University Physical Education Students’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience

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Abstract

The promotion of meaningful experiences is a primary way teachers can enact a transformative physical education (PE) curriculum for students (Kretchmar, 2006). Recent advances have led to a framework that outlines the following features of a meaningful experience: social interaction, challenge, fun, motor competence, delight, and personally relevant learning (Beni, Fletcher, & Ní Chróinín, 2017). This study examined how university physical education students understand, learn to articulate, and plan to enact positive social interaction as one feature of meaningful experiences in PE. The study took place in one undergraduate class where the instructor emphasized and articulated the components of positive social interaction. Participants (n = 10) took part in one or two individual interviews at the beginning and/or end of one academic term. Non-participant observations (5) of the class were conducted and exit slips (42) collected from students. Students had a basic understanding of positive social interaction at the first data collection point, whereby finding and making friends or encouraging one another were emphasized, which revealed a lack of sophistication in understanding. At the end of the course, students developed a deeper understanding of social interaction and its components, which they contributed to their teacher educator intentionally reflecting on positive social interaction and articulating the complexity of it with them, organizing inclusive class activities, and making an effort to develop meaningful relationships. This study is significant because it highlights the need for PE teacher education (PETE) instructors to be explicit in articulating and demonstrating ways in which social interaction can be understood, interpreted, and enacted.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Physical education (PE) has the potential to provide opportunities for all children in Ontario to experience joy and meaning that can be made from movement. Even for families who do not have access to organized sport, PE is a mandatory school subject up to grade nine, the first year of secondary school. Given all children attending publicly funded schools in the province participate in PE throughout their early years and adolescence (up to at least age 14) it is important to gain deeper understandings of how to provide the best possible PE program for Ontario’s children and youth in order best service them and instil healthy habits for a healthy active lifestyle.

Kretchmar (2006) identified meaningfulness as a vital priority in providing a quality PE experience for young people. A central feature of a meaningful experience is positive social interaction (Beni, Fletcher, & Ní Chróinín, 2017). Social interaction is a broad term that describes two or more people cooperatively regulating their communications (verbal and/or non-verbal) in order to maintain their relationship; put simply, social interaction occurs when a group of people (two or more) engage (directly or indirectly, verbal or non-verbal) with each other to convey information about one’s own thoughts, intentions, and emotions (Gallagher, Jaegher, & Paolo, 2010; Brackett, Lopes, Nezlek, Salovey, & Shutz, 2004). In this research study I explored the role of social interaction in PE and examined how future teachers understand and interpret social interaction as a crucial part of a meaningful PE experience: what it looks like and consists of, as well as how they intend to plan, teach, and enact situations that promote positive social interaction in classroom settings.
In the contexts of PE and sport, social interaction can be experienced and understood in a wide variety of ways. For example, Beni et al. (2017) explain how positive social interaction refers to the teacher-student relationship, student-student relationships, as well as the social environment or climate of the PE class. In the case of teacher-student relationships, positive social interaction may consist of a supportive teacher who gives students freedom to genuinely express themselves and plans for activities that are inclusive and promote participation over skill levels (Carlson, 1995; Baines, Blatchford, Galton, & Kutnick, 2003; Dyson & Grineski, 2001). Student-student relationships are also crucial to positive social interaction and can contribute to the meaningfulness of the students’ experiences as well as increase their participation levels (Carlson, 1995; Light, Harvey, & Memmert, 2013; Maivertsdotter, Quennerstedt, & Öhman, 2015; Siedentop, 1998). The social environment or climate affects teacher-student and student-student relationships and social dynamics. The teacher has a responsibility to create an environment that allows for participation without the fear of ridicule, is supportive and encouraging for all students, and promotes a sense of community and belongingness, all of which contributes to the meaningfulness of the students’ experience through positive social interaction (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006; Barker, Quennerstedt, & Annerstedt, 2015; Battistich, Solomon, Watson & Schaps, 1997; Goodenow, 1993; Light et al., 2013).

In this chapter, I explore several principles that have been developed about providing a meaningful PE experience for young people, and outline the ways in which social interaction contributes to and aligns with those principles. I argue that social interaction serves as a key and integral part of any participant’s experience in PE, and can either
have a profound overall positive or negative impact; thus contributing to the
meaningfulness or meaninglessness of the experience for students. As such, it is
important to identify ways future teachers learn to promote positive social interaction in
PE classrooms.

**Study Context**

PE in Ontario has long been an issue of discussion, particularly in relation to its
perceived “usefulness” or “importance” in today’s society (Francis & Lathrop, 2014;
Ministry of Education, 2015). Its evolution as a subject began with a heavy influence
from military training mainly for boys early in its history, to a place of expression,
learning, and identity development for all learners regardless of their gender, ability, or
race/ethnicity/nationality (Francis & Lathrop, 2014). Yet, the subject and its
professionals remain under constant scrutiny, with arguments continuing about its
necessity as a subject for student learning and its value in the lives of young people
within and beyond school (Kirk, 2013). With the revised Ontario PE curriculum being
mandated as policy, and a bigger push as a society to reduce issues related to children’s
health and levels of physical inactivity (Strong et al., 2005), PE is once more at a point in
its history of “proving itself” to the general public as crucial to children’s development.
In many ways, we are back to the future of PE.

In order to make claims about the relevance of PE, schools and teachers must
offer a quality PE program that motivates *all* children to participate. Some have argued
that the current emphasis on health prevention is misdirected, because children are
typically not motivated to participate in physical activity to lower their cholesterol or
reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease (Kretchmar, 2008). Instead, the emphasis should
be placed on the joy and meaningfulness children derive from movement (Beni et al., 2017). In comparison to traditional program models, providing a quality PE program through the prioritization of meaningful student experiences is arguably an alternative approach to teaching PE. While few would argue about the value of meaningful experiences for children in PE, it is often not explicitly enacted in a teacher’s practice (Kretchmar, 2007), nor is it overtly stated as an aim for teachers in the Ontario PE curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015).

Along with philosophical support for this view (Hawkins, 2008; Kretchmar, 2007; 2008; Pringle, 2010; McCaughtry & Revegno, 2001), physical activity researchers have found that people are more likely to engage in lifelong physical activity participation for the intrinsic forms of motivation (such as feelings of accomplishment, personal satisfaction, or enjoyment) than they are for extrinsic forms of motivation (such as disease prevention or weight loss) (Teixeira, Carraça, Markland, Silva, & Ryan, 2012). Therefore, it may be likely that young people may find current forms of PE more relevant to their lives if they are able to make meaning from their experiences through tasks and situations they find intrinsically motivating, satisfying, and enjoyable. As a consequence, they may be more likely to engage in physical activity and value an active lifestyle in the long-term across their lifespan.

A meaningful experience in PE is a broad term that includes the full range of human experience (e.g., all emotions, perceptions, and thought processes) that work together to create an experience that is “personally significant” (Kretchmar, 2007). Meaningful experiences are personally subjective and the owner of the experience becomes involved with the memory and takes it into themselves; so much so that it has the potential to have
a lasting affect or influence on their life, even after the experience is over (Beni et al., 2017). With this definition of meaningfulness in mind, a meaningful experience has been conceptualized as consisting of positive social interaction, personal challenge, increased motor competence, fun, and delight (Kretchmar, 2000; 2006). In their review of 50 peer-reviewed articles on meaningful PE and youth sport experiences, Beni et al. (2017) found empirical support for four of these features (with the exception of delight) in addition to the role of personally relevant learning. A PE teacher who prioritizes meaningful experiences through using the features as a guide for their practice can potentially make a difference to the quality of students’ experiences of PE. When meaningfulness to an individual learner is prioritized, a stance is made by the teacher that resists the traditional PE model where, as an example, athletic students may be favoured over non-athletic students, and which allows everyone to experience quality in their participation by being challenged to accomplish personal bests and learn in a positive social setting (Kretchmar, 2006).

Researching how to provide a meaningful PE experience is a large undertaking and beyond the scope of this particular research study. However, it is possible to focus on one aspect of meaningfulness. In this thesis I focus on positive social interaction. Specifically, I investigate how positive social interaction is understood and interpreted by future PE teachers, and how they learn to enact approaches where positive social interaction may be positioned as a crucial feature of a meaningful experience. Due to arguments about the integrated nature of the features of meaningful PE (see Beni et al., 2017), focusing solely on positive social interaction may not be enough to guarantee a meaningful PE experience; however, given its prominence in meaningful PE and youth
sport experiences (Beni et al., 2017; Bernstein, Phillips, & Silverman, 2011; Carlson, 1995; Dyson & Grineski, 2001; Kretchmar, 2006) there is value in understanding the meaning and significance of this concept for those individuals who will be charged with the responsibility of providing meaningful experiences to PE students in the future. Examining how positive social interaction is understood, interpreted, and learned by future teachers may provide PE teacher educators with insights about how to better prepare students to foster meaningful experiences in schools.

The literature review conducted by Beni et al. (2017) provides insights into what young people identify as contributing to a meaningful experience and what they would like to see in PE in regards to the social environment and positive social interaction; however, they also identified a gap in understanding how teachers are prepared to provide these types of experiences for young people. As such, my thesis research will address this gap, focusing on gaining an understanding of how future teachers understand and interpret positive social interaction, and learn to construct the social environment of the classroom and promote positive social interaction in their teaching of PE.

**Study Purpose and Research Question**

In this study, I access the voices of university PE students and interpret their perspectives about what positive social interaction means, what it looks like, and consists of, as well as how they have learned to plan and enact positive social interaction in their future classrooms. The research is guided by three overarching research questions:

1. How do university PE students understand and interpret positive social interaction as part of a meaningful PE experience?
1. What does positive social interaction in PE mean to them and what does it consist of?
2. How do university PE students learn to articulate positive social interaction as part of their evolving PE teaching practice?
3. How do university PE students envision themselves planning and enacting strategies and approaches to promote positive social interaction when they are teaching in classrooms?

