his chest] gym is the place for the boys where we work and compete against one another hard to become better athletes for our hockey teams. Whether it’s the fitness testing, the workouts we go through in class or just playing different sports to develop skills such as hand eye coordination, gym has become almost like free training for me and some of the guys. Because we’re so competitive and work hard here, I feel like I’m over prepared for sports and even high school gym class. If there is one thing I’ve learned from our teachers and coaches, it’s that I hate losing and I will do whatever I can or need to avoid losing to anyone in sports and gym. (Storm)
These collective values serve a distinct purpose and are not implemented accidentally in this independent school. As noted by Light and Kirk (2000; 2001) and Swain (2006), primarily through team sports, independent schools strategically instill practices of winning, competition and domination over others in HPE as a tactical training tool to prepare adolescent boys to become men. Similar to the logics of HPE practice at TBS, Bourdieu (1978) and Light & Kirk (2000; 2001) convincingly argue that boys who attend independent schools are taught to embody these valorized sporting and social characteristics as symbolic forms of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) and opportunities to gather social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). These multiple forms of physical cultural capital that are tacitly and explicitly taught function to reproduce social/economic advantage and social disparity among the socially elite (Light & Kirk, 2001). Taken together, these adolescent boys develop a class and gender specific habitus that is valued both within and beyond the HPE setting more broadly. As noted by Bourdieu (1990b):

The objective homogenizing of group or class habitus that results from homogeneity of conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any calculation or conscious reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction (p.58).

The formation of a habitus toward HPE engagement and participation is the product of the field itself, as adolescent boys have adapted their schemes of perception, action, behaviour and tastes to the sets of predisposed conditions of HPE at TBS. Thus in the pursuit of attaining and maintaining high physical cultural capital, the central focus on physical ability, winning and domination as the doxa (appearing to be self-evident in the world) of HPE mechanisms of engagement therefore function to develop a dominant habitus that is applicable and inherently valued both in HPE and the social world more generally.
5.08 The Pleasure of Movement

Within the complicated yet interconnected relationship of the tacit and explicit logics of the field, the practices therein, and the subjective experiences among adolescent boys, it appears that boys of both self-identified high and low physical abilities actively seek pleasure and excitement in the course of human movement in their different ways. The inherent pleasures of movement invite and incite many boys to engage in HPE because it serves as a space that allows for and in fact encourages a ‘controlled decontrolling of emotions’. With this, HPE engagement relies on the subjective emotional and motivational schemes of perception (habitus) as dispositions that actively guide the pleasures of movement. As expressed by Penny, A-Rod and Derek respectively, the pleasure of movement serves as a telos in the communion of mind, body and spirit (esprit du corps):

I love to move my body, so gym gives me an opportunity to do what I want, run and let it all out. Gym is a great place to allow you to release all your emotions and stress from other classes because you have the opportunity to run around and take a break from all of the craziness that happens during the school day. There is no better feeling than when you are stressed out from school work to just come into class and run at a nice and easy pace. Running allows me to relax my mind and my muscles. (Penny)

Gym is the only time in the day that I can have a break, let all my academic worries go and play with my friends because some of us are not in the same classes all day. It sounds kinda weird but I actually look forward to sweating in class all the time. I look forward to simply go through the motions and feeling sore the next day. We’ve also been taught that physical activity helps with your academic performance so there’s no better feeling than coming into class and just letting everything go from the morning and then starting the afternoon with a fresh start. Ms. Smith reminds us all the time, as soon as we enter these gym doors, you leave your problems, worries and stress at the door. (A-Rod).

You know, I just love moving. During gym class and especially during the workouts, sometimes I just get so caught up in what we are doing. I don’t want class to end. Especially if we are playing basketball which is my favourite sport, sometimes I just tune out all the competition, the yelling and screaming and the pressure to win for your team. All I can think and feel is the softness of the ball in my hands and the release of the ball through my fingertips. There’s no better feeling in class than to experience what I just told you. It’s a bit weird to describe but I don’t want to leave because my body feels like it’s in a very happy place and it’s just so relaxed. (Derek)
Also experiencing the inherent pleasures of movement, non-dominant boys in this study contradict mainstream discourses regarding the multifaceted reasons why boys withdraw from HPE, sport and physical culture. Boys who withdraw from HPE as soon as they institutionally are allowed to do so are typically blamed for their own laziness, lack of motivation and unregulated physically active behaviours. They are often labelled as couch potatoes who solely engage in sedentary behaviours such as watching television or playing video games. Although these boys cannot escape from the dominant, competitive, hierarchical, ostracising practices and sporting logics at TBS, the strongest predictor of HPE participation in this study among non-dominant boys is finding meaning, pleasure, excitement and joy in movement. As such, the formation of dispositions (habitus) toward HPE participation are inculcated through repeated experiences of success, fun, instruction at the appropriate skills level, autonomy, being free and complete immersion in various sporting and non-sporting activities. As remarked by Anonymous, Snazzy Cats, Khanseb and AJ:

Even though I suck at it [HPE class] sometimes I like gym because I find it very similar to my favourite board game; the Settlers of Catan. I think you’ve noticed by now that I’m not one of the guys to be upfront and in the action all the time. I like to be in the background planning, analyzing and trying to guess the next move. That’s where I find the most fun, just moving around, being happy and planning my next move. I bet that my teachers think that I just don’t get anything we do, but actually I do know what’s going on and participate fully when I feel free and not tied down by rules. I just like to play and don’t care about winning. Just moving around and smiling with the other boys makes me feel happy. (Anonymous)

Sometimes just playing dodge ball once in a while in gym class brings me so much fun and good feelings. There is no better feeling than just running around and trying to catch or throw a ball as hard as you can. What’s even more fun is when you peg one of the jocks in the head or anywhere else because they don’t expect you to be able to play any sort of sport or physical activity at all. Sadly we don’t play dodge ball much because we just play sports all the time but when we do play, at the end of every class, I always leave with a smile on my face. (Snazzy Cats)

There have been times in gym where we have done karate for a few random days and that gets me excited right away. Even though it’s not my favourite sport it’s pretty close to
taekwondo which is awesome. So maybe that’s why I really like it, but I think I really like it because I never have to worry if I will be playing. Because it’s an individual sport that allows everyone to participate all the time and because I’m good at it I don’t have to worry about being picked last or not playing. When Khanseb gets to play, I got nothing bad to say about HPE. I just wish I got to play more often. (Khanseb)

Whenever I play squash outside of school, I feel like I have a sense of calm, purpose and complete enjoyment. I just love the feeling of moving side to side, hearing the ball hit off the wall and imagining that my racquet is just part of my arm and allows to me to hit whatever ball is coming at me. No video game or thing in the world so far brings me the same amount of joy and excitement than squash. It’s too bad we don’t play squash here and the closest thing I get to play is badminton. But I also like playing badminton because I’m better than most of the guys so I’m never chosen toward the end of the group like usual. Even though most of the jocks don’t like badminton, badminton is one of the only activities we do that makes me want to come back to class time and time again. (AJ)

In accordance with Bean & Kinner (1989), Griffin et al (1993), Portman (1995) and Whitehead, (1988), regardless of physical ability level, when HPE is centred on fun, inclusiveness, repeated experiences of success, opportunities to participate regularly and sheer excitement, adolescent boys form dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990a) toward active participation rather than disengagement and withdrawal. Even though Anonymous, Snazzy Cats, Khanseb and AJ did not possess high physical cultural capital, the pleasure of movement in and of itself serves as an intrinsic disposition (habitus) that is objectively observed and subjectively embodied as a both a conscious yet unconscious mechanism of HPE engagement. Resultantly the formation of a habitus toward HPE engagement and participation originates from “the internal forces arising instantaneously as motivations springing from free will, the internal dispositions-the internalization of externality-enable the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organism in which they are incorporated” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.55). Since individual and collective practices (Bourdieu, 1997) of the habitus are the product of history and previous experiences, this ‘present past’ tends to actively dictate future dispositions, schemes of perception, tastes, action and behaviour (Bourdieu, 1990b). Indeed, when objective practices of the field align with individual subjectivities maximizing one’s physical cultural
capital that are derived from the pleasures of movement, embodiment/performance of masculinity, the will to win, socializing with friends and extrinsic reinforcement from HPE teachers, regular participation in HPE becomes reified and expressed into the corporeal. Perhaps it is unsurprising then that when dominant boys observe, somatize and naturalize the valorized forms of physical cultural capital in this particular social space, the (re)creation of dispositions toward regular participation becomes consciously yet unconsciously engrained in the habitus; inviting and inciting dominant adolescent boys to persist with HPE during secondary school.

5.09 Misfits in HPE: Toward a Habitus of Disengagement and Withdrawal

5.10 Exercise as Punishment

All of the discussion above in this chapter relates deeply to the mechanisms that are inextricably related to the formation of dispositions that contribute to a habitus (Bourdieu, 1993) of engagement in elementary school HPE. Equally however, situated within this field are mechanisms that prompt HPE disengagement among non-dominant boys. One of the mechanisms of HPE disengagement is the use of exercise as a form punishment and physical conditioning. Exercise as a form of punishment was implemented as a method of discipline and the inculcation of an ethos of hard work to become better high performance athletes. While exercise as punishment was always met with displeasure from all students, non-dominant boys (Khanseb, Sebastian, Hugg, Snazzy Cats, Eli-Silver, AJ and Anonymous) universally cited that exercise as a form of punishment was a contributory mechanism of HPE disengagement and the formation of distaste for physical activity more broadly:

PJ: I noticed that today you guys had to run some extra laps and do some push-ups in the middle of class, can we chat about what happened there?

AJ: If there is anything that I hate most at gym class, it’s that sometimes we get punished with exercise. Not a time out or a warning to remind boys of what they are supposed to be doing, exercise as flat out punishment. During class today, the
jocks were talking, touching each other and fooling around when Mr. Woodcock was speaking. So he got mad and made us all run laps and do push-ups.

**PJ:** Do you always run laps as a form of punishment or is there something else?

**AJ:** Oh yes we do lots of different ones. It usually is the invisible chair [wall sits] for as long as we can go, jump squats, push-ups and running laps around the gym until we are told to stop.

**PJ:** Is this something you feel is a fair thing to do?

**AJ:** Hell no, it’s stupid, that’s what it is. Even if I had nothing to with it and it was just the stupid jocks involved, fooling around, we all still have to do it and suffer because of them. I hate [tone of voice ascends] being in class and doing this stupid stuff because of someone else’s bad decisions. If I could skip class, I would and I sure hope that high school gym won’t be like this because I’ll get out of there in a jiffy.

~

**PJ:** What goes through your mind when Mr. Woodcock or Ms. Smith announce that you have to run laps or sit in the invisible chair?

**S:** The first thing is I ask myself, ugh, why I am here. The second thing I ask myself is, when the heck will this be done and how much time is left in the class.

**PJ:** Do these situations make you like HPE more or less or does it stay the same?

**S:** Every time we do these annoying things, it makes me want to avoid gym more and more. I actually hate doing the fitness stuff because it doesn’t even relate to anything I do when I try to be physically active on my own when I do kung fu. I don’t do any of this fitness stuff outside of school so I don’t see why we have to even do it. I come to gym class and not GoodLife fitness classes. Gym should be about running around, feeling good about yourself and just having fun. Sometimes I think our teachers forget that.