**Theoretical & Interpretive Frameworks**

Identifying the interpretive framework through which I view the world was important for it helped provide a reference point as to how the data were interpreted (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). This research was conducted through the lens of social constructivism. Social constructivism acknowledges that realities are socially constructed and that how one perceives interaction with others impacts upon how they perceive a situation or past experience (Creswell, 2013). Meaning is often subjective and formed through interaction with others rather than being imprinted on individuals (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, this study did not begin with a theory, but through inductive study, generated a theory or pattern of meaning. In this way, the meaning of participants’ narratives guided the development of an understanding of how to achieve the purpose of this study and answer the research questions. This thesis was therefore an exploratory and inductive study. As such, I built patterns, categories, and themes from the “bottom up”, using the data to generate broader understandings and, potentially, theories rather than pre-emptively having theories informing how the data was analyzed and understood. It required an iterative process, moving back and forth between the data (as it was being
generated) and my data-informed themes, until there was a comprehensive set of themes developed (Creswell, 2013). Due to the inductive nature of this study, not all themes and understandings could be developed or pre-determined before data collection began. Therefore, the literature review chapter was an evolving document as more theoretical and empirical literature were added to it in order to accommodate new themes that were developed through data collection and analysis. Also, to reflect the processes I engaged in as part of the research, some new literature and theoretical insights are introduced in the Discussion chapter, because it was after I analyzed the data that I was able to make new connections to existing literature that I had previously been unaware of.

The foundation of this research study was the outline of the features of a meaningful experience described by Kretchmar (2006) and Beni et al. (2017) which are (in no particular order) challenge, increased motor competence, fun, delight, personally relevant learning and social interaction. The framework and literature reviewed by Beni et al. (2017) suggests that social interaction is a crucial component of an overall meaningful experience. However, the ways in which future teachers understand, interpret, and plan to provide situations that promote positive social interaction as part of a meaningful experience is relatively untouched in the literature. Therefore, discovering more about social interaction specifically can enable future physical educators to provide their students with a meaningful experience.

**Positioning Myself**

I believe that no one can approach research in a completely unbiased and objective manner. Qualitative research is offered in alignment with this point of view. As a researcher therefore, it was important to understand how my own past experiences and
biases may have affected how I approached research and interpreted its findings (Creswell, 2013). I am a graduate of the site where the research took place, Mountainview University¹, having completed an undergraduate degree in PE and Bachelor of Education through a Concurrent Teacher Education program. As a result, I am well versed in the language participants used to describe professional practice in PE, and the contexts in which they are learning. I believe this enabled me to gain some special insight because I was not trying to enter the participants’ world from a completely unrelated context or background. In a way, I lived not too long ago in a similar way to the research participants, and so I may be partially justified in claiming I have a strong understanding of their perspectives, particularly in terms of their interpretation of what is valued and prioritized in their courses and by their instructors at Mountainview University.

During and prior to my experiences as an undergraduate student at Mountainview, I have also always been involved with organized sport. I started out playing soccer during the summer in kindergarten and then in grade two, I branched out to basketball and baseball. Finally, I found a sport that I stayed in for the rest of my organized sport career which happened to be competitive swimming. I swam competitively for eight years, grade four to grade twelve, which shaped a lot about my views on what competitive sport is and how best I might coach and teach sport orientated skills. With that said, in high school, I only took PE for one year, so I do not have the same experience as many PE majors do in that most of them took multiple years of PE in high school. In that regard, at

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis to refer to individuals and institutions.
times it may have been a bit more difficult for me to understand participants’ recollections of their experiences exactly: I know the method in which skills are typically taught in competitive sport is often different than in PE class.

The purpose of this study is to explore how university students understand and interpret positive social interaction, what it looks like and consist of, as well as how they have learned to plan and enact positive social interaction as part of a meaningful PE experience. My previous experience in competitive sport has given me some insights into what I understand and interpret as contributing to positive social interaction and ideas about how I and other teachers might go about supporting its implementation. However, these insights and ideas were brought to the project through my particular lens, belief system, and what I have learned through my undergraduate and graduate degree programs, so when it comes to hearing what the participants think, there were times I tried to separate myself in those regards, in order to make sure to value their voice and life experiences.

**Definition of Terms**

Throughout this thesis, I use specific language to describe participants or concepts. This section is a description of terms used throughout this thesis and will assist the reader and avoid any ambiguity.

**Physical Education.** Although the Ontario curriculum identifies the subject area of PE as “Health & PE”, for the purposes of this study, the elementary school subject of “Health & PE” will be referred to only as PE. I chose to do this to reflect the current literature on meaningful experiences in PE, which often referred to the school subject only as PE. Moreover, the participants of this study, who are in post-secondary education,
receive a bachelor’s degree in PE, so it kept the language consistent. This is not to
discredit the need for health education, however, the focus of this study as well as the
cited literature address positive social interaction within the context of PE.

**Meaningful Experiences.** Meaningful experiences are those that hold personal
significance (Kretchmar, 2007). Due to their significance, these experiences are often
memorable and have a lasting impact on the individual. In this thesis, a meaningful
experience is one that is positive, holds personal significance, and has the potential to
influence the individual’s quality of life (Beni et al., 2017; Kretchmar, 2006; 2007)

**University Student.** In this thesis, the term “university student” is used to
describe an individual that is in post-secondary education, in this case, university, and is
in the process of acquiring degree in PE. All individuals are in their final or fourth year of
their bachelors in PE program, with seven out of the ten participants enrolled in the
Concurrent Teacher Education program, where they will enter a two-year teacher
education in order to acquire their Bachelor of Education degree in the upcoming school
year. The term “university student” is used to describe all participants because they are all
in their fourth year of Mountainview’s physical education program which prepares
students to enter the physical education field.

**Positive Social Interaction.** The term positive social interaction or PSI will be
used frequently throughout this thesis. Positive social interaction refers to the positive
outcomes of the quality of explicit or implicit interaction between groups or individuals.
It is important to note that I am not referring only to “enjoyable” forms of social
interaction but to the positive outcomes of the interaction. For example, an encouraging
educator will explicitly exemplify positive social interaction, however, if there is conflict
in the classroom and the educator deals with it directly and professionally. The interaction itself may not be necessarily enjoyable (e.g., tough conversations, behaviour correction, or appropriate consequences to poor choices) but the outcome of the interaction will be positive (e.g., personal growth, a strong sense of community, a developed sense of trust) (Allender et al. 2006; Baker, 2006; Light et al., 2013)

**Significance of the Research**

As previously mentioned, a gap exists between knowing what young people have expressed as important, desirable, and meaningful in PE, and understanding how teachers are being prepared to provide their future students with those types of experiences (Beni et al., 2017). In this study I address that gap by gathering and analyzing data on the perspectives of university students regarding what positive social interaction means to them and how they learn and intend to promote positive social interaction in their classrooms. This research may contribute to the literature by building on the knowledge of meaningful experiences, providing a clearer picture of university students’ understanding and interpretation of positive social interaction in PE, and enabling teacher educators to better develop practices and programs to meet gaps in university students’ preparation.

**Organization of the Thesis and Chapter Summary**

In this introductory chapter I briefly outlined a rationale for the study by identifying the role and nature of meaningful PE experiences. Based on gaps in the literature, I explained the purpose of the study, as well as three guiding research questions. In Chapter two, I situate the study among existing research by reviewing
research on social interaction in education and PE. In Chapter three, I explain the methods used in this study, such as data collection and analysis tools and strategies, and the coding process and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 contains the results of the data analysis and I discuss the major findings of the research. In Chapter 5, I return to address the research questions, discuss significant findings from the analysis, and explain the implications for PE teacher education practice and future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature on meaningfulness in PE, with a particular focus on the role social interaction plays in meaningful experiences, and how to promote positive social interaction in a PE setting. I will delve into the concepts and themes that surround positive social interaction in PE. Therefore, in this chapter I consider the literature in the following four main sections: (a) meaningfulness in a PE setting, (b) theories that inform understandings of positive social interaction, (c) what negative and positive social interaction entails (including possible outcomes), and (d) learning to teach PE in ways that promote positive social interaction.

The literature cited in this paper is from a broad spectrum of dates and authors. There is a focus on major studies that are directly related to the research question. There was a lack of literature regarding how teachers interpret and enact positive social interaction, most of the examples or research done were at a conceptual level or involved an observation of a class (e.g. Brown, 2008; Kretchmar, 2006). Therefore, the literature cited is drawn from multiple fields in order to get well-rounded ideas on meaningfulness, social interaction, and how they are applied in PE. In particular, literature is cited from the following fields: PE, psychology, and education. Gathering information from these fields provides an in-depth view of social interaction, as well as gives multiple perspectives on the same issue. This study utilized grounded theory, which is an inductive approach to research that recognizes and constructs the patterns, categories, and themes from “the ground up” as data are gathered and analyzed (Creswell, 2013). The literature review was conducted in order to identify gaps and situate the research among the current research of the field,
however, as new themes were identified, additional literature was added to clarify and situate the study in the field of PE.

**Meaningfulness**

What makes for a quality PE experience? Some may say that all the goals of the curriculum are met, that the students had fun, the students learned something new, or that the students are more physically fit after the unit or lesson. However, even when all of these things are achieved, often the students are left wanting more and some may not even participate (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2010). After reviewing the literature, Kretchmar (2006) summarizes a quality PE program as providing students with a breadth of experiences that aim to satisfy all the criteria aforementioned, as well as giving students a deeper understanding of physical activity and its benefits. Kretchmar (2006, 2008) recognizes that there are tangible and scientific benefits of PE such as disease prevention, promotion of a sense of well-being, and provision of health related self-management skills and motor competence. However, if the goals of PE are disease prevention, increased physical fitness, and learning of motor and skills then PE could simply entail students running laps and running drills. While this approach might achieve a limited range of outcomes, it does not provide a quality PE program because students are less likely to find it personally meaningful. For instance, children or adolescents are typically not motivated to be physically active due to extrinsic concerns they may have about preventing diabetes (Domingues, Hallal, and Reichert, 2007) and few find pleasure from simple, repetitive tasks that involve little challenge or opportunities for positive interactions with peers. Moreover, teachers might have difficulty explaining how these tasks carry relevance to the lives of students outside of the classroom.
Although there is not an overwhelming amount of evidence in the literature that supports the long-term effects of meaningful experiences in PE, generally, young people are not active simply because of the physical health benefits (Kretchmar, 2008). There are other reasons people participate in physical activity besides disease prevention, increased fitness, and learning new skills, and the constituent features of a meaningful experience provide clues about reasons why students might want to engage in a more active lifestyle. Specifically, people tend to be motivated to move because it is intrinsically satisfying and meaningful, it is fun, it offers a respite or break from other daily activities, and it gives individuals the freedom to express themselves, explore, and create movement (Brown, 2008; Kretchmar, 2006).

Kretchmar (2006) identifies a personally meaningful experience as one that includes challenge, increased motor competence, fun, delight, and social interaction. This clarification of a meaningful experience recognizes different reasons people participate in physical activity, and can be generalized in most PE settings. Moreover, a recent review of literature on meaningful experiences in PE demonstrated support for four of these five features: fun, social interaction, challenge, and motor competence, however there was not a strong case made for delight (Beni et al., 2017). The authors also demonstrated support for personally relevant learning to be considered as a feature of a meaningful PE experience.

Meaningfulness has been conceptualized differently by several different scholars, often in ways that reflect their research field. Kretchmar is a philosopher, and although some scholars have taken a more psychological approach (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013), I was drawn to Kretchmar’s view on meaningfulness due to its
specificity in the features of a meaningful experience, how it provided the most comprehensive set of evidence of what young people find meaningful in PE, and how well it lined up with the tenets of social constructivism which links to how I positioned myself in Chapter 1.

These features represent a simple and, on the surface, easy to understand framework for interpreting meaningful PE. However, such a view masks the complex nature of the features themselves and their integrated nature. The features of a meaningful experience can be explained clearly separately, however, it is critical to understand that they are presented in no particular order. Also, although the features are explained separately, they interact with each other and combine together in order to create a meaningful experience (Beni, et al. 2017). To clarify all aspects of a meaningful experience, a deeper look at Kretchmar’s writing about these features is therefore needed. An argument will be made in this chapter that many of the features rely on social interaction in order to maximize their effect on the students’ experience.

**Challenge.** Challenge can be meaningful if it is set at a “just right” level for learners (Carlson, 1995; Kretchmar, 2000). Simply put, a “just right” challenge level is a place where the activity is not too hard that it is frustrating, and not too easy that the participants are bored (Dismore & Bailey, 2011). It is perfectly challenging so that the participants are given the opportunity to experience success but not find the activity too easy. A good level of challenge results from movement competence and can lead to fun (Kretchmar, 2000). A challenging activity can foster movement competence since it allows participants to learn new skills or improve on skills that they already know and a “just right” challenge is usually inherently fun, satisfying, and motivating, for it is not
frustrating or too easy (Dismore & Bailey, 2011; Dyson, 1995). Gray, Sproule, & Wang, (2008) found that when an activity was at the “just right” challenge level, students participated more freely and typically had a more meaningful experiences due to experience success in a challenging activity.

**Increased Motor Competence.** This is an important component that is often missed in PE classes. It refers to the fact that students are provided with clear guidance on how to develop new skills and become more competent in skills that they already have some degree of mastery of (Kretchmar, 2006). Students are often afraid to participate in certain activities because they are not confident in their skill level and do not want to embarrass themselves (Carlson, 1995). Increasing students’ skill levels will allow them to participate, and students typically have a more meaningful experience when participating in activities that they feel skilled or competent (Gray et al., 2008). Having a meaningful experience is not just about having fun, it is also about learning skills and increasing participation to become a more competent mover. The literature suggests that learning new skills or becoming more competent in existing skills are important elements of meaningful experiences for young people (Beni, et al., 2017).

**Fun.** Although fun may seem simplistic and self-explanatory, it can be one of the hardest for teachers to have students regularly and intentionally experience. When done well, it means that the activities being done in the class are inherently fun and the students are given the freedom to experience play with each other and by themselves (Kretchmar, 2006). Depsite what many adults say about the value of fun in PE, it has been identified by students as a critical component to a meaningful experience (Dyson, 1995; Jakobsson,
Lundvall, & Redelius, 2014); it is therefore important for teachers to keep students’ voices in mind if they are aiming to provide their students with a meaningful experience.

**Delight.** Delight is a more complex idea than fun. According to Kretchmar (2006):

“Delight is different from fun, just as ‘love’ is different from ‘like,’ and ‘excellence’ is not the same thing as ‘competence.’” (p. 7). Delight is more enduring than fun, and when experiencing delight, the participant is carried away in the joy of movement and often forgets things like the time, or how long they have been doing said activity (Kretchmar, 2006). Although Kretchmar (2006) strongly advocates for the promotion of delight in a meaningful experience, there is little evidence of its contribution to the meaningfulness young people make in PE. Beni et al. (2017) explained that this may be due to the difficulty of defining delight and separating it from fun, particularly for children.

**Social Interaction.** Social interaction, at its most basic form, is any form of tangible or intangible interaction between two persons, a person and a group of people, or two groups of people (Allender et al., 2006). With that in mind, there are many forms of social interaction in PE, some that are more obvious than others. There is social interaction between: (a) the teacher and the student, (b) student and student, (c) groups of students and a student, (d) groups of students and other groups of students, (e) groups of student and the teacher.

Social interaction takes several forms and can be hard to conceptualize. An example of a teacher-student interaction would be the teacher openly discussing ideas with students, or giving the students the power to develop their own curriculum (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2010). A student-student interaction might involve students discussing ideas, designing partner games, or simply talking while waiting (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2010). A group of
students interacting with one student might be represented by playing games or the implicit feelings shared between students towards others, such as including them or excluding them (Carlson, 1995). Interactions involving groups of students with other groups of students could be implicit feelings shared by one group to another group of students which could translate to including them, listening to them, excluding them, or even conflicting with them (Carlson, 1995). Groups of students interacting with a teacher might involve the class interacting with the teacher, as in listening to him/her, accepting him/her, or collaborating with him/her (Enright & O’Sullivan, 2010).

Social interaction is a crucial feature of a meaningful PE experience, so much so that it can drastically support or demolish all the other aspects of a meaningful experience. For example, an appropriately challenging and fun activity can be a unique and meaningful experience if the students respect and support one another and the teacher has built a cohesive learning community (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003). On the other hand, the very same activity can produce different outcomes and experiences if the students do not get along, the teacher does not strive to create a community of learners, or, in a sports situation, if the spectators ridicule the participants, all of which would cause the activity to be a negative experience.

Social interaction is the focus of study of this research because, as explained by Beni et al. (2017), a great deal of fostering positive social interaction is the responsibility of the teacher. Teachers must make explicit, thoughtful and intentional efforts to provide opportunities among students to experience positive social interaction. If university students can be made aware of the need to provide positive social interaction to their future students, they may better understand how and why to provide their future students
with a meaningful experience in PE. In the following sections, I explore social interaction in greater depth, looking specifically at theories that inform understandings of positive social interaction, positive social interaction and its outcomes for students, and negative social interactions and its outcomes for students.

**Theories That Inform Understandings of Positive Social Interaction**

Several theories were explored in order to inform a clear and thorough understanding of positive social interaction in the context of PE and teacher education. Each theory represents a unique perspective on positive social interaction and contributes to its overall understanding. In particular, in this thesis I draw from: (a) social constructivism, (b) situated learning theory, (c) self-determining theory, and (d) identity.

**Social constructivism.** Teachers can draw from social constructivist learning theory to enact appropriate situations in class, which in simple terms, recognizes that knowledge is socially constructed and human development is a social process (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Barker et al., 2015). This is more of a theory of learning and does not come with specific practices, however, understanding the theory of learning can affect teaching model choice, activity choices, and how to set up the classroom. A social constructivist teacher creates an environment where students are free to explore and share their ideas through social interaction (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003). The community created by the teacher can allow students to develop socially and experience a supportive learning community for, “Studies suggest a connection between the teacher’s ability to create a learning environment that emphasizes students’ social interaction and the enhancement of students’ individual and social growth” (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003).
Social constructivism calls for teachers to understand that the students play an active role in knowledge construction and are not simply empty vessels for the teacher to pour into (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003). Therefore, students are empowered to contribute and take ownership of their learning, therefore creating potential for students to be personally invested in their learning and find education more personally relevant or significant. An important feature of a meaningful experience is that it is personally relevant or significant, thus social constructivism lends itself to providing opportunities for students to have a meaningful experience.

**Situated Learning.** A key feature of the situated learning theory is peripheral participation (Lave & Wegner, 1991). Peripheral participation is when an individual observes, learns, and is engaged in an activity from the sidelines or while not actively participating (Lave & Wegner, 1991). For example, imagine the following scenario: a PE class is playing basketball, and there is a student who has never played basketball before. They can first observe the game, how it is played, strategies, and how to achieve success before jumping into the game. This gives the student a chance to become familiar with the game before participating.