Not only is exercise used as a form of punishment, it is also implemented to reinforce the desired physical movement competencies at TBS. For example during a basketball drill, if a student missed a free-throw shot, before they were able to move onto the next station in the drill, they were required to assemble in the middle of the gymnasium and complete ten push-ups each time they missed a shot. More telling during the American football unit, as part of the routinized warm-up (running laps around the gym), HPE teachers threw footballs to the students with an
expectation that they will catch the ball and throw it back. If a student dropped the football or did not throw the football back on target to the teacher, boys were instructed to stop running, assemble into the middle of the gymnasium and complete ten push-ups. As you can probably imagine, boys on the lower end of the physical ability spectrum (non-dominant) were the students who often missed their respective free throw shots or dropped the football during the warm-up. Resultantly, they were the ones who were completing the greatest volume of push-ups among all boys. As expressed by Hugg and Anonymous respectively, the frequent frustration of not catching the ball, coupled with exercise as a form of punishment creates dispositions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) toward developing apathy to HPE, sport and fitness training in totality:

Doing push-ups when you drop the ball is the worst thing you can do to someone like me or any of the other boys for that matter who aren’t so fit and aren’t so good at sports. Do you really think that we’ll like gym if we get punished with exercise for dropping a stupid ball? This isn’t even part of the game so what’s the point of even doing this. Doing push-ups will not make me a better football player in any way, shape or form. I’ve been at this school for two years now and I still don’t know why we do it, we don’t ever ask, we just do. But let me tell you, if I didn’t have to, I sure wouldn’t do these useless push-ups. There are some days where I just sit off to the side and try to get away with not doing them. There are other days where I will forget to bring my gym uniform so that I can’t participate. (Hugg)

There probably is nothing more embarrassing then not being able to do a push-up on the spot in front of everyone. I absolutely can’t stand it because you have 64 eye balls starring at you as you try to do at least one push-up. What makes things worse is when you have the teacher towering over you counting them out loud. As if I don’t know how to count! [voice ascends]. All that does is bring more attention to watch me suffer in the middle of the gym as I try to finish them. Most of the time I don’t get past five and then Mr. Woodcock tells me to get up and keep running. In that case he’s wasting my time and his time. Whenever I can, I try to hide in the back ground kinda doing what we’re supposed to do but mostly not doing it. (Anonymous)

While these boys identified that exercise as punishment and overall fitness testing more broadly can have some positive health outcomes (i.e. becoming more physically fit), when asked what their own classrooms would look like, sound like or feel like if they were teachers at TBS,
Khanseb, Snazzy Cats, Eli-Silver and AJ contended that they would eliminate these fitness based components and exercise as punishment without second guessing their decision. As perhaps best expressed by Khanseb and Eli Silver:

If I could get rid of the fitness stuff, I would. I wouldn’t put my students through the same torture that we go through. You know generally gym class could be fun but doing the fitness stuff all the time makes it less enjoyable. I don’t see any real use to it really. Who cares if you can squat on a bosu ball or whatever you call it when the only thing the keeps me active is my taekwondo. I definitely wouldn’t punish my students with exercise. If I hate it now, there’s no way I’m going to force my own students to go through that living hell as well. (Khanseb)

My class would be all about fun and just playing all kinds of different activities. I wouldn’t punish my students with exercise and I wouldn’t make then do the mile run and all the other tests we do. The activities that I would do don’t even have to be sports; it could just be playing outdoors or trying weird new things like dance or yoga. I see that the fitness stuff can be a little bit useful to the try hard students [dominant boys] but overall we shouldn’t forget that gym class is supposed to be everyone not just the jocks. I definitely see no use in punishing my class with exercise so I can guarantee that you wouldn’t see that in my gym class ever. (Eli Silver)

Previous research (see Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 1997; McCarthy & Jones, 2007; Richardson, Rosenthal & Burak, 2012) suggests that the frequent use of exercise as punishment may develop negative associations between physical activity and participation, potentially contributing to both the lack of enjoyment and drop out of physical activity in the future. As such, in the wake of the growing consciousness and moral panic of physical inactivity among children, perhaps we have reached a crux in HPE whereby there is a need for a critical revaluation of HPE biopedagogies (Rail, 2012) and the role of exercise as punishment and physical fitness testing altogether. At the centre in the creation of dispositions (habitus) toward HPE engagement are teachers themselves who fundamentally influence whether children and youth will develop a habitus of participation and or withdrawal in elementary school HPE.
5.11 Teachers as a Mechanism of HPE Disengagement

While dominant boys ostensibly described that teachers at TBS overwhelmingly were responsible for the formation of positive HPE experiences and served as a mechanism of HPE engagement, many non-dominant boys remarked that teachers were one of the instrumental factors promoting HPE disengagement. As noted by Ginott (1972) teachers can be both a source of inspiration, repugnance and or torture for students who do not meet personal and or curricular learning standards. Specifically situated within a highly competitive sports based HPE curriculum, boys’ bodies that do not align with the narrowly defined valorized forms of physical cultural capital in the field (such as a rugged masculinity, a high degree of fitness, completing the movement patterns with ease and understanding of sport tactics) at times were repeatedly subjected to explicit and symbolic humiliation from teachers in class. These institutionalized instances of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1989, 2001) had clear implications how boys experience HPE. Perhaps unsurprisingly when non-dominant boys who were asked to comment on the teacher’s role in HPE, negative and challenging HPE experiences were recited much more frequently and overtly, than positive experiences.

I absolutely hate it when Mr. Woodcock calls me O’Neil as a way to make a joke. O’Neil almost always forgets his gym uniform and is away from HPE very often. Whenever I make a mistake of any kind, Mr. Woodcock says “Come on O’Neil aren’t you going to play today?” He also says in a very sarcastic tone which he finds funny but I don’t [voice quivers]. I get it, we’re both not white and it’s easy to tell that apart in our class but there’s no need for jokingly calling me his name when it’s clearly not me. What makes things worse is that he always, not usually, always does it in front of other students which I don’t like. Sometimes to avoid this shit talking, I take my time and take a really long water break or go to the washroom. (Sebastian)

It’s gotten to the point where I have become the source of entertainment in class sometimes. When something goes wrong on my team in gym class, I’m usually one of the first people to be blamed or made fun of by the teacher. To give you an example
Patrick, when we talk about fixing our basketball shooting form in class he [Mr. Woodcock] always talks about what we did wrong and uses examples of what were the things we were doing wrong with our hands or feet. Even though he never says my name, I’m not stupid, I know he’s talking about me because the way he describes things being wrong is always and exactly what I do. Heck I know I suck at basketball but having the teacher making it worse doesn’t help motivate me to get better all. I don’t even care about playing anymore and when he talks, now all I do is sit there and listen every class to try and see if he’s at it again [referencing his basketball abilities]. I also ask myself all the time whether today will be the day I participate, kinda participate or try not to participate at all. (Anonymous)

This is only my second year at TBS and even though some of the stories Mr. Woodcock tells us are funny, they all are like small lectures. He always tells us to do the right thing but in my time at this school, rarely have his stories highlighted something positive or cool that I do in class or even outside of class. But even though he tells us to do the right thing, he never does. I ask him a question to try and get better and instead I get a lecture about how I need to participate harder, learn from the other boys by watching or come to fitness club at 7:30 in the morning. But you notice that he never actually tells me how to try harder or how to get better. If he just spent a few minutes working with me, I would definitely get better and maybe even like gym class just a little bit more. (AJ)

During the ball hockey unit this year, I was pushed around every single second by someone. Even the one day we played broom ball in the snow as part of the TBS Olympics, I’ve never been so annoyed by the stupid jocks in our class. One of them [a dominant boy] kept grabbing the face mask of my helmet and shaking my head around and around. The teachers saw it many times but didn’t do anything. I even told them that he was being a pest and bothering me and even then they told him just to do the right thing and ignore him. It wasn’t until you asked that boy to come help you out with score keeping on the other court that he finally stopped and bugged off. What made things worse at the end of class was that instead of telling the boys not to shake other people’s heads in the helmet, Mr. Woodcock told the group that some of us just need to “man up” sometimes and solve conflicts ourselves instead of always coming to the teacher. (Hugg)

Similarly while the non-dominant boys in this study were quick to observe and point out their repeated instances of humiliation by their teachers, they also highlighted that teachers seemed to naturally gravitate toward the dominant boys in the class because dominant boys were ‘low maintenance’ and did not require lots of individual teaching time. While both Mr. Woodcock and Ms. Smith spent some time working with the non-dominant boys, Snazzy Cats, Eli Silver and Khanseb remarked that overall their teachers favour the boys who can execute the desired fitness and movement competencies with ease.
No matter how hard I try in HPE, it just seems like I just always am second best at everything. I’m never fast enough, fit enough, strong enough and or good enough at the sports we do in class to get the teacher’s attention about my participation in class. Usually the only attention I get is being told to work harder to try and achieve my goals. Compare this to A-Rod who is a member of the hockey team, is insanely fit and plays all the sports well in class. The teachers always want to work with him to teach him to be better but I never get that attention and by the time I graduate, I probably never will. I’ve come to accept already that I’ll just never be good at gym class and will stick to the academic side of things. So because I never get any attention from the teachers, sometimes I kind of pretend that I’m doing what I’m supposed to. But like I’m not really trying, just doing it so that the teachers don’t yell at me and tell me to work harder in front of all the guys. (Snazzy Cats)

I know that I suck at sports. My old school never had such a crazy focus on sport and fitness as we do here so it’s not really my fault I guess. If only the teachers took some time to listen to me and figure out what I need to do to get better, I probably would get better. Instead they always work with and help out the jocks. What also drives me bonkers is that I am treated differently. If one of the hockey boys comes late to class, it’s not a big deal, but when I come late to class or forget my uniform, I can’t remember the last time I didn’t get in trouble for coming to class only 20 seconds after the warm-up run started. You tell me Patrick, how is that fair at all! Are you surprised that you don’t always see me participating? (Eli Silver)

Instead of trying to always work with the next Olympic athlete in our class, if only Mr. Woodcock or Ms. Smith spread their time equally with all the students, I’m sure that everyone would benefit from some extra instruction. Sometimes I’ve been called lazy by other teachers or the guys in the class but actually, I’m not lazy at all. I do taekwondo outside of school and that sometimes uses up more energy than some of the stuff we do in gym class. It’s just super frustrating when everything we always do is sports, sports, sports. I never get a chance to shine in class. (Khanseb)

It is here in HPE that non-dominant boys overtly feel cheated and indeed violated by the teachers and the TBS system itself, as their bodies, deficiencies and participation in alternative physical cultures are ignored and rejected outright. Situated within the climate of the sport and performance based HPE curriculum at TBS where the social worth of one’s body is determined from the repeated performances and evaluations of sport and fitness movement competencies (Ball, 2003), the sentiments expressed by Snazzy Cats, Eli Silver and Khanseb demonstrate how teachers contribute to the deeply engrained exclusive and abusive HPE culture (Beltran et al., 2012). With all the potential pressure to win athletic competitions and championships against
other schools, teachers at TBS appear to channel much of their energy teaching and ameliorating
the extant physical abilities of boys who are on the higher end of the physical ability spectrum.
This inherent privileging of increased instructional time not only affords dominant boys with
multiple opportunities to attain high physical cultural capital in HPE, but also reproduces the
naturalized hierarchization and domination of boys who are on the lower end of the HPE
physical ability spectrum.

Since non-dominant boys perpetually struggle to acquire the valorized physical cultural
capitals in this culture of masculine performativity (Butler, 1988, 1993), they are seen as deviant,
maladaptive or disabled bodies that do not conform to desired movement competencies of the
HPE curriculum. As a result of these deficits that they have incurred, their bodies are directly and
symbolically sanctioned by teachers. Overwhelmingly the majority of attention that was given to
these non-dominant boys was negative rather than supportive in nature. Progressively throughout
fieldwork, it became evident that these negative interactions from teachers convey, reinforce and
underline that low physical cultural capital and subordinated/marginalized masculinities are not
valued in this particular HPE environment. Furthermore, since non-dominant boys (lower end of
the physical ability spectrum) have difficulty acquiring, mobilizing and converting the valorized
forms of physical cultural capital in this field, despite their perpetual struggle to ameliorate their
social positioning through the observation, somatization and negotiation of the valorized physical
cultural capitals, non-dominant boys retain their subordinated/marginalized position in the field.
In turn, these repeated, negative experiences from teachers contribute to and inculcate a habitus
(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) toward disengagement, withdrawal and disdain for HPE and their
teachers, rather than active participation in elementary school HPE.
As a regulatory process of action and behaviour, the habitus regulates disengagement and withdrawal among adolescent boys with low physical cultural capital. Since the habitus is not an innate capacity (Swartz, 1997) but rather is the result of external structures, practices and experiences that become internalized, non-dominant boys become complacent and relinquish their quest to augment their physical cultural capital from low to high status in the field (Bourdieu, 1985a, 1989); subsequently disengaging and withdrawing from HPE. Disengagement and withdrawal are two distinct yet intersectional conscious and unconscious, recursive, structuring structures that are formed by, and function at the level of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1997). Disengagement from HPE dovetails with the psycho-social internalization of external subordinating/marginalizing structures and practices from boy’s collective experiences in the field (Bourdieu, 1971). When boys disengage from HPE, there is an alteration in the schemes of perception deeply located within the habitus as they consciously contemplate their relationship with their peers, teachers, their bodies and their enjoyment and experience of HPE altogether. This conscious (re)appraisal of their bodies and their physical cultural capital simultaneously operates at the level of the unconscious, as these altered schemes of perception create dispositions toward withdrawal and task avoidance rather than active participation. Notably boys who disengage continue to participate in HPE as they institutionally are required to do so; however their withdrawn participation and overt critique is a direct reflection of the alterations embedded in the schemes of perception. Guided by the dispositions (habitus) of disengagement and alterations to the schemes of perception, withdrawal from HPE fundamentally is the explicit and symbolic behaviour or action itself. Withdrawal from HPE however is not a simple static categorical or behavioural entity rather; there is a spectrum of social, emotional and behavioural
withdrawals (transient, partial and or complete) that are selectively/strategically employed by non-dominant boys.