Legitimate peripheral participation forms an integral part of a broader theory of situated learning, which is informed by social constructivism. Situated learning observes that learning takes place in communities of practice and occurs within the social and cultural context of the classroom or environment (Kirk & Macdonald, 1998; Lave & Wegner, 1991). Therefore, the educator has to be intentional about creating an atmosphere that promotes learning and aspects of positive social interaction such as community, connections, and belongingness. Lave and Wenger (1991) relate legitimate peripheral
participation in communities of practice with the concept apprenticeship. Within the community of practice there are apprentices and masters, but it is important to note that the master does not always have to be the educator. Situated learning allows for peer to peer teaching as well; the role of the master is thus fairly fluid. Just as apprentices spend time with their masters observing, participating in easier tasks, until eventually becoming the master’s equal, situated learning theory suggests students do the same in PE (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, positive social interaction does not always mean actively including everyone in an activity by forcing all the students to take on a role they are not ready for; it also means intentionally allowing students to learn the social climate of the class and rules of the activity through observing and being included in small incremental steps at their own pace (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

**Self-Determination Theory.** The self-determination theory emphasizes individuals’ intrinsic tendencies concerning intrinsic motivation by identifying their psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The self-determination theory identifies three psychological needs, present in all humans. Those needs are: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). If those needs are met, the individual benefits from increased intrinsic motivation and emotional function (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Teachers should be mindful about the kind of environment they are creating in order to promote social interaction. Combining intrinsic and extrinsic factors to promote participation is a powerful tool to do this (Carlson, 1995). Intrinsically, movement is enjoyable and meaningful (Brown, 2008). Movement should and can promote motor skill acquisition, physical fitness, social development, cultural awareness, academic performance, lifelong physical activity and fitness and cognitive learning (Brown, 2008).
All of these can be meaningful to an individual, they might not find them all meaningful, for everyone moves for different reasons, however, by providing multiple intrinsic reasons to move, at least all students can find PE personally meaningful (Brown, 2008). Practices that promote intrinsic motivation in students can be heavily informed by the self-determination theory, which states three psychological needs for all humans: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Everyone needs to feel that they are able to participate in a meaningful capacity (similar to inclusivity and enabling students to have a meaningful role, competence), feel that they are able to participate without being overbearingly monitored or explicit direction (autonomy), and need to feel a sense of connectivity or belongingness with their peers (relatedness) (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Identity.** Although identity is not a specific part of Kretchmar’s criteria of a meaningful experience, it is important to discuss for it affects the students directly and shapes their experience. For example, a student who does not identify themselves as an active part of a learning community or an active person will have a hard time having a meaningful experience in PE. So students who identify themselves as a physically active person means they can find the intrinsic enjoyment of physical activity (Brown, 2008). Having students who positively identify themselves as a physically active person is ideal, for it can increase participation and can increase their intrinsic enjoyment of movement, no matter what the activity is (Brown, 2008).

It may not be clear initially what identity has to do with social interaction, however, a social constructivist view of identity can add some clarity. According to Mayes (2010) identity (or identification) has two main processes: one process is how an individual
views themselves, and the second is how that individual believes they are viewed by others (Mayes, 2010). Mayes (2010) discusses how identity is constructed through social interaction and that identity is fluid and can be changed. So the learning community or how the community labels an individual has a strong impact on how that individual views themselves. For example, if Stacy views herself as an inactive person but through interaction comes to believe that the teacher and class view her as a competent mover, it is possible that she will come to identify herself as a competent mover from influence of how she interprets others’ identification of her in the PE classroom.

In order for students to have a meaningful experience, it requires some form of participation or engagement. In order to ensure that all students are engaged or identify with PE, the teacher can create an environment where all ability levels are respected and appreciated. In this way, all students come to terms with who they are as a mover, and feel comfortable with their ability level and become more willing to participate. It is therefore important for a teacher to recognize this duality of identity and use it to their advantage. This does not mean manipulating their students and pressuring them into becoming something they are not. However, it does mean that they have an opportunity to reverse or reinforce an individual’s pre-conception of themselves and their movement abilities. The teacher is in a role to do so since it has been proven that education program have the power to shape its students’ identities (Maivorsdotter, et al., 2015).

Identity development is an important part of meaningful experiences in PE because it has lasting impact beyond the classroom and can lead to a lifelong active lifestyle. For this study, identity development will be a component of the potential outcomes of a meaningful experience that emphasizes positive social interaction. It will be used to
promote the value of positive social interaction in PE, and will be discussed with the research participants as an outcome of positive social interaction. Teachers are in a position to influence their students’ identities and social interaction plays a key role on if the students experience positive or negative identity development, so it will be beneficial to hear the perspectives on how university students intend to use social interaction as a tool to provide students with the best opportunity to experience positive identity development.

**Summary.** Drawing from a variety of theories provides a thorough understanding of positive social interaction by acknowledging multiple perspectives of how social interaction might be thought about and enacted in practice. In this way, in this thesis I do not exclusively align my thinking with just one perspective but instead draw from several theories to inform a more complete view on positive social interaction which will be referred to throughout this thesis.

**Positive Social Interaction in Physical Education**

Social forms of physical activity are attractive, especially to many young people (Carlson, 1995). This is crucial to recognize, since avoiding social interaction by providing only individualized games or activities does not ensure that all students will have a positive experience. People crave and enjoy social interaction if done in a physically and emotionally safe setting, and teachers must be intentional in allowing students to interact with each other, since most teachers typically only plan for teacher to student interactions and often do not intentionally set time aside for student to student interactions (Baines et al., 2003). PE offers a unique setting for students to be social, relative to other aspects of life, and isolation is a factor in students’ lack of enjoyment or
fun in PE (Carlson, 1995). It is therefore clear to see that in order to offer a quality and meaningful PE program, social interaction has to be part of the planning process by the teacher and must be recognized as central to the meaningfulness learners might derive from their experience (Kretchmar, 2006; Maivorsdotter et al., 2015).

Social interaction can be conceptualized as a life skill that allows students to interact effectively with others, verbal and nonverbal, express their own thoughts and feelings, and receive feedback as well (Sheppard & Mandigo, 2009). Social development is an explicit component of the Ontario Health and PE curriculum (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015). Focusing on positive social interaction thus not only does has the potential to provide students with a meaningful experience, teachers in Ontario and many other jurisdictions are also required to provide experiences and identify outcomes set out by the official curriculum.

Positive social interaction is not a new concept in PE and can be clearly seen in previously created teaching models such as Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) (Hellison, 2011). A common claim among teachers and sport practitioners is that “sport builds character”, however, there is little evidence to support that claim and therefore risky to assume (Walsh, 2008). TPSR provides clear steps to not only provide the students or participants with time to build skills or movement competence and participate in physical activities, but also aims to explicitly teach them about personal and social responsibility. It does this through creating and purposely highlighting positive aspects of the learning environment as well as putting students in a position to understand how to interact positively with themselves and others (Hellison, 2011). Hellison’s TPSR model is recognized as a legitimate and effective teacher model, its strength being how it
emphasizes the importance of positive social interaction and community within the PE classroom (Metzler, 2011; Walsh, 2008).

The notion of community in the classroom is central to Hellison’s TPSR model as well as other approaches to supporting positive social interaction. In a PE setting, having a positive social network or community of movers provides motivation to students to participate and is critical to their enjoyment of the subject (Beni, et al., 2017). Aspects of experiences that contained positive social interaction tend to allow students to experience a sense of community, which provides students with feelings of belongingness, trust, and emotional safety (Allender et al., 2006; Baker, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Goodenow, 1993; Light et al., 2013). Students need a safe and encouraging community to feel motivated to participate in PE. Although students often feel uncomfortable trying new skills, Allender et al. (2006) found that they still tried and eventually learned them due to the fact that there was no fear of ridicule and had a supportive learning community. The importance of a sense of community and its role in positive social interaction can therefore not be overlooked. In a study on competitive swimmers, Light et al. (2013) found that the sense of community within a swim club was important to fun, meaning, and enjoyment (Light et al., 2013). A sense of community has such a strong influence that sometimes, it can often make activities that were not previously fun or challenging become so due to the freedom, trust, and relationships in the community (Light et al., 2013). A sense of community among participants of physical activity has been identified as what brings people back and what they find meaningful and valuable (Allender et al., 2006; Light et al., 2013). Therefore, establishing a supportive community of movers in the PE classroom is integral to providing students with a meaningful experience.
Having a supportive community is important because it does not focus on the difference of skill levels or competence among students, but recognizes that all students bring a different type of expertise to the group (Barker et al., 2015). The difference here between positive and negative social interaction is that positive social interaction focuses on the strengths students bring to the situation, whereas negative social interaction often focuses on what students lack or what they do not have (that is, it is a deficit perspective). Since there is a shift in focus away from the deficits of students, a supportive community of movers allows students to be engaged through legitimate peripheral participation (Barker et al., 2015).

It is clear to see that positive social interaction is strongly informed by the presence or absence of a supportive learning community. Within this understanding, it is important to understand that the community not only consists of the students and the teacher, but also any spectators that may be present. The educator must allow them to add to the meaningful experience of the students and stop any negative comments from the spectators so that the positive, supportive, learning community is not in jeopardy. Externally, the teacher can utilize tools and strategies to promote positive social interaction such as using the pedagogical models Sports Education and Cooperative Learning, Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility, or by drawing from social constructivist principles of learning.

Sport Education is a teaching model that celebrates the culture of sport and does so by putting students in teams where each student has a specific role (Siedentop, 1998). Sport Education has a strong social interaction aspect for the students all have to work together throughout the duration of a season (Siedentop, 1998). A key feature of Sport
Education involves learners adopting several roles such as coach, trainer, equipment manager, and reporter. The roles that students get switched regularly, however, it allows students to feel valuable since they all contribute in different ways. So even if a student is not as skilled as some of the others, they still have a legitimate role on the team, and can contribute to the team’s success. Each role requires students to interact with others in a group and requires the teacher to provide some suggestions about how students can be successful in enacting each of the roles. Teaching PE through a tested and proven model that promotes social interaction can lead to building a supportive learning community in the class.

Cooperative learning is another way to promote positive social interaction to teach PE. It is, “defined as small-group instruction and practice that uses positive student interactions as a means of achieving instructional goals” (Dyson & Grineski, 2001, p.28). Cooperative learning focuses on “Team formation, positive interdependence, individual accountability, positive social interaction skills, and group processing” to teach content in PE (Dyson & Grineski, 2001). Taking into account the different dynamics of group work to promote positive student relations, and maximize participation is a great way to developing a supportive learning community. It allows students to work together to achieve a common goal, as well as valuing each other’s abilities and ideas.

Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility focuses on preparing students for all aspects of life by using physical activity as a means to educate students on how to manage themselves and their social interaction with others (Hellison, 2011). Although this is using positive social interaction with the goal of personal student development and life skills rather than a meaningful experience, it still promotes positive social interaction
among the students and between the students and teachers. This model shows students how to be comfortable with themselves and aware of how their own actions and thoughts affect themselves, others around them, and how to take those personal life skills outside of the classroom.

**Outcomes of Positive Social Interaction in Physical Education**

One of the most notable outcomes of positive social interaction in PE is student engagement. Engagement is different than active participation. A positive community allows students to engage with tasks, lessons, units and others in the teaching-learning setting through peripheral participation, which is the first step to active participation (Barker et al., 2015). Engagement in the activity is necessary to providing students with a meaningful experience, with social interaction being a powerful tool to ensure that.

Within the activity, positive social interaction also contributes to how students engage with other features of a meaningful experience (i.e., challenge, fun, motor competence, personal relevance). For example, healthy competition among students and friends can be fun and challenging to some participants, even if they are competing against one another, not just alongside each other (Bernstein et al., 2011). Social forms of physical activity are attractive to many young people which add to the fun of the activity (Bernstein et al., 2011; Carlson, 1995). With increased participation and enjoyment, it can be inferred that there will be a greater chance of skill development and movement competence, due to active student participation. Taken together, providing students with a supportive learning community can lead to positive social interaction, which can be a strong factor in providing students with many of the other features of a personally meaningful experience in PE.
Through positive social interaction that occurs in a supportive learning community, participants’ identities may begin to reshape in terms of both seeing themselves as capable movers, and as being seen as a capable mover (Mayes, 2010). Also having a positive experience in PE can provide an educative experience to the students, and they will tend to seek out more experience in that particular field (Dewey, 1938). This can potentially lead to students continually being active, and living a healthy active lifestyle. Overall, continued engagement in a supportive learning community has notable benefits, all of which lend themselves to helping provide students with a personally meaningful experience in PE.

Certain pedagogical models or teaching models such as Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) and Sport Education have been found to facilitate or provide opportunities for meaningful experiences and positive social interaction among students (Beni et al., 2017). TGfU helps students acquire a deeper understanding of game strategy and tactics and how they are transferable among a variety of games and gives them the tools to experience success, even though they might not all be exceptionally gifted physically or athletically (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982). Sport Education assigns every student a meaningful role that is not based on their skill level, therefore, every student has a meaningful role that is appropriate to their ability (Siedentop, 1998).

Cooperative learning supports positive social interaction by emphasizing cooperation among students, which are often a diverse group with a variety of skills (Dyson & Grineski, 2001). By having a strength based approach versus a deficit model, cooperative learning challenges students to contribute in ways that they are best able to, therefore, acknowledging students strengths and allowing other students to cover for
areas where they might not be as skilled, competent, or confident in (Dyson & Grineski, 2001).

**Negative Social Interaction in Physical Education**

Not all interactions in PE is positive; many students have had negative experiences in PE, and many of those can be credited to negative social interaction. For example, in PE, there is often a fear of ridicule or being seen as incompetent (Carlson, 1995). Since social interaction is any interaction that happens between two persons, groups, or combination of the two, this fear of ridicule stems from the possibility that participants can be ridiculed. It may go without saying that it is important for the teacher to not participate in ridiculing students for their lack of ability, despite how “funny” it may be for some students, or how much the teacher thinks they are in on the “joking”. The small possibility of being ridiculed can often deter students from pushing their boundaries or trying something new. At worst, it can lead students to drop out of PE and be deterred from participating in other forms of physical activity (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013). Therefore, teachers should be aware of how they are presenting themselves to their students. They should maintain a professional teacher – student relationships, however, they can still be supportive, encouraging, respectful, and create a safe environment in order to best promote positive social interaction within the classroom or PE setting (Allender et al. 2006; Barker et al., 2015)

Although PE often involves games, which by their very nature consist of some forms of competition, an overly competitive atmosphere in PE can have negative outcomes for students (Carlson, 1995). Pitting students against each other needlessly often results in lack of participation or avoidance of PE (Carlson, 1995). There is such a
thing as healthy competition, which can be linked to appropriate challenge, however, an overemphasis on competitiveness can create a negative social atmosphere and can hinder the fostering of a positive learning community (Kretchmar, 2006). Creating an overly competitive PE classroom also emphasizes the skill gap between students, which can have consequences for the ways social relationships are formed and maintained (Bernstein et al., 2011). An overly competitive PE class can lead to negative social interaction between students, because students may label themselves or others as either competent or incompetent movers which will, in turn, influence the extent to which they identify themselves as a competent mover.

Focusing on student skill levels and over-competitiveness are two examples that can give birth to negative social interactions. In short, any practice that is demeaning to the student and does not make them feel comfortable can be labeled as negative social interaction. This is not to say that students should not be put into adverse situations where they can learn, however, doing so in a demeaning and malicious manner can often lead to negative social interaction, and by extension, negative experiences in PE.

**Outcomes of Negative Social Interaction in Physical Education**

There are several short-term outcomes of negative social interaction in PE. First, the fear of ridicule or a physically or emotionally unsafe environment does not foster continued participation (Carlson, 1995). As mentioned before, some sort of heightened engagement or participation is required for students to have a meaningful experience and if they are denied that participation, there is little chance that they will have a meaningful experience. Fear causes students to draw themselves into isolation, and they become unengaged spectators in the classroom, even though they are physically there (Carlson,
An example of this would be a student playing a game of soccer who just jogs with the group as the game goes on but strategically avoids touching the ball because then they would be in the spotlight and they are afraid of making a mistake and being ridiculed for it (Tischler & McCaughtry, 2011). Although one could argue that the responsibility rests on the student to take a risk or to “try harder”, the root of the problem is a socially and emotionally unsafe environment, and they are afraid of being singled out as incompetent, unskilled, or for other reasons such as their ethnicity, sexuality, and gender.

Over-competitiveness in PE has been shown to contribute to lack of participation from those who identify themselves as low skilled (Bernstein et al., 2011). In these situations, the whole PE class is directed towards the interests and abilities of a small group of high-skilled students, while at the same time alienating the rest of the class. Even though the highly skilled students may be receiving a meaningful experience, it is at the expense of the majority of the class who are passively being labelled as incompetent, which will lead to isolation or avoidance of participation (Bernstein et al., 2011; Carlson, 1995).

Social isolation is linked to low self-efficacy in PE, which is why reshaping students’ identity to one that enjoys and appreciates movement is so important (Carlson, 1995). Lack of participation is a certain way to ensure that students do not have a personally meaningful experience in PE, and negative social interaction or a negative social environment can be a catalyst in that process. Negative social interaction, as mentioned earlier, can cause a well-planned and otherwise potentially meaningful experience to go awry due to lack of participation, isolation, low self-efficacy, poor peer to peer relationships, or a socially unsafe environment (Carlson, 1995; Bernstein et al., 2011). In
fact, Lodewyk & Pybus, (2013) found that students that chose to not enroll in PE at the high school level reported lower levels of perceived self-efficacy, personal enjoyment, and personal value placed on PE. Moreover, they were discouraged by previous experiences in PE, such as skill level comparisons between students by teachers (Lodewyk & Pybus, 2013).

There are also potentially long term outcomes of negative social interaction in PE. Students who consistently experience negative social interaction are likely to have a miseducative experience (Dewey, 1938), which may cause them to avoid seeking further experience in PE or physical activity. This is especially unfortunate, since it can cause a person to avoid living a healthy active lifestyle, and a life full of movement (Engström, 2008). Negative social interaction is linked to many negative outcomes of PE, which is why it is important to recognize practices that should be avoided at all cost, for the consequences for the students can potentially last a lifetime.

**Learning to Teach and the Role of the Teacher Educator**

Pre-service teachers often hold pre-conceived notions of teaching and what teaching entails (Loughran, 2006; Pajares, 1992). This is because every pre-service teacher has gone through at least 18 years of education and has had exposure to multiple teaching strategies, approaches, and methods of learning that has subconsciously shaped their ideas and way of thinking, which has been described as the *apprenticeship of observation* (Loughran, 2006; Pajares, 1992). Although this lengthy indoctrination into the education system does provide some insights into teaching, it also narrowly focuses the pre-service teachers’ mindset and often limits them from learning or expanding their worldview on what education “can be” instead of only what it “should be” in their own
eyes. Therefore, the role of university-based teacher educators often is to disrupt the pre-service teachers’ assumptions of teaching and learning developed through years of experience in elementary and high school, in order for them to be more fully equipped to provide their future students with a meaningful experience rather than just a reincarnation of their own school experience (Bullock, 2011; Davis, 2006).

Some of the challenges of educating pre-service teachers is that many of their assumptions are developed early in life and are resistant to change, even if they are challenged through reason or evidence-based education (Pajares, 1992). Teacher educators are tasked with finding a balance between presenting proven as well as innovative teaching models, along with the challenges that come with implementing them. Although teaching models are an appropriate and often effective way of teaching PE, there are many challenges that come with implementing them, such as unwilling student participation, disagreement among students and inconsistency in the educator’s practice, lack of interest from educator or students, or lack of knowledge of teaching models (Fletcher & Casey, 2014). Openly reflecting about teaching decisions is one method teacher educators can use to help disrupt pre-service teachers’ assumptions. This is because it introduces the complexity of teachers’ decision-making to the pre-service teachers, which has also been referred to allowing pre-service teachers to see teaching from “the other side of the desk” (Davis, 2006; Fletcher & Baker, 2015; Fletcher & Casey, 2014; Loughran, 2006). Teacher educators are tasked with reflecting openly about their teaching decisions and be honest about the challenges they face in articulating the reasons underpinning their teaching practice. Though often difficult, it has been shown to assist pre-service teachers in developing a deeper understanding of the teaching practice,
its unique challenges, as well as includes them in the reflective process of teaching by turning the teacher education classroom to a site of inquiry (Fletcher & Baker, 2015).