Situated within transient withdrawal, non-dominant boys covertly cease participating when teachers and or peers appear to have their attention focused elsewhere. This transient withdrawal is relatively short in duration and can occur multiple times per class during any given point. For example, when non-dominant boys are instructed to complete push-ups, sit in the invisible chair (wall-sits) or run laps, non-dominant boys strategically modify the given task. These modifications include taking extended rest periods between sets of push-ups, sit-ups, table tops (isometrically contracted abdominal muscles-planks); transiently ceasing the completion of push-ups altogether and when boys notice that teachers and or peers are paying attention to them, they continue with their assigned push-ups; modifying their posture in the invisible chair so that it’s less strenuous; and cutting corners (running on the inside part of the track) when running laps around the gym and or in the playing fields. While teachers vilify non-dominant boys as cheaters who are simply cheating themselves from the anticipated health benefits of these exercises, for these non-dominant boys, transient withdrawal is a primary act of resistance to their negative/unpleasant experiences in this social space.

Furthermore, partial withdrawal can be understood as an overt attempt toward task resistance and or strategic avoidance. With partial withdrawal, boys selectively and deliberately find methods to avoid participating during any portion of HPE. For example when the class is instructed to commence the warm-up, to avoid running laps, non-dominant boys regularly attempt to go to the bathroom, get a drink of water and or retrieve items from their locker or change room. Almost exclusively, these same boys never seem to be in a hurry to return to class. More telling, with partial HPE withdrawal, as soon as non-dominant boys are supposed to
participate in the instructed scrimmage or sporting event, some voluntarily give up their ‘opportunity’ to participate to the dominant boys in the class, and rarely do the dominant boys ask twice about their decision. While non-dominant boys can oscillate between all three degrees of withdrawal, once boys move toward complete withdrawal, reformulating the habitus toward HPE participation becomes increasingly difficult.

Finally, the last behavioural withdrawal in HPE is complete withdrawal. Non-dominant boys who develop a habitus of complete withdrawal have developed durable dispositions toward non-participation. With complete withdrawal, non-dominant boys elude attending or and participating in HPE by ‘accidentally’ forgetting their HPE uniforms, coming to class without their uniform and asking teachers to grant them extra time to find their uniform, scheduling mandatory make-up tests and or other school functions during HPE class time, bringing doctors notes to indicate that they cannot participate (most common during mile run and fitness testing days) and at times ‘acquiring’ an injury during class time as a set me free card from participation.

From the social conditions, discourses, experiences with teachers/peers and ideologies (Bourdieu, 1990b), these dispositions (habitus) serve as “objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits, a ‘sense of one’s place’ which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, place and so forth from which one is excluded (Bourdieu, 1984, p.471). Disengaging and withdrawing (transiently, partially or completely) from HPE then is at the heart of the habitus and these non-dominant boys have been socialized to accept their subordinated/marginalized social locations in a stratified social order; effectively positioning them onto the fringes of HPE. To avoid humiliation, favouritism and exclusion from teachers and peers alike, disengaging and withdrawing from HPE often purports itself as a logical solution.
5.12 Ostracism and HPE Participation

To complicate the matter further, the explicit and symbolic instances of humiliation, exclusion and favouritism elicited by teachers (symbolic violence) are actively observed, somatized, naturalized and reproduced by the dominant boys in HPE class. In conjunction with being subjugated both explicitly and symbolically by their teachers, non-dominant boys are also ostracized on a regular, if not indeed on a daily basis by their peers because of the way they look, move, think and comprehend the logic of sport in HPE. Perhaps one of the most overt and visible methods of exclusion of these non-dominant boys occurs when teachers select students to be team captains. Almost exclusively, dominant boys who are athletically inclined, are competitive athletes both within and outside of TBS, and who have a ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990a), are selected as team captains. It is also a very common practice that the dominant boys attempt to create ‘the dream team’ by exclusively drafting their friends and or dominant boys with high physical cultural capital during the first few rounds of the draft. Concurrently non-dominant boys are always selected toward the end of the draft as the ‘leftovers’ that need to be integrated into the performative hierarchical arrangement of boys, bodies and pedagogies. From this ceremonial ritual, non-dominant boys are excluded overtly and symbolically on two occasions in a matter of minutes. As conscious and rationalizing human agents, this repeated failure does not go unnoticed, rather it is actively observed and somatized, and has real time effects in determining the social worth of their bodies and their levels of participation/withdrawal in HPE. As stated by Sebastian, Khanseb and Eli Silver, this repetitive hierarchization of boys and exclusionary practice contributes to the development of apathy toward HPE, sport and physical activity.
Every day I hate that time. The time we use team captains to choose teams. In my two years here, I’ve been captain only twice and almost every day I am last or second last. Definitely I’m in the bottom four. There’s no worse feeling sitting on the ground and looking up at the heroes in front of you while you’re just a nobody. What makes things worse is that everyone is watching to see who is left at the end because we have to be on a team but I can tell that no one wants us. I’m sure that if they had the choice, they wouldn’t draft us at all. Then surprise, surprise, there I am. Last again. Sometimes I’m not even last, the teachers just put me on a team where they see me fit, especially if one team doesn’t have enough players. I don’t know what’s worse, ‘accidentally’ forgetting my gym clothes and not participating or being selected almost last each and every time. (Sebastian)

No matter how high I throw my hand in the air or gently say choose me, choose me, I’m never chosen first, or twentieth even. Usually I’m right toward the end of the group with Sebastian. We look at one another and say, here we go again. I’ve gotten to the point where I don’t ever expect to be chosen first and now just expect to be chosen last. Sometimes actually, a lot of times, I ask myself if playing is even worth it anymore. I don’t remember the last time I actually was excited to come to gym class and have fun. Even though I’ll do the activities because I have to and don’t want to fail class, most of me says to give up on this altogether. Sometimes I fake an injury and try to sit out, other times I come late to class and tell the gym teachers that I had to stay longer in science class. These little tricks don’t always work but they definitely are worth the shot in at least trying them out. (Khanseb)

You know I don’t mind trying to keep up with some of the guys. What kills me though is that in all my years here, I’ve never been a team captain or selected anywhere close to first. I’m just somebody’s sloppy seconds because no captain ever chooses me early in the draft. I’ve gotten to a point where I just don’t care about gym anymore. It’s pretty much the same thing but different day and I don’t really even want to play. If this is the way it is always going to be here at TBS, what even is the point of coming and even trying. In my time here nothing has changed, the only thing that keeps on changing is that I more and more want to avoid HPE and sports altogether because I don’t get anything out of them. (Eli Silver)

Not only were these boys isolated each every time the proverbial team captain method was implemented by teachers, to make matters worse, because of their ‘deficits’ in HPE, non-dominant boys had limited opportunities to participate during class time. Except for the softball unit where all students were concurrently participating, for the most part, scrimmages were configured with time based intervals. For example during the scrimmage intervals, each student was supposed to participate for two minutes and when the horn sounded, all boys are supposed to find a substitute waiting on the bench to replace them. Yet as a form of symbolic violence
Bourdieu, 1989, 2001) and the result of the testosterone filled, win at all costs mentality, dominant boys in the class autocratically dictated when boys of lower levels of physical ability were ‘allowed’ to play. Subsequently when the scores of games were close during the house games or scrimmages, the dominant boys instructed non-dominated boys to sit out so that another dominant boy could participate and help the team win. As such, their individual opportunities of participation were unwillingly substituted and rationally excluded for the benefit of the collective. Eli Silver and Anonymous recount:

PJ: Do you participate in HPE all the time?

ES: Well as much as I’m allowed to do so by the guys on the team.

PJ: What do you mean? Who or what would stop you from trying to participating?

ES: Sometimes when we are playing house games and there are points up for grabs, I play one shift. That’s it. The teachers are referring the games and not paying attention to who is playing and I almost always get asked to sit off by one of the jocks to allow another jock back on so that we can win. Don’t get me wrong, I want to win, but I also want to try and play from time to time. How are you supposed to feel good about yourself to try and get better if the teachers don’t really help you and then you don’t even have a chance to play.

~

PJ: I noticed today that you didn’t play much during class, is that always the case?

A: You’re right, I didn’t play much because I was asked not to. Me and the rest of the boys know that I’m not so hot at hockey so they’ve always just substituted me on when they see it fit best. Usually when we are winning or losing by a lot of goals, they’ll put me on but when it’s a close game, I can’t say I’ve ever been involved in one of those games. And really I don’t think I even want to be. I feel much more safe and comfortable watching these guys duke it out instead of being told I am a failure if I make a mistake and it costs the team the game.

PJ: Does that always happen in every sport?

A: Mostly, I don’t remember the last time I actually played all the time like I was supposed to. Even when I play dodge ball, you’ve seen it before, I just hide in the back and feed the balls to the players who have the gun [a strong accurate throw]. It’s the code we have around here and it’s not going to change so I just go with the flow. Those of us who know we are not the best at sports make way for those who are so that they can play and win for the team.
As McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) note, when teachers reproduce these exclusive constructions of sport in HPE, children and youth who are on the lower of physical ability spectrum are further subordinated and marginalized by their peers. Equally problematic is the fact that when non-dominant boys indeed participate in HPE, the inherent pleasures of movement and participation are short lived. Alarming are stories from these boys who remark that they often are blamed, confronted and at times yelled at if they make an error during game play.

One of the reasons why I don’t like gym is that when I finally get to play, I often make a mistake. It’s almost a guarantee so I see why the guys don’t always want to pick me. That one mistake or a few often are not worth it because I never hear the end of it from every player. I hate being yelled at and the guys who I thought were my friends in class, turn into these professional coaches who blame me for all the mistakes I made. The only thing I want to do at that point is curl into a ball in the corner and be left alone. Sometimes just playing in class isn’t worth it, plain and simple. (AJ)

Additionally if a team loses as a direct result of a mistake committed by a non-dominant boy, there were instances where non-dominant boys were completely ostracized by their peers for the rest of the day or the week. One particular occasion accentuates the torment of HPE for some non-dominant boys. During Phase 3 of fieldwork, as I was preparing equipment for the grade 8 class that was to commence very shortly, I encountered a boy hiding in one of the equipment rooms sobbing. A few minutes later once we got talking, it turned out that he was hiding because he tried to do whatever he could in his power to delay and or avoid participating in class that particular day in order to avoid the social repercussions of losing the game for this team the previous day. Even though this particular boy eventually returned to participate for the remainder of the class following a lengthy and supportive discussion, non-dominant boys find little comfort and reconciliation in being bullied and ostracised as a result of their unintentional blunders. Thus situated within this performative, meritocratic, elitist, and highly competitive sport-based HPE
culture and curriculum at TBS, avoiding HPE class altogether for some boys at times serves as a righteous coping mechanism. Anonymous said:

There’s no way to keep these guys happy. If we lose, it’s my fault and I get blamed for it even if I didn’t play. If we lose because of a mistake that I made, well let me tell you, you will hear it for a long time from the jocks on your team. There have been nights where I had so much trouble sleeping the day before gym class. There have been times I have tried to skip class for as long as I could because that seemed like my only option. Those were the days where I prayed for a math test to be assigned, so that I could do it during gym class.

While some physical education scholars have provided suitable alternatives to meet the physical and developmental needs of all students and have fervently advocated against the use of elite and highly competitive sport based curricula to foster equity, inclusion and the development of the ‘whole’ person (see Ennis et al., 1999; MacPhail, Kirk, & Kinchin, 2004; Sidentop, 1994), these traditional sporting curricula centred on tacit and explicit mechanisms of power, privilege, domination and exclusion continue to reign supreme in HPE at TBS. While we ostensibly can assume that exclusion solely takes place in the playing fields, exclusion peregrinates the nooks and crannies of the change room as well.

The change room serves as a social arena whereby boys debrief and dissect the plays and misplays of the most recent HPE class. It is also here that boys have been taught to ‘let off steam’, verbally or physically settling their differences with their peers if there was a disjuncture that was not completely addressed in front of teachers during HPE class. As remarked earlier, non-dominant boys who committed a sport performance error that contributed to a team loss often times were singled out and vilified for their sporting inadequacies in the change room at the culmination of class. As narrated by Eli Silver:
On days that we lose and if it’s my mistake I just want to get the hell out of there [the change room]. I know what is coming, jokes and more jokes that are not the nicest things to hear. They’re have been times where some of the dumb jocks made a circle around me as I was changing and pushed me around from one end to the other as if I was a human bouncy ball. All I had was my underwear on and it was probably the most embarrassing or negative experience I’ve ever had in gym. The whole thing probably would have gotten worse if Mr. Woodcock hadn’t walked in asking some of the dominant boys for permission forms to compete during a weekend tournament. Since there are no teachers there [in the change room], whatever they say goes and often is agreed upon by everyone else around them.

Exclusion in the change room isn’t necessarily always physical or verbal in nature; rather, it can be symbolic as well. Often on the periphery looking in, non-dominant boys who were excluded regularly knew ‘their place’ in the change room and rarely went against the grain. Enveloped in the tacit logics of this particular social space, the ‘code’ at TBS made it common knowledge that the benches at the top of the change room were exclusively reserved for the dominant boys. As such non-dominant boys never changed directly beside the dominant boys, even if that was the only space that was empty. This code of dominance and exclusion reigned supreme at all times in HPE and those who violated the code, were sanctioned in the change room. Even though there are two change rooms at TBS with the exact same physical layout, Hugg and Eli Silver respectively note:

Some days I get to class half way into the warm-up run because I wasn’t able to find a place to change. I checked both rooms and in both the same crap is going on, the jocks are near the top of the change room and us regular boys are at the bottom of the change room in the corner. In fact sometimes we’re told to just go to our corner and be quiet and change, while the jocks obviously are talking up a storm. When I first got to the school, once I changed at the top of the change room thinking nothing would happen but instead it was World War three. They took my back pack and my clothes and flung it across the room to where I was supposed to be [gestures with hands to make quotation marks]. It was then that I didn’t have to ask why they did that, I just knew that I can never do it again. Eventually I learned that there is a bro code at the school that must be followed by everyone. (Hugg)

It’s really sad actually that a boy like me can’t enjoy and get to class on time because of a bunch of guys who think they are heroes around here. Accidentally once this year I changed where I wasn’t supposed to. Let me tell you, I heard it from everyone. Not just
the jocks in the class but even some of the other boys who aren’t go good at sports like me. At the end of class I didn’t bother changing, I just walked out in my gym clothes and went to a bathroom at the end of the hall. Even though I would get pounded for it [beat up] I wanted to say “For Pete’s sake, it’s just a change room, get over it”. There have been so many times where I’ve been late for class or tried to leave class slightly earlier so that I could change in peace. (Eli Silver)

For non-dominant boys then, there is no mercy in HPE and the change room serves as a volatile place for boys who do not conform or perform hegemonic masculinities. Atkinson and Kehler (2010) note that the locker room serves as a proverbial ground for bullying and the policing of masculinities among boys in secondary schools. This curious, open and unregulated space serves as a panoptic structure (Foucault, 1975) that permits for the examination of boys’ physical bodies, as they are subjected to the gaze and interpretation of others. Given that the body can be interpreted as an art canvas (Jachyra, 2013) that becomes circumscribed to the logics of practice and valorized physical cultural capitals in particular social fields, the body becomes fully exposed to be examined, appraised, evaluated and quantified by dominant boys during the daily ritual of institutionally shedding the TBS uniform. Removing clothing inherently is not the primary issue here, the issue is the fact that non-dominant boys who do not measure up to socially constructed notions of hegemonic masculinity in elementary school HPE are also subjected to taunting, exclusion and bullying in the change room. Snazzy Cats said:

SC: If there is one more thing I can tell you that makes me dislike gym even more it is the fact that every single day, I have to take my clothes off in front of others. I can’t even count the number of times that I’ve been made fun of because I’m a bigger kid in the class. I’ve been told that I need a bra to support my ‘man boobs’ which isn’t exactly the things I want to hear when I come to school. There have been times where stupid jocks have even come up to me and touched my chest laughing and saying to everyone else, come touch his boobs. I don’t know exactly how you can exactly feel positive about yourself when you hear and experience things like that. I guess I can see why no one wants me on their team, they don’t want a girl to be playing with them.
PJ: What would happen if you told teachers that those boys touched you inappropriately?

SC: I think things would get worse actually. It might help for a little bit but then it’ll just happen again since there are no teachers in the change room. If anything, I’ve been able to convince myself that sadly this is just the way things are the way around here.

These comments from the non-dominant boys clearly portray a deeply engrained and repeated pattern of latent homoeroticism and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1989, 2001) as these relationships of power and gender are somatized and rationalized by both the dominant and non-dominant boys. Kehler (2004, 2010) remarks that HPE is not a gender neutral territory, such that masculinities are normalized, restricted and policed by teachers and students alike. As such children and youth who do not fit into these normalized and restrictive social constructions of masculinity and femininity are not only restricted from acquiring physical cultural capital, they are both objectively and subjectively marginalized (see Messerschmidt, 2010). Whereas Snazzy Cats was excluded in the change room because of his ‘unusual’ effeminate body composition, Anonymous was excluded, rejected and taunted because of his deficits in the performance of an outward boisterous masculine ethos. As valorized masculine traits that were lauded by teachers’, boys who were loud, boisterous, spoke up and were rough/tough were afforded high physical cultural capital. Yet despite observing this valorized form of physical cultural capital, Anonymous resisted the embodiment of these masculine traits and employed his quiet demeanour as a mechanism to cope with his repeated and outward experiences of exclusion in the change room. He stated:

I know this sounds silly but I’ve been bullied and excluded so many times because I am too quiet. You’ve got the boys who scream and shout and let it all out but I’m not a cheer leader. They’ll laugh and say things like “Oh is that the wind blowing” or “Speak up little boy, my old ears can’t hear you”. They’ve even created a quiet corner for me, which doesn’t really bother me because I stay quiet to ignore them. I tell myself that they [dominant boys] are like that because gym class is just like that, for those who are sporty
not the boys who think outside of the box like me. When I get anxious, I remind myself that they just are stupid jocks who will never get anywhere in life. I know that the teachers and even the boys want me to try and act like them but that’s not who I am and I will refuse to become one of them *[a boisterous dominant boy]*. It’s worked before where if I stay quiet I’ll be left alone, if I try to talk back to them, that opens a whole new can of worms.

While Anonymous resisted the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity and in this case did not seek to augment his *low degree of physical cultural capital*, Khanseb, AJ, Hugg and Sebastian drew heavily from sources of *physical cultural capital* outside of HPE as a method to legitimize their own social positioning and masculinities. Because their bodies, physical abilities and masculinities are not valued at TBS and are afforded *low physical cultural capital*, they sought alternative leisure and physical activity pursuits that gave them meaning, a sense of purpose, a positive sense of self and opportunities to seek alternative forms of *physical cultural capital*. Their participation in these activities also served as a coping mechanism to stray away from their frequent, repetitive experiences of ostracism, bullying and homogenous conceptualizations of what it means to be a boy in contemporary society:

**PJ:** Do you participate in any activities outside of school?

**K:** Yup the best thing in the world, taekwondo

**PJ:** And what makes it the best thing in the world?

**K:** Well it’s kind of like you get to beat people up and not get in trouble for it and I love showing off to the rest of our class because no one else really knows what it is. I’m not usually one to brag but I feel like really good when I do it. I feel like a man during that time. I also like taekwondo because even though after it I am dead tired, I find that I am much more relaxed, calm and kinda in my happy place. I just feel good about myself and my body. There’s no one in the world who could take that feeling away from me when I’m at taekwondo.

**PJ:** Does anyone in your class know that you do taekwondo?

**K:** Most of the guys do because whenever I’m bored in gym or if we are walking out to the field, I’ll just practice my kicking. I can kick pretty high and can probably kick someone in the face if I really wanted to. I also like showing the guys my
roundhouse kick, it’s pretty cool and I know that the guys respect me for it because it scares the hell out of them.

~

PJ: Do you participate in any activities outside of school?
AJ: I sure do, I play squash a few times a week.
PJ: What made you decide that you wanted to play squash?
AJ: My dad plays a lot and it was something I’ve never done in gym class before so I said why the heck not. Hands down the best decision I’ve ever made.
PJ: Why would you say it is the best decision ever?
AJ: I would say that because every time I play I feel great about playing. I don’t have to worry about some of the boys yelling at me to pass the ball. Also if I make a mistake when I’m playing it’s my fault and nobody else so I never have anyone else to blame except myself. I just feel squash serves like a release for me, it makes me stronger, faster and bigger but also calms me down when I’m done.
PJ: Does anyone in your class know that you play squash?
AJ: Actually, yeah most of the guys know and so do the teachers. I talk to them sometimes about squash telling them all the work I have to do to get better at it. There have been times that I’ve gotten some attention from it and was looked up to just for a little bit by the teachers and the other boys. But that small bit of attention I got died real fast as soon as someone else started talking about hockey.

~

PJ: Do you participate in any activities outside of school?
H: Ever heard of Gaelic football?
PJ: Yes I did. I played Gaelic when I was training to become a teacher. It’s a very fun sport.
H: Cool but yeah I play Gaelic football in a league. The league itself isn’t very competitive because most the kids are like me and we’re not so good at sports but we’ve been able to find this sport as something that is so much fun and excitement. There hasn’t been a day yet where I wasn’t looking forward to playing Gaelic football. It also takes lots of discipline, focus, communication and hard work if you want to become really good at it.
PJ: Does anyone in your class know that you play this sport?
H: The teachers do because I even suggested to them that we could play it in class but surprise surprise, it hasn’t happened yet and probably won’t happen at all.
PJ: What interested you in playing Gaelic football?

H: It’s somewhat interesting because all these years the boys [the dominant boys] said that I throw like a girl and I wanted to prove them wrong. One day I saw the sport when I was on YouTube and I knew right then and there that I was going to try it out and stick it out to play. I have no regrets at all so far and sometimes I kind of remind the boys that I play Gaelic football when I show them the wrist bands we get when we play. Sometimes I’m even asked if I can play with them [the dominant boys] during recess to show them how the sport is played. So far A-Rod has been the only boy from our class who has joined the team.

~

PJ: How about dominating the entire class in Kung fu, how would that look like or sound like?

S: Well it would be me never picked last, I would be a team captain probably every time and people would want me on their team rather than being angry at me if I make a mistake when we play sports. For once, I would be able to show that Kungfu is a really tough and takes lots of discipline. Doing Kung Fu will make you more tough unlike yoga or badminton that we usually do in gym.

Since physical cultural capital is in a constant state of flux, one’s embodiment of high and or low physical cultural capital is not fixed, rather, there is a perpetual observation, somatization and or naturalization of the valorized forms of physical cultural capital among social actors themselves and the social field at large. As such, the liminal point between achieving high and low physical cultural capital serves as durable but not eternal mechanism of negotiation whereby social actors seek to augment and or subvert the valorized forms of physical cultural capital in the field. Thus the mere participation in alternative physical cultures subverts the naturalized physical cultural capitals, practices (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and the tacit and explicit rules of HPE and attempts to legitimize the existence of alternative masculinities at TBS. However, because these alternative physical cultures and expressions of masculinity are not valued in this field and do not have a high value of exchange to be converted into other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), citing that these activities are tough, physically demanding and requiring significant mental and physical discipline, Khanseb, AJ, Hugg and Sebastian drew on hegemonic
forms of masculinity to try and fit in among their peers appropriately. The inability to convert their alternative capitals into physical cultural capital in turn influences their degree of participation and engagement in HPE on a daily basis. Indeed, the frequent and repeated experiences of ostracism, bullying and taunting among non-dominant adolescent boys complicity forms dispositions toward disengagement and withdrawal from HPE. Alarming is that fact that these non-dominant adolescent boys rationalized that their symbolic and explicit subjugation in HPE is something that is natural and is “just the way it is around here” (Anonymous).

5.13 It is what it is! Rationalizing Hegemony and Vilifying Alternative Grounds

As ontologies deeply woven into the social fabric of HPE at TBS, non-dominant boys are not only subjected to explicit physical and visible forms of violence (pushing and sexual assault in the change room), they also are subjugated symbolically. Through the naturalization (Bourdieu, 2001) of practices, tacit and explicit rules of the field, dominant gender identities and the circumscribed opportunities for the acquirement, mobilization and conversion of the valorized forms of physical cultural capitals, boys who fail to conform to these tacit and explicit rules are subjected to symbolic violence. For Bourdieu symbolic violence is “a gentle violence, usually imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition) recognition or even feeling” (p.1-2). The operationalization of symbolic violence for Bourdieu is laden in an act of misrecognition (Bourdieu, 1997) such that individuals may be subjected to singular or repeated acts of violence but they do not overtly recognize these acts as violence. This misrecognition occurs because of the fact that symbolic violence depends upon:
the set of fundamental, prereflexive assumptions that social agents engage in by the mere fact of taking the world for granted, of accepting the world as it is, and of finding it natural because their mind is constructed according to cognitive structures that are issues out of the very structures of the world (Bourdieu, 1998, p.168).

As illustrated on several occasions throughout the *Misfits in HPE: Toward a Habitus of Disengagement and Withdrawal* section, the multimodal instances of exclusion by both peers and teachers, the physical and spatial arrangements of bodies in the change room and pedagogical practises all served as perpetraions of symbolic violence whereby these boys have come to naturalize these behaviours and their subordinate/marginalized social positioning as ‘just the way it is’ in HPE. Anonymous and Snazzy Cats perhaps best accentuate how an ongoing symbolic violence manifests itself in HPE as they stated:

> Being chosen last doesn’t really bother me anymore. Well it kinda does but not really because I’ve prepared myself for it now. I say to myself it’s okay Anonymous you’re not being chosen last because they don’t like you, it’s because they want to win so bad. (Anonymous).

> I’ve prepared myself now before class knowing that I am going to be chosen last. It definitely does suck and I wish it wouldn’t happen to me but it’s not so bad anymore because I know it’s [being selected last or almost last] coming. This never used to happen to me at my old school and now I’m ready for it and remind myself that that’s just the way it is around here. (Snazzy Cats).