Ní Chrónín, Fletcher, and O’Sullivan, (2017) have identified pedagogical principles that should be utilised by teacher educators during teacher education in order to emphasize the importance of meaningful experiences, and in turn positive social interaction, as well as support the learning of pre-service teachers that they refer to as the Learning About Meaningful PE (or LAMPE) framework. These principles, work together to provide one way in which teacher educators can disrupt pre-service teachers’ assumptions about teaching as well as support their learning in providing their students with a meaningful experience and emphasizing positive social interaction.

One of the main pedagogical principles of LAMPE is that teacher educators should explicitly prioritise meaningful participation among pre-service teachers (Ní Chrónín et al., 2017). By actively engaging pre-service teachers in meaningful activities, the pre-service teachers themselves are being put in a position to have their own meaningful experiences. Thus the pre-service teachers have recent experiences to contextualise their learning. Along with explicitly encouraging meaningful participation, teacher educators can encourage meaningful participation by modelling pedagogies that support meaningful participation (Ní Chrónín et al., 2017). Teacher educators should be intentional in creating positive and supportive learning community that allows for meaningful participation. Teacher educators can do this through their tone of voice, presentation style, body language, and providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in meaningful participation and engagement through practices such as
acknowledging relational time and setting time aside for self-reflection (Ní Chróinín et al., 2017).

An important aspect of the LAMPE framework is that the pre-service teachers are intentionally guided to engage with the features of a meaningful experience both as a learner and a teacher (Ní Chróinín et al., 2017). This directly lends itself to the challenge of disrupting pre-service teachers’ assumptions about teaching, as they are experience teaching from the perspective of both a learner and a teacher (Loughran, 2006). The teacher educator can do this through open reflection that specifically identify how they were experiences the features of a meaningful experience and activities such as peer teaching, where pre-service teachers are intentionally put in a position of a teacher (Ní Chróinín et al., 2017).

Overall, the LAMPE framework calls teacher educators to be intentional in modelling, engaging, and articulating all the features of a meaningful experience to pre-service teachers (Ní Chróinín et al., 2017). In the case of positive social interaction, which is a feature of a meaningful experience, teacher educators should embody the principles of positive social interaction (e.g., trust, meaningful relationships, a sense of community, a sense of belongingness, and safety) as well as intentionally provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to experience those qualities so that they can reflect collectively and the features of positive social interaction can be explicitly articulated in the context of a similar experience (Ní Chróinín et al., 2017).

The LAMPE pedagogical principles have been found to be effective in supporting pre-service teachers’ learning of meaningful experiences as well as how to facilitate them in their future classrooms (Fletcher, Ní Chróinín, Price, & Francis, 2018). The principles
can be used as a guide for teacher educators when it comes to the variety of decisions that accompany teaching pre-service teachers and undergraduate PE students. They provide consistency when it comes to making teaching decisions that will prioritise learning about meaningful experiences, whether it be at the big picture level of designing a course or on the ground during an activity (Fletcher et al., 2018).

By prioritising meaningful experiences, teacher educators are also emphasizing positive social interaction (Kretchmar, 2006). Teacher educators can promote positive social interaction by openly reflecting about the role positive social interaction plays within their classes and explicitly articulate its features and how they contribute to a meaningful experience (Fletcher et al., 2018; Ní Chróinín et al., 2017). This is a social constructivist approach to teaching and helps pre-service teachers develop a deeper understanding of positive social interaction through experiencing it as well as collectively reflecting on what made that experience meaningful (Azzarito, & Ennis, 2003). A social constructivist teacher educator utilises dialogue to allow the pre-service teachers to co-create knowledge with each other and the teacher educator and allow them to approach biases and pedagogical thinking openly and critically (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In this way, learning to teach for pre-service teachers becomes a much more social experience and involves them coming to realization of their own perspectives or biases, since sometimes prior knowledge or biases can hinder teacher development (Loughran, 2006).

Although brief, this analysis of learning to teach reveals the complex nature of learning and the social dynamics present between teacher educator and pre-service teacher. It also presents learning to teach as a messy and often challenging experience, as
pre-service teachers’ assumptions are disrupted and their new understandings are co-created with other pre-service teachers and teacher educators. This provides insight into the mindset of pre-service teachers and university PE students, and what teacher educators are tasked with, other than simply “preparing teachers for the future”. They are responsible for showing pre-service teachers that teaching and learning is a complex process and understanding how they learn can help them becoming more complete teachers.

**Chapter Summary**

There is an existing gap in the literature on how pre-service teachers and university PE students understand social interaction as part of a meaningful experience, as well as the ways they learn how to promote positive social interaction. The lack of literature surrounding this topic on social interaction is evidence that it is not being recognized as a key factor in providing students with a meaningful experience. Schools are primarily socially vibrant communities, understanding how teachers can use that to their advantage in order to have provide students with a meaningful experiences will only further the development of the education field and help produce more competent and effective teachers.

Throughout this chapter, there have been practices that have been identified as either negative or positive social interaction as well as some established approaches to fostering positive social interaction in a PE setting. The importance of social interaction has also been thoroughly explained; however, there is one aspect that needs to be reiterated. The four other features of a meaningful experience (fun, challenge, movement competence, and delight) hinge largely upon positive social interaction. If there is not a
healthy, safe, and supportive learning community, I carry the assumption that all of the four other aspects will diminish or not reach their fullest potential. All five features of a meaningful experience are linked and influence each other (Beni, et al., 2017); however, social interaction is the only one that explicitly involves other people, and in a PE class, there will always be other people. Social interaction is equivalent to the atmosphere that the physical activities are being held in, and a positive, supportive, learning community will allow the other four features of a meaningful experience to manifest themselves appropriately and without hindrance, and therefore provide the students with a personally meaningful experience.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss and justify the research methodology and methods used to gather and analyze data in my proposed thesis. Covered in this chapter is the interpretive framework, a review of the study’s purpose and research questions, reasoning behind choosing a qualitative research methodology, a description of the research context, the data collection process, the data analysis process, and a brief description of ethical considerations. In short, in this chapter I justify the choices I made, in finding the best way to achieve this study’s purpose and to address the research questions.

Interpretive Framework

As discussed in Chapter One, the paradigm through which I view the world and am conducting this research is social constructivism. Social constructivism acknowledges that reality and knowledge are socially constructed and individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). These meanings are, “varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views…” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Therefore, rather than aiming for objectivity and detached interpretations of data, this research will focus more on dialogue and narration to “understand shared and co-constructed realities” of the participants and their experiences. (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 62).

A key component of social constructivism is that the researcher understands they cannot be completely objective because participant and researcher are collaborating together during the meaning making process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Therefore, the participants and the researchers are co-constructors of knowledge and not simply
vessels of knowledge, where the participant gives and the researcher receives (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013).

In practice, social constructivism emphasizes the dialogue between the researcher and the participant, and due to the subjective nature of knowledge, the researcher seeks to understand the participant, who they are, where they come from and where they are situated, and their perspectives on the issues being researched. Through dialogue, the researcher and the participant come to terms with a shared knowledge that they have co-constructed and both are active participants in the research process. Due to the nature of social constructivism, one preferred way to conduct research is through engaging in dialogue (such as through interviews), where participants and researcher have the freedom to explore the complexities of past experiences and are converse freely without restrictions or limitations.

Qualitative Research

Because I am bringing a social constructivist lens to the research process and given the nature of the research questions (see Chapter 1), it was determined that a qualitative approach provided the best and most appropriate means to access the perspectives of the participants and address the research questions. Qualitative research utilizes social inquiry as a means to understand how people interpret the world they live in and make sense of their experiences (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013).

Because I want to hear the voices of university students and let them express what positive social interaction is in PE in their own words, I believe that qualitative methods are the most effective way to empower participants so that they can give their own perspectives on positive social interaction and how they have learned to promote it in
their classrooms. This necessitates using data collection methods that offer participants opportunities to express themselves and their views in open-ended ways, so they can elaborate on their thoughts and provide deep and rich accounts of their perspectives and experiences.

Qualitative research is an appropriate research method in this research project because it allows the researcher to collect rich, deep data from the participants and I chose to use a qualitative approach to enable me to focus on the “quality” of the data rather than quantity (Charmaz, 2008). Therefore, it is typical for qualitative research studies to have a smaller sample size, but the researcher will often strive to deeply understand their participants’ perspective or stance on the issue at hand (Creswell, 2013). A researcher can find out how many students are taking PE and collect data on student satisfaction levels with the class fairly quickly using quantitative methods, however, if the researcher really wanted to unpack those students individual experiences and understand what makes PE personally satisfying to each of them, qualitative research methods may serve to be the most effective way to accomplish that. This is because qualitative research provides participants with the time and space necessary to explain their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and revisit them in an interactive, ongoing process. At its core, qualitative research and is many approaches to data collection and analysis can situate the researcher in and amongst the world of their participants where observations can be made in participants’ natural setting (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research methods are tailored to achieve the researcher’s goals in a different way than the traditional quantitative methods. According to Creswell (2013) there are six defining features of a qualitative research study: (a) Natural setting, (b) Researcher as a key
instrument, (c) Multiple methods, (d) Emergent design, (e) Reflexivity, and (f) A holistic account. Each of these are described in the following sections.

(a) Natural setting. The researcher aims to observe and understand the participant in their natural setting (Creswell, 2013). For example, if observing how children interpret authority figures in school, the researcher would make an effort to observe the children at school during recess or in the classroom. In my research, I observed university students participating in their university learning environment so I could get a glimpse of what and how they were learning about teaching PE. These observations did not include any sort of interviews or intentional interaction, thus allowing them to participate unhindered or uncompromised in their natural setting.

(b) Researcher as a key instrument. The researcher is the key instrument of data collection and generally does not rely on research tools such as standardized questionnaires, surveys but prefers personal observations, examining documents, and open ended interviews (Creswell, 2013). I have done this by creating my own interview questions, utilized them in an unstructured interview format, collected documents such as lesson plans that were used in tandem with non-participant observations and interview to inform analysis, and observed labs and students myself so I was able to see their experiences firsthand.