Hall (2004) suggests that “symbolic violence is a means through which marginalization is accomplished” (p.45). Resultantly the visibility and invisibility of their bodily differences and physical abilities in HPE at TBS not only affects how these boys are perceived, treated and excluded by dominant peers and teachers, but also fundamentally shapes their individual and collective habitus, as they come to internalize scientifically constructed bodily and gross motor deficits and differences. More concerning is the fact that all of the non-dominant boys (Khanseb, Sebastian, Hugg, Snazzy Cats, Eli-Silver, AJ and Anonymous) discussed that they saw themselves as a burden to their class; often slowing everyone else down, contributing to team
losses and troubling their teachers as a result of their defunct physical abilities in HPE. As such their tacit ‘feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990a) and the internalization of these socio-psychological dispositions of disengagement becomes imbued in a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby these boys were subjected to the double bind of symbolic violence as both victims, and accomplices. Exerting symbolic violence against themselves AJ and Eli Silver remarked:

I feel bad for some of the guys because I’m always slowing them down. I don’t do much to try and help my team win during gym class or during the house games. So when they take me off the court so that someone else can play its fair game from the way I see things. (AJ)

Sometimes I think that it’s not really fair that I’m so much work for the teachers. I mean sometimes they try and try to teach me things and I just don’t get. It just doesn’t work out and I can see that they want to and do give up on me at times. Because of all of these situations, when they don’t choose me as a team captain or make some comment about me to the other boys and they find it funny, it makes sense because I’m not so good at HPE. (Eli-Silver)

These mechanisms of HPE disengagement and repeated negative experiences of ostracism, taunting and bullying demonstrate the inextricable relationship between symbolic violence and the inegalitarian distributions and the naturalization of power, privilege and hegemony. While some experiences of violence against non-dominant boys were clearly overt and visible in nature, symbolic violence is invisible to both the dominant and non-dominant adolescent boys and is a misrecognized form of domination as non-dominant boys are punished for their lack of performance of the quantified and normalized movement patterns, and normalized gender expressions. Their misrecognized domination and subscription to tacit and explicit logics of the field (Bourdieu, 1998) resulted in an internalization that they indeed were the problem and were ‘disabled’ students in HPE with defunct bodies that didn’t know how and when to move appropriately. This misinterpretation of symbolic violence legitimized their dwindling levels of participation and withdrawn participation in HPE.
As structuring structures, these repeated instances and rituals of explicit and or symbolic acts of violence, learned cultural logics, tastes and physical dispositions (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) contribute to the formation of a habitus of HPE disengagement and withdrawal. With little physical cultural capital to draw from, these boys find little reconciliation in coming to HPE class, and subsequently transiently, partially and or completely withdraw from participating. Brooks & Magnusson (2006) posit that negative experiences in HPE such as the ones described above significantly influence the conceptualization of one’s physical identity and one’s degree of participation in HPE. Given that the habitus is a product of history and is a "present past that tends to perpetuate itself onto the future by reactivation in similarly structured practices" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 54) the formation of a habitus toward participation and or disengagement/withdrawal during elementary school HPE is strongly associated with the desire to participate and or persist with HPE during secondary school.

5.14 Anticipated Participation in Secondary School HPE

All of the discussion above deeply relates to mechanisms that promote and or dissuade participation among adolescent boys in elementary school HPE. With increasing attrition rates in Ontario secondary school HPE among adolescent boys (Kehler & Atkinson, 2010), some of the most common reasons cited reasons for dropout among HPE practitioners from the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) include: increased academic pressures of secondary school, the fact that HPE is optional in secondary school once a student completes the mandatory grade nine course credit and the fact that HPE bears no academic weighting in terms of improving one’s chances to seek admission into college or university (personal communication, 2014). However and as repeatedly argued throughout this thesis, deeply woven psycho-social subjectivities, hegemonic systems and structuring structures
concurrently guide schemes of perception (Bourdieu, 1990b) toward HPE participation
disengagement and withdrawal among both dominant and non-dominant boys. As boys transition
from elementary to secondary school, from the daily petty contingencies of elementary school
HPE experiences, the “durable but not eternal” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133) formation
of the habitus dictates one’s anticipated participation in secondary school HPE. The ‘soul’ of
HPE participation resides in the “cultural unconscious” (Bourdieu, 1971, p.182) of the habitus
and comes to apparition vis-à-vis one’s “attitudes, aptitudes, knowledge, themes, and problems,
in short the whole system of categories of perception and thought” (Bourdieu, 1971, p. 182).
Taken together, prolonged immersion, regular participation and enjoyment of HPE in elementary
school engrains the habitus toward anticipated participation in secondary school. Thus, it is
fitting that dominant adolescent boys at TBS met the transition into secondary school HPE with
great excitement and as an opportunity to continue to dominate and pry open the
biological/physiological envelope of the human body.

PJ: Thinking about high school next year and the next few years ahead, will you be participating in HPE?
AR: I can’t imagine that I won’t be. Gym has always been so good to me all these years and it’s something that I always look forward to so I can guarantee you that I’ll be there. In fact I can’t wait [tone of voice ascends in excitement].

PJ: Even when it’s not mandatory after grade 9, you still see yourself participating?
AR: Yep without a doubt, I’ll do whatever I can to make sure that I’ll be participating.

~

PJ: When you’re in high school next year and the years after that, how will HPE fit into the mix of academic courses?
J: Well even if I have academic courses to take, I will make sure that I will be in gym class. I’ve loved every minute of it here at TBS and in fact Mr. Woodcock always tells us that he over prepares us for high school gym so if anything, I will continue to dominate and will continue to push myself in gym so that I can get
bigger, faster, stronger. It’s probably one of the only classes in high school that I am looking forward to right now as we talk.

PJ: After grade nine when gym isn’t mandatory anymore, would I still see you participating in HPE if I was to conduct a research study there?

J: For sure, I want to participate as long as I can before the academics get in the way. If school work does get in the way, I will try to work my way around it, hands down I want to participate in high school gym. If anything I feel like it will be more fun because there will be more guys who will be competitive like me and more guys who will be looking forward to becoming better athletes.

~

PJ: During your high school years, do you think you’ll be participating in HPE?

F: Hell ya! [tone of voice ascends]

PJ: Oh yeah, why would that be?

F: In all these years, gym has always been my safe place and I don’t imagine it’ll be much different in high school. So to answer your question, since I’ve had great experiences here and I always participate and play sports outside of school, I absolutely cannot see myself not participating. It would be a shame if I didn’t really because I would put all these fun and enjoyable years of my life to waste.

PJ: How about after grade nine when gym isn’t mandatory anymore, do you see yourself still participating?

F: I don’t see what would stop me from doing so. I mean gym will only get better because they guys who stay in it the longest are the ones who actually want to be there. So I am sure that they guys who will be there will be good at gym and won’t be slowing us down all the time like we had to deal with most times here at TBS. So if anything it should be more fun actually and the competition should be much more intense and enjoyable.

Consistent with other findings regarding dropout and subsequent future participation in HPE, sport and physical culture, (Allender, Cowburn & Foster, 2006; Beltran-Carillo et al., 2012; Carlson, 1995; Ennis 1996; Atkinson & Kehler, 2010; Portman, 1995, Thompson, Humber, & Mirwald, 2003; Strean, 2009; van Daalen, 2005; Wellard, 2009), the findings of this study suggest that negative, ostracizing and repeated experiences of bullying (either explicit or symbolic) during childhood influence one’s anticipated degree of participation during adolescence and adulthood. Specific to non-dominant boys in HPE, as a function of an “open
system of dispositions” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p.133), the formation of the habitus and bodily hexis (one’s deportment, posture, style and walking gait) toward disengagement during elementary school concurrently guides schemes of perception toward withdrawal from HPE in secondary school. From the relationship between the body and its position in the social world, the ways in which individuals “carry themselves” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.218), present, and relate to their bodies in everyday life exposes the “deepest dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.190) and embodiment of the habitus. The embodiment of the habitus better known as bodily hexis is “political mythology realized, embodied, turned into permanent dispositions, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of feeling and thinking... The principles em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 94). The capacity of the habitus and bodily hexis arise from the logics of practice and taken-for-granted assumptions located within social fields. Because the habitus of disengagement and withdrawal have been inscribed into/onto the body among non-dominant boys, the habitus generates “patterns of thought which organize reality by directing and organizing thinking about reality” (Bourdieu, 1971, p.194). As a method of habitually bearing the body (hexis), no longer participating beyond the mandatory grade nine HPE class operates as a logical pattern of thought, behaviour and action; in turn actively constructing, directing and organizing social realities (Bourdieu, 1971) for non-dominant boys with low physical cultural capital. As the “unchosen principle of all choices” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 136) the avoidance of the proverbial bullying, taunting, and exclusion both in direct and symbolic forms (i.e. symbolic violence) of violence gives rise to a habitus of disengagement and withdrawal rather than active participation. It is perhaps unsurprising that boys with low physical cultural capital in HPE cite
that they desire to withdraw from HPE altogether as soon as they institutionally are allowed to so in an effort to avoid their previous excluded realities. As highlighted by Anonymous, AJ, Khanseb and Hugg respectively:

PJ: We’re going to chat about gym class next year right now. Do you see yourself participating in gym class next year? What would that look, feel or sound like to you?

A: I will participate next year only because I have to do. There’s no way out of that one but my participation will be much like what I do here. More in the background not really participating just doing as much as I need to do in order not get noticed. I know that some of the guys will be even bigger and stronger than some of the guys we have here and that’s something that worries and scares me. I am definitely going to try and avoid the big guys in the class who only care about winning and playing hard. I just really hope it won’t be similar to what we did here.

PJ: How about gym class after grade nine? It’s not mandatory at that point.

A: I can tell you right now that you won’t see me there. That’s a guarantee, once I’m done, I’m done and I’m done for good. I can’t wait until that day comes. Let the countdown begin.

~

PJ: Thinking about HPE in high school next year, what will your participation in class look like?

AJ: Ummm, probably something close to what I did here. I’ll come to class because if I skip I’ll get in trouble but I doubt I’ll ever get so into gym class where I live and breathe it like some of the try hards [dominant boys] do. Maybe the only thing that would make me go there with a smile on my face is if we played squash. Even though it’s not a common sport in gym class.

PJ: Now when HPE isn’t mandatory in grades ten, eleven and twelve but still available to you, do you think you’ll be in those classes?

AJ: To be honest I would say no. I think I’ve done my time in HPE and don’t want to do anymore if I don’t need to. In my eyes there's no point really. I mean I still will be active by playing squash but I don’t see gym changing much compared to what we did here in all my years so if anything by not participating, I’ll be avoiding the highway to hell that’s for sure.

~
PJ: Next year in when you are in grade nine it will be your last year of taking HPE? How do you feel about that?

K: It will? Thank God. I thought it went on until grade twelve and I was not looking forward to high school because of that. But now that you tell me that I can relax a bit. I can’t wait to tell the other boys about that!

PJ: Why weren’t you looking forward to it?

K: If you really think about it, I was never really good at gym. There were days that I felt really sorry for myself because I sucked at it so much. The only thing that made me excited to come back was seeing my friends and because I do taekwondo, I am sort of strong and fit. Maybe not as much as the other jocks but I’m definitely not the weakest in the class.

PJ: What do you mean you were never good at gym? I saw you what looked like you were participating all the time.

K: I mean that I’m not the fastest, not the strongest, can’t do the most push-ups or even run the mile anywhere close to some of the other boys. I also just hated being pushed and teased all the time in the change room and during class when teachers weren’t paying attention. Because sometimes actually most of the time they don’t pay attention to me, if I at least fake it to make it and pretend to try so that I don’t get yelled at by the teachers and the other boys. Sometimes they catch me not participating but most of the times my tricks work like a charm.

PJ: How about after grade nine, would I see you there if I was doing more research at your new school?

K: I would say no actually. I already do taekwondo three or sometimes four times a week so I feel that that’s more than enough to stay active and healthy. I also want to focus more on academics so that I get into a good university. And if I don’t have to deal with some of the meat heads all day in gym, you can’t force me to go there to be made fun of and selected last during team captains time after time.

~

PJ: Next year in when you are in grade nine it will be your last year of taking HPE? How do you feel about that?

H: It will be a big relief actually that I won’t have to put up with some of the bullshit I put up with here at TBS over the years.

PJ: Like what kinds of bs did you have to deal with directly over the years?

H: To name a few off the top of my head, being chosen last, being made fun of because of my lanky body, laughed at because I wear glasses, putting up with Chirp in the change room and or during the games, being told to sit off when I actually wanted to play, teachers favouring the jocks and my number pet peeve of
all, being told that I sound like and throw like a girl. I play rugby on the school
team, I am far from a girl.