(c) Multiple methods. Qualitative researchers typically use more than one data collection method to develop a rich set of data (Creswell, 2013). I used non-participant observations, documents, unstructured interviews, and participant generated artifacts to produce rich and deep data on the participants’ perspectives.
(d) **Emergent design.** The research process for qualitative research emerges throughout the course of the research project. Therefore, the initial plan for research cannot be tightly clung to because plans may change once the researcher enters the field for data collection or different themes may be developed by the researcher than he/she initially started with or planned to use (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, although I mapped out a fairly clear design, I remained flexible and adapted to changes in the research situation as they arose.

(e) **Reflexivity.** Qualitative researchers position themselves in their research and acknowledge how their own personal worldview and biases may influence their interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research recognizes that no one can approach the research process totally objectively, however, by acknowledging their own biases and personal experiences, the researcher can limit their influence on the research project (Creswell, 2013). As explained previously in the section titled “Positioning Myself” in Chapter 1, I have already positioned myself as the researcher and explained how I had to be aware of my own past experience and assumptions. I had to be conscious of how my experiences influenced my interpretations of the data due to the subjective nature of qualitative research.

(f) **A holistic account.** At the end of the study, the researcher aims to provide a deep view of the issue or problem under study, taking into account all the complex factors and generally providing the reader with a big picture understanding of the issue (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, qualitative researchers are not bound by a tight “cause and effect” analysis, but instead they aim for a broader understanding. As a result, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants’ perspectives and how their experiences can inform PE teacher education practice and shed light on how university
students are prepared to provide their future students with meaningful experiences through social interaction.

Along with the six characteristics of qualitative research, a qualitative researcher should decide on how theory will be used to inform and guide the design of the research, including collecting and analyzing data. Researchers typically choose from using theory inductively or deductively. As explained in Chapter 1 in the section titled “Theoretical Framework”, I took an inductive approach because I wanted the views of the participants to guide my interpretations of their experiences rather than the other way around. Because of this, grounded theory offers a useful approach and is explained in the next section.

**Grounded Theory**

This thesis is a qualitative study that was guided by the principles of a grounded theory approach to research. In this case, instead of developing a theory, I aimed to understand “*what positive social interaction means and looks like to university students*”. Although there are several approaches to qualitative research, such as phenomenology, case studies, and narratives, grounded theory lends itself to this thesis since it emphasizes the construction of knowledge through social interaction, and allowed the participants to be understood so that conclusions can be drawn from their perspective coupled with the researcher, rather than just solely the researcher’s analysis of collected data.

Grounded theory is an approach to research where the researcher seeks to generate or discover a theory about a process or action (Creswell, 2013). The theory is not pre-determined, instead, it is generated or “grounded” in the data collected from the participants. Therefore the researcher seeks to create a general explanation of a process,
action, or interaction that is shaped by the views of participants (Creswell, 2013). This is an inductive method that gives the researcher freedom to generate conclusions from the data collected.

It is important to note that since the researcher is the primary source of data analysis, that the theory or explanation created is subjective. It is a product of the researcher’s understanding and interpretations of the data collected. Data is most often collected through observations or recorded interviews between the researcher and participant. These interviews are later transcribed, coded, and organized into themes. Thus a large amount data is systematically organized into a manageable amount for the researcher to draw their own conclusions. Because my research questions are geared toward understanding university students’ perspectives on social interaction as part of a meaningful experience, I wanted to let their views guide the analysis of their experiences a posteriori, rather than have a theory guide analysis of their responses a priori. As such, this research was an inductive study in that the codes and themes are not pre-determined, but were created subjectively by me as the researcher once data was collected and analyzed.

Types of grounded theory. There are multiple types of grounded theory, with two of the most used being the systematic approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2008). Since my worldview is aligned with social constructivism, I mostly utilized the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2008).

A constructivist approach to grounded theory takes into account the multiple realities and complex worlds that the participants live in. In this approach the researcher strives to understand where the participants are coming from and take those experiences
into account during the data analysis phase (Creswell, 2013). There is more emphasis on where the participants come from rather than adhering to a strict, systematic research method. Therefore, the researcher aims to collect rich data through multiple methods in order to allow participants to express themselves clearly (Creswell, 2013). An over-emphasis on strict guidelines can take away from the individualistic, complex and messy nature of qualitative research and represents an attempt by the researcher to gain power over the participant by controlling the data, rather than allowing it to flow freely (Charmaz, 2008). When strong relationships between researcher and researched are aimed for and/or achieved once rich data is collected, they can then be coded and analyzed. Since the researcher knows the participant well as a result of committing to the establishment of strong relationships throughout the research process, the interpretations can be made more trustworthy and the conclusions can be more robust, even though it is still acknowledged as a subjective process, with tentative and contextually-bound results.

**Context**

**Setting.** Data collection took place at Mountainview University, a medium sized university in Southern-Ontario. Mountainview University has a strong history of offering PE programs, dating back to the mid-1960s. Mountainview University has two main streams of PE programs: the Bachelor of Physical Education/Bachelor of Education, or concurrent program (where students receive two degrees, one in PE and one in education), and the bachelor of PE program (where students do not necessarily pursue careers in education, although they can following graduation). Both programs allow students to experience and focus on movement concepts and approaches, as well as concepts and approaches applicable in education and teaching (for example, assessment,
game types, teaching models). In some cases, students are provided with an introduction to the provincial health and PE curriculum.

I invited students in the “Formal Team Games” course during the fall semester of 2017. These were a combination of students were in the upper years (3rd/4th year) of their PE program, some of which were enrolled in a Concurrent Teacher Education program, and some that were not. Regardless, all of the students in the Formal Team Games course would have been exposed to various pedagogical strategies and teaching models due to the fact that in order to enroll in the Formal Team Game course, students would have had to take similar physical education courses earlier in their studies. Such courses include Fundamental Movement Skills and Individual and Dual Formal Games. Therefore, it was assumed they had learned the necessary language and experience to give their perspective on what they believe is positive social interaction due to their prior experience in the Mountainview PE program. These students were selected because they were taught the Formal Team Games course by a teacher educator who emphasizes ways pre-service teachers can learn about fostering meaningful experiences in PE. It was therefore assumed that the students would have some exposure to the role of social interaction as part of a meaningful PE experience, and would be able to engage in a discussion at a level sufficient for me to able to address the research questions.

Participants. All participants were recruited from Mountainview University, specifically from those that were enrolled in one of the PE programs mentioned in the previous section. Every student in both of the PE programs completes an introductory course in developmental games, where they learn about developmentally appropriate approaches to teaching games and sport, including through the pedagogical model
Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU). In this course, Mountainview University PE students are taught to maximize inclusion, build positive relationships, and be aware of what kinds of games or activities include students and which ones exclude students. In short, Mountainview University PE students should be well versed in what theoretically is a positive classroom atmosphere and if they are upper year (3rd/4th year) students, many have firsthand experience teaching in public schools in the area through practicum experiences. Therefore, most students should have some theoretical understanding of meaningfulness in PE, including introductory principles of social interaction and real life experience working with students. It was thus assumed they had at least some personal knowledge about what positive social interaction is and consists of, and that they will have considered this to some extent as part of their prior experiences in the Mountainview University PE programs.

Sample Selection

The recruited Mountainview University students were enrolled in the Formal Team Games course. Seven out of the ten participants were enrolled in a concurrent teacher education program, all of which will start their teacher education program in September 2018. The remaining three participants were in their fourth and final year of their bachelors of physical education program. Also it is important to note that nine out of the ten participants have had previous experience in competitive, organized sport. This could be at any level, ranging from organized soccer during their grade school years to competing in track and field at the university level. Recruiting from this specific pool of students ensures that they have a background in teaching PE and will have their own view on social interaction and its importance to a meaningful experience. Further, it is likely
that they have been exposed to or thought about concepts that align with social interaction previously.

Although grounded theory researchers often call for a large sample size (Creswell, 2013), I took into account the number of potential participants and how small the recruiting pool was (21 university students). To this end, I aimed to recruit five to ten research participants since I believed that hearing responses from between a quarter and half of the class would provide an adequate amount of data as well access a variety of perspectives on positive social interaction (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). As it happened, I recruited eight participants for the first interview and seven participants for the second interview, with five returning participants. I believe the number of participants in this study provides an adequate range of perspectives on social interaction and meaningfulness in PE. I did not turn down any potential participants, and aimed to be as close to an equal gender representation (half male and half female). There was not any formal pre-participant screening due to the fact that they were in the Formal Team Games course and had completed prerequisite courses as a result. The assumption here was that all of the students were presently in an upper year PE course and have had adequate experience in a PE setting to provide sufficient data and each carried their own unique perspective on positive social interaction that should not be ignored.

Data Collection

All data collected provided adequate opportunities to access the insights of participants’ perspectives, which allowed me to achieve the purpose of this study and the three overarching research questions. To this end, there were several main sources of data collected, which are presented in the order that they were conducted/gathered: first
individual in-depth interviews, an artifact chosen by participants, second individual in-depth interview, and lab observations.

First Interview. The first interview was conducted to gather an initial impression of what the participant believed positive social interaction looked and felt like in PE. This interview was conducted in the first two weeks of the 12-week semester when participants were enrolled in the Formal Team Games course. Getting a first impression of the participants’ views was important because it provided an idea of their experiences of social interaction in PE before they were exposed to any significant time under the teacher educator’s instruction in the Formal Team Games course. Therefore, I acquired an understanding on how they interpreted positive social interaction in PE prior to being exposed to the practices of a teacher educator who explicitly prioritized meaningfulness.