PJ: How about gym class after grade nine? It’s not mandatory at that point

H: There is little you can do to try and make me to participate later on in high school.
Like I said before, I’ve put up with a lot of shit over the years and I imagine high
school will be much of the same. Jocks trying too hard and boys who don’t really
participate. Don’t get me wrong, I still like to be active, I play rugby and Gaelic
football for crying out loud but to make me do gym class in high school when I
don’t have to, you can’t pay me to go.

Whilst the construction of a habitus of withdrawal is “durable but not eternal” (Bourdieu &
Wacquant, 1992, p.133) as suggested by Strean (2009), these negative HPE experiences can
impact one’s participation in sport and physical culture lifelong. Thus with the proliferation in
the volume of critical HPE scholarship and even the seminal publication of the *Handbook of
Physical Education* (see Kirk, Macdonald & O’Sullivan, 2006) in the last two decades, we can
no longer ignore and assume that HPE subjectivities do not affect the collective growth and
development of all boys throughout the life course; especially when disengagement from
athletics, sport and physical culture have been associated with sedentary behaviours later on in
life (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010). There is a need then to create socio-cultural conditions that
create curricular and pedagogical reform along race, class, gender, disability, ethnic and sexual
lines that foster and champion participation in alternative physically active modalities. This
reform in turn can dislodge current narrowly defined inegalitarian and abusive practices imbued
in the logics of the field and taken-for-granted assumptions that all boys inherently are drawn
toward sport and expressions of dominant masculinities. Theoretically, if we (teachers, student-
teachers, parents and researchers) create an environment for the collective formation of a habitus
of participation in elementary school HPE, there is a possibility for increasing levels of physical
activity among children and youth and potentially reverse the current trend of high attrition rates
among adolescent boys in Ontario secondary school HPE.
CHAPTER 6

6.01 Setting Students up for Success in HPE

This ethnographic grounded theory case study originated with the purpose to understand the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys as they transition into secondary school. In combination with participant observation, active interviewing and the analysis of HPE lesson plans at TBS, I sought to decipher what invites and incites adolescent boys to participate, disengage and withdraw from HPE during elementary school. Theoretically informed with Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual tools, I have argued that the ability to accrue, mobilize, and convert high physical cultural capital in HPE results in the formation of a habitus (Bourdieu, 1997) toward (dis)engagement in elementary school. Resultantly, a habitus of HPE engagement among the dominant boys during elementary school creates dispositions toward anticipated participation in secondary school HPE. In stark contrast however, non-dominant boys who are afforded low physical cultural capital and are subjected to explicit and symbolic violence in HPE, actively create dispositions (habitus) toward HPE disengagement and withdrawal. Since the habitus is determined by past experiences, practices and interactions with the social world, non-dominant boys sought to withdraw from HPE as soon as they institutionally were allowed to do so (at the end of grade nine). In this final chapter, I conclude this research study by reiterating the purpose and major findings and, provide recommendations for HPE in an effort to meet the diverse physical abilities, multiple masculinities and physical cultural capitals situated in this field. Lastly, I also address the inherent limitations of the study and suggest future research regarding boys' participation (and lack thereof) in HPE.
6.02 Summary of Findings

At the outset of this thesis I outlined four separate, yet concatenated research questions that sought to guide and inform my analysis of the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys. In this section I discuss and summarize my findings in relation to each question.

My first question was designed as a launch pad to unearth and understand how intersubjective and intrasubjective elementary school experiences serve as mechanisms that prompt HPE (dis)engagement as adolescent boys' transition into their final year of mandated HPE in Ontario secondary schools. As illustrated throughout this thesis, there was a significant, overt, and highly notable divide between the dominant and non-dominant boys in HPE at TBS. This divide in turn influenced how adolescent boys enjoy and socially experience HPE. As mechanisms of HPE engagement for the dominant boys in this study, teachers with a competitive sporting background, opportunities to socialize with friends, playing sports with a dominant masculine ethos, the excitement of competition/winning and the inherent pleasure of simply moving the body all served as intrinsic and extrinsic mechanisms that invite and incite engagement and regular participation in HPE. Compellingly, while these distinct cited mechanisms above serve as mechanisms of engagement for dominant boys, non-dominant boys equally remarked that some of these very same mechanisms also serve as mechanisms of disengagement and withdrawal. Among non-dominant boys, exercise as punishment, negative appraisal/negative experiences with teachers, vilification of alternate masculinities and experiences of ostracism, taunting and bullying on a regular if not daily basis all served as mechanisms of HPE disengagement and withdrawal. An important implication from the findings of the first research question is the fact that elementary school HPE experiences can potentially play an important role in the disengagement and withdrawal from HPE during secondary school.
Resultantly, disengagement and withdrawal are cultivated in elementary school and manifest themselves in secondary school as soon as HPE no longer is an institutional requirement.

Building on Griffin’s (1985) and Parker’s (1996) research regarding HPE participation, another important study finding that dispels dominant discourses that percolate among teachers, peers and parents is the fact that even though non-dominant boys withdrew and disengaged from HPE at TBS, they are not naturally lazy and unmotivated boys who deliberately attempt to avoid participating in HPE. In fact as illustrated in the narratives above, non-dominant boys actively seek the pleasure of movement and opportunities to socialize with friends in HPE; however, because of their limited opportunities to find success, pleasure and the embodiment of the valorized *physical cultural capitals* in the circumscribed sport and performance based HPE curriculum at TBS, disengaging and withdrawing from HPE purports itself as a logical solution.

The findings from this first research question illustrate the sensitive yet important discussion that asks whether HPE should continue to be centred on a dominant, competitive and exclusionary sports-based curriculum that has become common place in westernized industrialized countries or perhaps we have reached a crux where we should *seriously consider* adopting alternate curricula that strive to explicitly meet the needs of boys (and girls) of all abilities, physicalities and gender identities.

The second and third questions that were posed served to unpack how masculinity at a single gendered all boys’ school is constructed, negotiated, performed and the potential relationship between masculinity and the enjoyment and experience of HPE among boys of all abilities. Analyzed in depth in Chapter 3 and 5, masculinity backgrounds much of the research findings of this study since dominant masculinities are objectively instilled in the practices, logics and structures that become subjectivized and embodied by dominant adolescent boys.
While it is easy to tease out, isolate and write about instances of dominant, subordinate or marginalized masculinities in HPE, the omni-presence of multiple masculinities throughout this thesis more specifically illustrates how masculinity concurrently serves as both a method of engagement and disengagement. While there were multiplicities of masculinities (i.e. hegemonic, subordinated and marginalized) that simultaneously operated in this particular social field, deeply engrained in the social fabric and practices at TBS, the embodiment and performance of hegemonic masculinities were respected and valued by teachers, peers and the ceremonial rites of passages that were described above. As Wellard (2009) remarked, masculine performances are considered a necessary pre-requisite to continue with HPE as these expressions of manhood in HPE and sport are regarded positively by peers (Wellard, 2006). Hegemonic masculinities then serve as a form of physical cultural capital which enables dominant boys to achieve high physical cultural capital status and in turn reflects and reproduces their privileged power and position in HPE.

Accordingly, since hegemonic masculinity dovetails with power and privilege, dominant boys who embodied and performed traits of hegemonic masculinities took the liberty to symbolically and explicitly police the non-dominant boys in the playing fields and in the change room. As illustrated in Chapter 5 above, dominant boys controlled when non-dominant boys were ‘allowed’ to play and regularly subjected non-dominant boys to bullying and taunting about their body size and physical abilities in the change room. As an act of violence against the self, symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001) and a panoptic structure more broadly (Foucault, 1975), adolescent boys who exuded a hegemonic masculinity also were agents of power and policed the change room as they autocratically assigned non-dominant boys with their ‘permitted’ changing area. This symbolic violence is reproduced as non-dominant boys who do not change in their
designated area are sanctioned if and when they don’t follow the ‘code’ at TBS. The naturalization of ‘the code’ became a compulsive need that was inseparable from their gendered identities, as dominant boys strongly opposed the dismantling of the hierarchical sport based curriculum at TBS. As a mechanism and in fact pre-requisite of HPE engagement, the valorization of hegemonic masculinities at TBS therefore is centrally tied into the logics of practice and objective structures that strategically have been put in place in the formation of a gender specific and class based habitus.

Constantly walking in the shadow of dominant boys in HPE are non-dominant boys themselves. As highlighted throughout the findings section of this thesis, non-dominant boys in this field are not endowed with hegemonic masculinities and as a result are subjected to frequent taunting, bullying and subjugation from the curriculum, peers and teachers alike. The study findings demonstrate that non-dominant boys as conscious rationalizing human beings actively observe and attempt to embody the dominant forms of masculinity that are valued at TBS in order to achieve *high physical cultural capital* status. However because their bodies, physical abilities and alternate masculinities do not fit into the narrowly defined notions of what it means to think, act, sound, move and behave like a boy, these boys are routinely subjected to instances of explicit and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001). Wellard (2009) proposes that HPE and sport participation among children and youth has a profound impact on the development of the masculine identity, which can shape future participation in sport. Thus as a discursive and material practice that tacitly and explicitly becomes reproduced by teachers (Brown, 1999, 2005), curricula designers (Bain, 1975, 1976; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993) and adolescent boys themselves (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010; Swain, 2006; Wellard, 2009), the privileging of a singular and narrowly defined dominant masculinity indeed serves as a mechanism of HPE.
(dis)engagement and fundamentally influences whether adolescent boys anticipate persisting with and or disengage/withdraw from HPE both in elementary and secondary school.

The present data on the privileging of hegemonic masculinities indicate that we must create spaces for boys that value participation in alternative physical cultures. Associated with HPE disengagement and withdrawal, the current sports based curriculum, peers and teachers at TBS tacitly and explicitly did not value, and in some cases, rejected participation in alternative methods of physical activity. From the narratives above, since non-dominant boys were on the margins of HPE as a result of their ‘deficits’ in body size, shape, functionality, appearance and expression of masculinity, non-dominant boys turned to alternative physical cultures to remain physically active. Although participation in alternative activities (Gaelic football, taekwondo, squash and kung fu) did not afford non-dominant boys with physical cultural capital, their mere participation in these alternative spaces provided these boys with meaning, pleasure, excitement and the communion between mind, body and spirit. Arguably then, if we could provide all boys with opportunities to find inner peace and the joy in movement in HPE, we may indeed be able to invite and incite children and youth of all abilities and genders to participate on a regular basis without discrimination.

As both a mechanism of engagement and disengagement, with the ample evidence presented throughout this thesis regarding the facilitating and rather debilitating effects of inculcating a singular masculinity in HPE, there is a heeding need to translate research findings into the realm of educational policy and practice. In an effort to reconceptualise HPE as a space that provides children and youth with some of their first encounters with sport, physical activity and physical culture, and to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students, their bodies and self-expressions, curricular reform and teacher education at all levels (current and student-
teachers) that subverts the naturalized dominant sport and exclusionary based curriculum in HPE is needed. As illustrated in the findings of this research, all boys regardless of self-identified physical ability level actively sought to find meaning, pleasure and joy in movement both within and outside of the HPE context. Resultantly the findings of this research propose altering the deeply embedded culture and social fabric of HPE by disrupting rather than celebrating dominant masculinities in HPE. More specifically, a non-genderist (Light & Kentel, 2010) technique based pedagogy implemented through paradigms of Adventure Based Learning (see Sutherland & Stuhr, 2012) Teaching Games for Understanding (see Griffin & Butler, 2005) and or Game Sense (see Light, 2013) should be strongly and seriously considered by all educational stakeholders (children, parents, teachers, policy makers, politicians and researchers) to begin to address the mechanisms of disengagement identified by the non-dominant boys in this study.

Light and Kentel (2010) propose that a non-genderist pedagogy that strives to promote sport and physical activity while limiting opportunities for the domination of physical activities and dominant masculinities is warranted and can be implemented through Teaching Games for Understanding and Game Sense pedagogical models. Game Sense is focused on student-centred and inquiry-based approaches that invite and incite students to develop their own understanding of the games without an overt focus on traditional mastery and performances of skills and drills (Light, 2013) that were common place at TBS and most HPE gymnasia more broadly. While both Teaching Games for Understanding and Game Sense teach HPE with the use of sports such as soccer, field hockey, basketball, netball, cricket, softball, ultimate Frisbee and volleyball (among all others) to achieve curricular outcomes, these pedagogical models explicitly attempt to integrate physical, intellectual and social learning accomplished through instances of problem solving with peers and their direct social environment. Resultantly, both models attempt to
develop the whole person and not just one’s physical abilities and the dominant performance of gender. The promotion of equitable HPE practices and setting can be instrumental in attracting children and youth to engage and fully participate in HPE during both elementary and secondary school.

The fourth and final research question posed was: Taking into account the research space, the teachers therein and the study participants, how might an integrated sociological/theoretical model of HPE participation look like and how might it be utilised by educational stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, curriculum designers/policy makers and coaches? Situated within the research methodology and methods of this study, this question encapsulates the theoretical development of physical cultural capital and Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as theoretical models that sociologically capture and delve into the previous three questions. As an extension of Bourdieu’s concept of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), physical cultural capital integrates the role of the agent in the observation, somatization and naturalization of the valorized forms of physical cultural capital in this particular social field. This theoretical contribution of physical cultural capital was integral in examining how the various mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement form a habitus toward participation and or disengagement/withdrawal. Consistent with observed behaviours and the co-construction of narratives during interviews, the habitus of regular participation, disengagement and or withdrawal (transient, partial and or complete) in elementary school is inextricably related to one’s anticipated participation in secondary school HPE. While I do not make an attempt to casually determine this relationship, the durable but not eternal function of the habitus generates dispositions toward future schemes of perception, thoughts, action and behaviour (Bourdieu, 1997).
Other theoretical/behavioural developments emanating from this study are the typologies of HPE behaviour among non-dominant boys. This research has exposed that disengagement and withdrawal function at the level of the habitus and are influenced by the perpetual struggle to gain *physical cultural capital* to ameliorate an agent’s social positioning in the field. Disengagement and withdrawal (whether transient, partial or complete) served as conscious yet unconscious reflexive sociological, psychological and behavioural processes that serve as a method to subvert explicit and or symbolic domination in the field. Thus disengagement and withdrawal do not occur suddenly and/or accidentally, rather, it is cultivated from repeated experiences of explicit and symbolic domination in the HPE field. It is perhaps unsurprising then that boys who voluntarily withdraw from secondary school HPE (see Atkinson & Kehler, 2010) do so as a solution to avoid the many years of repeated bullying and derision they have endured throughout their lives. Both of these theoretical developments of *physical cultural capital* and the typology of withdrawal and disengagement that function at the level of the habitus have important substantive contributions at the level of curricular policy at a time when HPE has been touted as the elixir to combat the ‘childhood obesity epidemic’.

In unison with others (Gard & Wright, 2001; Tinning & Glasby, 2002), I argue that there is a need proceed with caution when we claim that HPE should/could serve as a universal panacea to ‘combat’ the apparent childhood obesity epidemic. Current conceptualizations of HPE at TBS (routinized fitness testing and high intensity cardio-vascular training) as a wider reflection of social discourse aiming to combat the obesity epidemic are instrumentalist in nature and can have unintended consequences such as disengagement and withdrawal among non-dominant boys. Resultantly rather than focusing on instrumentalist conceptualizations of HPE and play-based learning (Jachyra & Fusco, 2014) by attempting to control body size, body
weight and bodily practices through neo-liberal biopedagogies (Rail, 2012), the findings of this study unilaterally point toward teaching adolescent boys and girls more broadly about the inherent pleasures and meaning making processes of movement. By focusing on the pleasures of movement instead of attempting to measure and evaluate body fat percentages and or fitness levels, there is the possibility that boys and girls of all abilities, body sizes, *physical cultural capitals* and multiplicities of gender can participate in HPE without being subordinated/marginalized and abused by teachers and peers alike. It is here that the pedagogical recommendations presented above (implementation of non-genderist pedagogy, use of Adventure Based Learning, Teaching Games for Understanding or Game Sense) can serve as a launch pad to be implemented in contemporary HPE classrooms in Ontario and Canada. While there may be inherent challenges when attempting to alter dominant methods of pedagogies and gender ideologies that traditionally have governed HPE classrooms, I contend that this wider advocacy for the role of HPE as a space and place that invites boys (and girls) rather than excludes can be an effective medium to engage participants in HPE and potentially decrease rates of attrition in secondary school HPE among adolescent boys.

### 6.03 Research Contributions

The study of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys as they transition into their final year of institutionalized HPE to the best of my knowledge is an area that has been under researched. This research is a specific but significant case study that has elucidated noteworthy contributions with regard to areas of HPE pedagogy, Bourdieu’s conceptual tools and added new data to the discussions of multiple masculinities. More specifically, this research has contributed new knowledge in four different areas.
First this research answered Swain’s (2006), van Dallen’s (2005) and Wright and Burrows (2004) call for more empirical research on HPE experiences among boys. The combination of participant observation, active interviews and the analysis of HPE lesson plans/curriculum from TBS in the ‘here and the now’ provided a nuanced discussion of the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement as adolescent boys’ transition into secondary school. Second, this case study illustrates the role of masculinity in the construction of a habitus toward participation, disengagement and withdrawal. While the discussion of masculinity in HPE, sport and physical culture is not novel and backgrounds the purpose of this research, this study adds to the gender knowledge base by suggesting that the ways we walk (dominant boys with swagger, see page 131) are also inherently gendered and convey power, privilege and domination. Additionally, one finding that was not readily discussed in this thesis as it did not directly relate to the research questions, was the fact that some adolescent boys expressed that they were confused about what it means to be a boy in contemporary society. Specifically boys illustrated a disjuncture of what they think they should look like, sound like, feel like and smell like. Similar to Cooley’s (1902) concept of the looking-glass self, on the one hand boys experience that they are supposed to be polite, quiet and docile in classrooms while in the gymnasium they are lauded for being rough, tough, warriors, fighters and champions. Centrally tied into this confusion is the potential relationship between body image, conceptualization of masculinity and health practices among adolescent boys. Just as Atkinson (2011) purports that adult men are in the midst of undergoing a masculinity crisis, perhaps this masculinity crisis has trickled down or even originated among children and adolescents. This very preliminary understanding of boys’ masculinities, body image and health practices certainly warrants further empirical research.
Third, my research has developed an extension of Bourdieu’s conceptual tool of capital. Physical cultural capital has enabled me to highlight the explicit and symbolic power relations that are privileged and oppressed. The ability to accrue, mobilize and convert physical cultural capital in this field inherently constructed a habitus of (dis)engagement. Dominant boys who achieved high physical cultural capital not only developed a habitus of participation, they almost always exclusively participated and reproduced the gendered, exclusionary and performative logics and practices of HPE at TBS. On the other hand, non-dominant boys who were afforded low physical cultural capital and despite their attempts to observe and somatize the valorized forms of physical cultural capital, were subordinated/marginalized. This subordination and marginalization in turn had a significant impact in the construction of a habitus toward (dis)engagement and withdrawal in elementary and secondary school HPE.

Fourth, this research illustrates the role of the habitus in guiding adolescent boys toward participation and or withdrawal in elementary and secondary school HPE. Although the boys in this study were speculating on their anticipated participation in secondary school HPE, given that the habitus is a durable disposition that is formed by one’s previous experiences in particular social fields (Bourdieu, 1997), it is clear that negative experiences in HPE during elementary school can have potential impacts in not only shaping participation in HPE but also in sport and physical culture outside of the school context altogether. This finding is consistent with previous research that has been conducted with adults and adolescents who withdrew from sport and HPE. Thus in the wake of the moral panic surrounding the apparent ‘childhood obesity epidemic’ instead of simply valorizing HPE as a potential universal panacea, it is necessary to critically assess the potential unintended consequences of the current iterations of HPE. Finally, this study has contributed to the heeding need to further advocate for curricular reform to promote HPE for
boys of abilities, body sizes, physicalities and gender identities. While HPE is uniquely tasked with developing curricula and pedagogies that meet the needs of all its participants, it is relatively clear that the current model in place is not meeting the needs of most of its participants. From the boys in this study, boys who participated in sport and or physical cultures outside of the school context will likely continue to do so throughout the life course. As such the critical question remains, should HPE be co-created as a space to expose children to a variety of sports, physical activities and physical cultures or should HPE solely be focused on teaching sport and fitness to children and youth as pedagogies to engage them in physical activity throughout the life course.

6.04 Recommendations

Building on the curricular and pedagogical recommendations that were outlined in the summary of findings section of this chapter (pages 178-180) of this research study, a number of recommendations can be made in order to meet the diverse needs of adolescent boys in HPE. While the recommendations provided in this study are specific to the practices and student experiences at TBS, these recommendations can also be implemented outside of the TBS context as well.

From the findings of the research, I suggest that alternative physical cultural activities are taught in HPE. Since HPE is often touted as the optimal space to positively impact a child’s health and level of physical activity (Cairney et al., 2012), providing children with exposure to a wide variety of activities can directly foster positive perceptions and experiences in HPE. As such, in conjunction with teaching children and youth sports that have become commonplace in HPE, teaching children and youth how to participate in activities such as dance, tchoukball, taekwondo, kung fu, Gaelic football or lapta can potentially attract students to participate in these
activities outside of the school context as well. With this approach, HPE becomes a safe space to ‘sample’ a variety of physical activities instead of reproducing a focus on winning and domination of others.

Teachers as both mechanisms of HPE (dis) engagement perhaps serve as one of the most important mediators of participation and disengagement/withdrawal. Although there were instances where non-dominant boys were celebrated for their achievements, during this particular ethnography, most of the attention that was given to non-dominant boys was negative in nature. As such, I recommend that teachers work towards meeting the physical ability levels of all boys by introspectively analyzing their interactions with each student and eliminating the largely overemphasized focus on winning and domination. This can potentially be achieved through further teaching training and exposure to new empirical research that advocates for student-centred HPE programming. Furthermore, the elimination of an elite coaching approach that often is centred on autocratic pedagogies and replacement with a student centred approach that is emphasized in Adventure Based Learning, Teaching Games for Understanding and Game Sense can potentially serve as an effective resource to teach children to seek pleasure and excitement in the joys of physical activity, sport and physical culture.

Additionally, tied into the exclusionary logic of HPE practice at TBS, I suggest the dismantling of team captains as a pedagogical preference in selecting team members for various physical activities. As a mechanism of HPE disengagement, non-dominant boys expressed that they dreaded the team captain method as it overtly and symbolically excludes non-dominant boys who perceived themselves as ‘sloppy seconds’ that nobody wanted. With this in mind, I suggest alternate methods to choose teams and or partners in HPE. Alternate methods of choosing teams/partners can include asking students to team up with those who were born in the
same month, folding the line (each person in the line pairs up with another) or asking students to arrange themselves by height and matching a taller boy in HPE with a shorter boy.

Lastly, I advocate for an alteration in the daily warm-up that is a staple in HPE from JK-grade eight. Although running laps around the gymnasium effectively challenges the cardiovascular system, the same warm-up outcome could be achieved through the implementation of small sided cooperative games such as line or flag time could be equally if not more effective than running laps around the gymnasium. The use of small sided games can also boost morale in the classroom and reinforce the notion that HPE should be a class that boys of all abilities look forward to instead of developing mechanisms to cope with disengagement and withdrawal.

6.05 Limitations

Despite the noteworthy contributions brought forth from this study as one of the first to examine the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among boys who were transitioning from elementary to secondary school in Canada, a few limitations need to be considered. Perhaps the one of the obvious limitations of this study is the location of the study; an independent boys’ school. Since most of the boys at TBS are afforded a higher socio-economic location, these boys are afforded multiple opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports and physical cultures both at TBS and outside of the school context. While non-dominant boys disengaged and withdrew from participating, a higher social economic standing in this case likely facilitated participation in alternative physical cultures. Given that social-economic status is one the most important predictors of health and well-being (Cockerham, 2005), there is a possibility that the results in this study may have been entirely different among adolescent boys who came from a lower socio-economic status who may not have been afforded the same resources and opportunities in education, sport, physical culture and HPE.
Another limitation is the sample size of interviews conducted in this study. It would have been ideal to interview every student in both grade eight cohorts to potentially further develop the concept of physical cultural capital and further explore the multi-modal mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement as adolescent boys transition between elementary and secondary school. Unfortunately the opportunity to conduct approximately 65 interviews was hindered by institutional gate keepers and the restricted timelines of this study. Yet, despite the ‘smaller’ sample size of 15 dominant and non-dominant adolescent boys, the findings proposed in this study have significant merit because of the comprehensive, rigorous, in-depth approach that was employed in this ethnography. Particularly, the use of multiple sources to gather data (participant observation, interview and the analysis of the HPE curriculum/lesson plans at TBS) served as empirical points of departure in the analysis of the research findings and the development physical cultural capital; an extension of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools.

Furthermore from a measurement and study protocol standpoint, to compare and contrast mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement during elementary and secondary school, it would have been ideal to interview each study participant at two different points in time. The first interview would have taken place when the boys were in grade eight to understand HPE transition, with a follow-up interview toward the end of their grade nine year as they were transitioning out of their final year of institutionalized HPE in Ontario. However, this particular study design was unattainable given the limited time frame of this research and the fact that boys from TBS typically continue secondary school education at independent schools across the province and around the world. Thus following up with participants may have posed a significant challenge to collect data.
The last limitation to consider is the generalizability of the data collected in this study and the concept of physical cultural capital. Given that research was an in-depth case study of the practices, logics and experiences of HPE among a group of adolescent boys from one independent boys’ school, the ability to generalize these findings to all dominant and non-dominant boys in Ontario is indeed limited. However, the current study provides a significant point of departure to consider future research about the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys. Additionally, at the present time, the ability to generalize the concept of physical cultural capital to the wider population also is limited. The development of this conceptual tool however demonstrates the important intersectionalities of the body, gender, culture and society as a theoretically sound tool that delves into participation and withdrawal from HPE, sport and physical culture. As a result of this limitation, I acknowledge that physical cultural capital is a conceptual tool that is specific to the HPE experiences at TBS, yet there is potential to expand this conceptual tool beyond the HPE class at TBS with future research.

6.06 Future Directions

The research questions and findings of this research have created a foray into further understanding how boys enjoy and socially experience HPE at a time when boys increasingly are dropping out of HPE, sport and physical activity. To further expand on the findings of this study, one of the chief ways to substantively and theoretically grasp the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement would be to hang out with, participate with and interview more adolescent boys in both scholastic and non-scholastic settings. I certainly perceive that there would be different perspectives and activities found among adolescent boys who attend public state schools and or independent schools. Even in and among independent schools themselves there are contrasting HPE pedagogies in place. For example, Waldorf schools have a completely different
philosophical and pedagogical approach to HPE in comparison to the approach that was implemented at TBS and other independent schools who are deeply rooted in a sports-based HPE curriculum. Furthermore within each scholastic setting, there likely are significant differences in the socio-cultural characteristics of students and parents (geography, race, class, gender, disability). These socio-cultural characteristics in turn all could potentially influence how adolescent boys enjoy and or experience HPE in contemporary HPE classrooms.

Along with spending more time in the field with adolescent boys and interviewing HPE teachers would be another potential resource to delve into the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement. As central social actors in the planning and delivery of HPE on a daily basis, teachers hold considerable power in either reproducing or resisting genderist pedagogies and the formation of pleasure or apathy toward HPE, sport and physical activity. Following this line of thought, by interviewing teachers, I would add another layer conceptual and substantive knowledge into the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement.

Emanating from this study, the development of the concept of physical cultural capital is situated within the major study of power, reproduction and resistance from human agents in HPE. While the development of this conceptual tool is still in its infancy, future research should strive to understand whether this concept is tenable in other HPE, sport and physical cultural settings such as public schools and independent schools with contrasting HPE philosophies and pedagogies. More telling, as an area that has not been explored yet, future research on the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement and the sociological processes of observing and somatising the valorized physical cultural capitals in the field must also include the experiences of ‘disabled’ children and youth. As conscious and rationalizing human agents, the attention given to ‘disabled’ children and youth in HPE in the sociology of sport literature has typically been
much more theoretical rather than empirical and currently is sparse at best. In particular and as an area without much empirical research, I am interested in how verbal and non-verbal adolescent boys diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) make sense of participating in HPE, sport and physical culture and their expressions, understandings and performance of gender identities. This research working with adolescent boys diagnosed with ASD will provide additional insight into the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement and will be pivotal in further extending the concept of *physical cultural capital* and the social engineering of spaces that accept boys of all abilities, ‘disabilities’, physicalities and gender identities.

### 6.07 Final words

“Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression”- Dr. Haim Ginott

This study has provided many valuable insights into the mechanisms of HPE (dis)engagement among adolescent boys transitioning into secondary school HPE. The narratives from both dominant and non-dominant boys suggest the importance of early life experiences in HPE as potential blueprints for participation in secondary school HPE. When HPE is centred on fun, experiences of repeated success, inclusion and the communion of mind, body and spirit in the pleasure of movement, adolescent boys of all abilities find meaning, a sense of purpose and feelings of acceptance in HPE. We cannot/should not discount the value and pleasure of enabling girls and boys of all abilities and all ages to form a habitus toward HPE engagement rather than disengagement and withdrawal. As a former participant, educator and now researcher, I ask whether HPE can play a wider role in inviting and inciting boys and girls of all (dis)abilities into the titillation of HPE, sport and physical culture. In closing of this master’s thesis, I pose the same question that begun this empirical adventure:
Since HPE is a human construct, ought we design and implement it to reflect the broader physical and social needs of all of its participants?
References


Gibson, B.E., & Teachman, G. (2012). Critical approaches in physical therapy research:


208


*Evanston: Northwestern University Press.*


Kehler, M. (2010). Negotiating masculinities in PE classrooms: Boys, body image and “want[ing] to be in good shape”. In M. Kehler & M. Atkinson (Eds.), *Boys’ bodies: Speaking the unspoken* (pp.153-176). New York: Peter Lang.


World Health Organization (2000a). *Obesity: Preventing and managing the global epidemic.* Retrieved from:  

World Health Organization (2000b). *What about boys?: A review on the health and development of adolescent boys.* Retrieved from:  
http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2000/WHO_FCH_CAH_00.7.pdf?ua=1


Appendix A
Institutional Ethics Approval

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 28357
January 7, 2013

Dr. Michael Atkinson
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Mr. Patrick Jachyra
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Dear Dr. Atkinson and Mr. Patrick Jachyra,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, “The student voice: Setting students up for success in health and physical education”

We are writing to advise you that the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB’s delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Friedland, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Daniel Gyewu
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurrich Building, 12 Queen’s Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273  Fax: +1 416 946-5763 ethics.review@utoronto.ca http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/
Dear Dr. Atkinson and Mr. Patrick Jachyra,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, “The student voice: Setting students up for success in health and physical education”

We are writing to advise you that you have been granted annual renewal of ethics approval to the above-referenced research protocol through the Research Ethics Board (REB) delegated process. Please note that all protocols involving ongoing data collection or interaction with human participants are subject to re-evaluation after 5 years. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your protocol. Note that annual renewals for protocols cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry as per our guidelines.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible. If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Peter, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Office of the Vice President, Research

Revised on 06/12/2014

Daniel Gyewu
Manager

Office of Research Ethics
McMurrich Building, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273 Fax: +1 416 946-5763 ethics.review@utoronto.ca http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/
Appendix B

Informed Consent Sheet Parents

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF KINESIOLOGY & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT SHEET

Dear Parent/Guardian and Participant,

This letter of information and consent provides you with an introduction about a research project that I hope to conduct about students’ enjoyment and experience of Health and Physical Education (HPE) at The Toronto Boys’ School (TBS). My name is Patrick Jachyra and I am a Master’s of Exercise Science Candidate at the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto.

Introduction

In the past few years, there has been considerable movement and increased awareness about the importance of physical activity among school children. The Active Health Kids Canada Report Card consistently demonstrates that children and youth are not meeting the recommended health guidelines. The 2012 Healthy Active Kids Report Card reports that only 7% of Canada's children and youth are meeting the recommended 60 minutes of activity per day (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2012). Furthermore, a failing grade for health active living among children and youth was issues for the sixth consecutive year (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2012).

A variety of factors influence whether a child or a youth will be active, including the school environment. TBS is unique and exemplary in HPE because students in grades 6, 7 and 8 are provided with HPE class at least 2-3 times a week. With frequent access to HPE class, it is likely that the students are receiving Quality Physical Education and are more likely to be lifelong participants of physical activity compared to schools who provide HPE once or twice a week. Interestingly, it has been suggested that if students do not enjoy physical activity and HPE class during elementary school, there is an increased likelihood of terminating a lifelong commitment to physical activity (Strean, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

My interest in the proposed research project entitled “The Student Voice: Setting Students up for Success in Health and Physical Education” stems from my experience completing a teacher preparation program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at The University of Toronto. As a former physical educator and coach, working with the students at TBS, we will examine the content and the dominant method(s) of instruction that are presented in HPE class. The data gathered will be geared towards informing teaching practice at TBS. We will be examining student enjoyment of the existing HPE program, the tremendous benefits and any shortfalls that are not meeting the needs of the students.

Nature of Your Involvement:

Under the guidance of Dr. Michael Atkinson of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto, I propose to study student enjoyment of the HPE program at TBS. I am asking that parents sign the consent form and return it to school with your child at which point I will retrieve it. Data will be gathered through informal semi-structured interviews. The interview will probably take about 30 minutes to 45 minutes of your child’s time. An outcome for boys who participate in this research project
will be the exposure to the research process and your child will have the opportunity to inform future practices in Health and Physical Education at the provincial and national level.

**Possible Risks to Your Child:**
The University of Toronto requires that people who participate in university research be informed of possible risks involved. In this study, I believe that your child will be able to better assess such risks than I am, and that they will decide on that basis what information to provide. Your child is free to withdraw from the research at any time, and any information which they have provided will be destroyed at your request. Furthermore, if you wish to review transcriptions made of your child’s interview(s), or view a final copy of any research articles produced from this study, please feel free to ask.

Your signature on this form indicates that the child and the parent/guardian have understood the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigator, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Prior to the start of the interviews, students will receive instruction about their involvement and will complete a student assent form. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact Patrick Jachyra or Dr. Michael Atkinson at:

**Patrick Jachyra, Master’s of Exercise Sciences Candidate**  
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education  
University of Toronto  
55 Harbord Street,  
Toronto, ON, Canada  
M5S 2W6  
patrick.jachyra@utoronto.ca/ 416-978-5548

**Dr. Michael Atkinson**  
Professor  
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education  
University of Toronto  
55 Harbord Street,  
Toronto, ON, Canada  
M5S 2W6  
michael.atkinson@utoronto.ca/ 416-978-7205

If you have any questions concerning the institutional ethics review of this project, or the way your child has been treated, you may also contact the **Office of Research Ethics for the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at 416-978-6095 or jack.goodman@utoronto.ca**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent’s Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Investigator/Witness</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.
Student Assent Form

RESEARCH STUDY ON STUDENT ENJOYMENT OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

Student's Name: ___________________________

Did you provide your parents with the permission slip to sign that you received a few days ago? Please circle: YES or NO

I am interested in learning if students enjoy attending and participating in physical education class. I am asking you and some other students at The Toronto Boys’ School (TBS) to work with me to find out about it. If you agree to work with me, I will ask you to participate in an informal interview, to try and understand your experiences at TBS.

The interview is not a test and you will not be graded on anything you help me with. The results cannot affect your health and physical education school grade to either increase them or lower them. Your participation also cannot harm you in any way as a student. I ask that you give honest answers and express how you feel about the activities that are completed in your physical education class.

Anything you tell me will stay between me and you. I will not tell your parents, teachers and the other students about the content of our discussion and anything you have shared with me.

Of course, you have the option to participate, even if your parents gave their permission on the permission form you provided me. If you do not want to do participate or if your parents asked you not to do this, simply tell me and everything will be fine. I understand if you do not want to participate and no one else will know that you are not participating.

Do you have any questions about what you’re supposed to do or what will happen if you participate?

Again, this will not affect your grades even if you choose not to be in the study. If you agree to complete this interview, I would like you to sign this student assent form.

The study on the enjoyment of physical education class has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I would like to take part in the study.

Student's Signature: ___________________________

Date: ________________________________

Investigators Signature: ___________________________
Appendix C

Interview Questions

Context
1) So for this study, I won’t be using your real name, is there a name that you could give yourself to remain anonymous?
2) How old are you, and in what grade?
3) Have you always been a student at TBS? - If not, when did you start?
4) a. Describe the activities you completed at your old school? Were they fun/enjoyable? Who/what made them fun or enjoyable?
   b. Compared to TBS, which HPE system do you feel benefited you most?
5) Can you talk to me whether you participate in any physical activities/sports outside of school?
6) This project is about HPE class and student’s experiences at TBS. How important is HPE class to you? (Probe: Is it your favorite class/least favorite class at school? WHY AND HOW SO?)
7) What did you think of today’s class? Was it fun, boring, a waste of time etc...
8) What sorts of activities have you done so far in class this year? Are there any activities you rather not do if you could?
9) What sorts of HPE activities/sports did you complete in previous years at TBS?

Enjoyment and experiences of HPE
10) Do you enjoy HPE class this year?
11) Can you describe what makes an enjoyable P.E class for you?
12) Can you describe any NEGATIVE experiences you may have had this year or in other years in HPE (Probe: How did it make you think, feel, react to HPE participation)?
13) Can you describe some POSITIVE experiences in HPE?
14) Do you always participate in class activities?
   Follow up: Do you ever find ways not to participate? Is there any reason you would decide not to participate?
15) Are there days you don’t feel like coming or skipping class (participation, friends?) What would influence you to miss class?
16) If you had the chance to miss HPE class, would you? (Probe: Describe why or why not)
17) Do you plan to continue with HPE in high school? Why or why not

Teachers’ Role
18) Do teachers at all influence your enjoyment and experiences of P.E? Can you describe a time(s) when they either made it a good experience or a horrible one?
19) I’ve noticed your teachers almost always use team captains to choose teams and the same students often are picked last. Is there a problem with the way teams are often chosen or is it fine with you? Do you think there are other ways to choose teams?
The Future
20) If you had the chance to be a HPE teacher, what sorts of activities do you think you would have in your classroom?
   **Follow up:** What would your classroom sound like, feel like, look like, smell like, feel like?
21) Is there anything we do to make HPE an enjoyable place for everyone?