The first interview was conducted in an unstructured format, which means I had a goal and plan prepared but mostly allowed the interview to flow into a conversation rather than strictly following a script (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). Unstructured interviews rely on spontaneous generation of questions that are guided by an overarching purpose or goal; in this case, it was seeking to understand the participants’ view on positive social interaction in PE, and what strategies they planned to use to promote it in their future classrooms. I believed this was an appropriate interview format because a structured interview would not have given the participant and me the best opportunity to enter into an authentic dialogue in order to understand their perspective. Although a semi-structured interview may have achieved the purpose adequately, since it balances open discussion with a pre-determined set of question, I believed there would have been a lack of authentic dialogue due to the need to stick to a specific set of questions and would not
have allowed for spontaneous dialogue. Congruent with my interpretive framework that knowledge is constructed in dialogue, unstructured interviews provided opportunities for the participant and I to engage in meaningful conversations about who they are, where they came from, and their perspectives and experiences on positive social interaction in order to have truly sought to understand how they existed in their own subjective reality.

**Second Interview.** The second interview was conducted in the last two weeks of the 12-week semester so the students spent some time in the course learning about how to teach formal team games. The purpose of the second interview was to understand their current perspective on positive social interaction in PE, and if it changed after being exposed to learning to teach games in PE by an instructor who prioritized meaningful experiences. This interview was similar to the first in the types of questions and discussion points so that the two could be compared during data analysis.

Also in this interview I asked the participants about strategies they would use to promote positive social interaction in PE in their future classrooms. The discussion flowed from what they think positive social interaction is, and to their perspective on positive social interaction and what it looks like in the classroom, and their thoughts about what may take place. Together we unpacked some practical ways in how they would create an environment that promotes positive social interaction and specific strategies that they would utilise in the classroom, or PE setting.

**Non-participant observations.** I observed five out of ten practical lessons (i.e., in the gym or on the playing field) of the Formal Games Course that were taught by the teacher educator. Non-participant lesson observations allowed me to get an idea of how the students interacted with each other and the teacher educator, and helped me put their
interviews in context with their experience. It also helped me verify certain teaching practices, strategies, or experiences as a positive social experience. For example, if a research participant said they had a positive social experience in a lesson due to the use of small groups and then I also observe the use of small groups in the lesson, it allowed me to draw stronger conclusions due to the amount and quality of data and evidence I have collected on the research participant’s experience. It also provided for richer, authentic discussion in the interviews, since I had a sense of what they are talking about when they referred to an experience in the lab during their interviews.

**Exit slips.** The teacher educator regularly asked his students (or university students) to anonymously complete exit slips after completing the practical lessons of the Formal Team Games course. At the beginning of the course, I recruited participants who were comfortable through verbal recruitment and written consent to let me to use their exit slips as data for this study. Students who agreed to have their exit slips used as data placed an asterisk in the top corner of their slip to indicate their willingness to have it used as data. Collecting exit slips helped me collect data on university students beyond the perspectives of those that participated in the interviews and helped add rigour and trustworthiness to the analyzed data.

**Summary of data collection.** From a macro perspective, the first interview took place in the first two weeks of the 12-week semester, and the second interview took place in the last two weeks of the 12-week semester. All interviews were electronically recorded. These interviews produced rich data on how participants interpret positive social interaction in PE and what strategies they planned to enact to encourage it.

**Data Analysis**
**Transcribing.** All of the interviews and artifact identification were transcribed by me; however they were not transcribed verbatim. Although there is merit in verbatim transcriptions, the ambition of trying to completely replicate a recorded interview in written form can lead to transcription errors; instead it was better to acknowledge that transcriptions are written records or a partial account of a richer interaction (Poland, 1995). Therefore I did not believe there was any benefit to transcribing the interviews verbatim, however, having a written account that is as close to the interview as possible was beneficial as it reflected the interaction between me and the participant, and lent itself to data analysis. This was not an emotional or discourse analysis where every pause or stutter had a meaningful impact on the data and its results. It was important, however, that the participants’ perspectives were representations of their words and thoughts. Thus, it was important to engage in member checking (see trustworthiness section).

**Trustworthiness.** I used member checking to ensure that the data collected was a true and accurate meaningful reflection of what the participants meant to express. Member checking involved sending participants the collected data to make sure they agreed with the representation of the data. Specifically, I emailed them their transcribed interviews so that they can see confirm or alter the data according to what they said (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013).

Also, the use of multiple data points (often referred to as triangulation) allowed me to broaden my understanding of the issue at hand and gave the participants the opportunity to express themselves in multiple ways (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013).

**Coding.** After the data was transcribed it was coded in three phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2013).
**Open Coding.** Open coding is an initial impression of the data and is done to condense the data into manageable amounts (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). I did not use pre-determined codes and therefore they were subjective, as chosen by me. However, I believe I was in the best position to code the transcripts because I was the one conducting the interview and therefore I had an understanding of who the participant is and what they are saying since we constructed that knowledge together through dialogue.

The initial codes were created by me and put meaning to key phrases or sentences said by the participant. I condensed phrases or sentences into open codes that were one word terms. Some open codes were the exact terms that participants mentioned during the interviews. Not every single word in the transcription was given a code; however, it was up to me to determine what was meaningful, and what was not. Underlying this whole process was a mindset of trying to draw as much meaning from the interviews, so most of the interviews were coded in order to give credit to the participants and acknowledge the rich data collected.

For example, in order to condense information, the phrase: “I want to create a space where all students feel like they are able to be themselves” would be coded as, “belongingness”. This preserves the essence of what the participant is saying but condenses the information to a single word or code. Another example would be if a participant said, “I enjoy when I’m able to play with my friends in PE”. This phrase would be coded as “relationships”.

**Axial Coding.** Axial coding is the reorganization of data, where all the open codes are further analyzed and put into similar categories (Savin-Badin & Major, 2013). This coding process occurred using all the open codes from either the first or second interview,
not just the open codes from one singular interview. So in this way, it organized all the
data collected from all the interviews of that set (first and second) and allowed it to be
compared and contrasted against each other.

The categories were created by me based on the open codes. For this reason it was a
subjective process, where I organized the data into created categories that reflect the
meaning of the open codes. This further condensed the data into meaningful categories,
which were only one or two words long. I took multiple open codes and put them into a
one or two word categories.

These categories will be used to further organize data into relevant groups. Following the
previous examples in the Open coding section, the two example codes, “belongingness”
and “relationships” would be put in the same category of community. The category of
community encompasses both open codes and groups like codes together in order to
organize large amounts of data.

Selective Coding. The last step is selective coding, which involves taking the axial codes
and seeking to provide an explanation or conclusion that describes the interrelationships
of the categories (Creswell, 2013). This is the culmination of the data analysis process
that ended with an explanation of the participants’ perspective on positive social
interaction in PE. I organized the data in chart form that integrated all the categories and
how they contributed to positive social interaction. There were two charts, one on the
participants’ initial perspective positive on social interaction in PE (data from the first
interview and artifact identification) and another on the participants’ perspective on
positive social interaction on social interaction in PE after being taught by the teacher
educator (data from the second interview).
The final step of the coding process groups similar categories together in order to develop a theory or explanation of the data. For example, using the example categories of “community”, “relatedness”, and “emotional security”, I can infer from the data and explain that the participants: “prioritized a safe space to move together where they is no fear of ridicule from both classmates and teacher”.

**Big Picture.** The collected data were analyzed through the three step coding process and condensed from a transcribed interview into a visual chart that communicates the data effectively and concisely. Data from the first interview was put through the three step coding process separately than the data from the second interview. After everything, there were two charts describing participants’ initial perspective and their perspective after being in the course for some time.

**Ethical Considerations**

In this section I describe the ethical considerations of the study and how I aimed to respect the rights of participants. I applied for an amendment of a previously approved Research Ethics Board application in order to conduct this study.

**Informed Consent.** All participants who participated in the study signed an informed consent form that thoroughly described the purpose of the study, what they could expect from the study, their rights as a participant, and my role and responsibilities as the researcher. Along with the consent form, they were given verbal affirmation that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary and had no effect on them academically or otherwise. They were made aware through the form and verbal recruitment that they were not obligated to follow through with the interview once the
consent form is signed and they could withdraw at any time. Therefore, some participants participated in the first interview and not the second or vice versa.

Participants were also informed that the course instructor would not know who does or does not agree to participate in the research. This minimized the risk of participants feeling coerced into participating against their will, or feeling they may be rewarded or punished (particularly through grading) for participation in the research or lack thereof.

Confidentiality. All participants were given a pseudonym when the interview is transcribed as well as any references to places or institutions that may have been used as identifiers. This mainly refers to schools, school boards, or sports clubs.

Data Safety. All data were kept on a password locked hard drive as well as a password locked cloud data base that ensured that the data was protected as well as backed up in case of a hardware failure.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the research methodology and research methods used in this research. I outlined my interpretive framework, how I approached the data collection process, data analysis, and how the study ran as whole. All decisions were guided by the study’s purpose and its overarching research questions. In the following chapter, I describe the results of the data analysis.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

In this chapter I report on the analysis of data and consider the ways in which the data help address the main research questions. Data were generated from two rounds of individual interviews, as well as anonymous exit slips from students and non-participant observations. The bulk of the evidence presented in this chapter is from the first and second interviews because I found the richest data in these sources, although that is not to say that the exit slips and non-participant observations had no value. All are used, though interview data is the source that best represented participants’ perspectives. In total there were eight participants for the first interview and seven participants for the second interview, with five participants of the first interview returning for the second interview. Analysis of exit slips and non-participants observations mostly served to confirm or disconfirm interview data or provide additional insight into claims made in the interviews. Through triangulation, all data contributed to the trustworthiness of the analysis.

The chapter consists of two main sections. In the first section, I consider participants’ growth in understanding of positive social interaction during their time in the Formal Team Games course. This section will be subdivided into participants’ understanding of: (a) being part of a community or a sense of community and (b) ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth. In the second section I unpack participants’ experiences of learning about how to promote positive social interaction, both from their experiences in the Formal Team Games Course, as well as other formal
and informal experiences that they may have had. After the two main sections, the chapter will be concluded with a summary of the findings and collected data.

**The Development of Participants’ Understanding of Positive Social Interaction during the Formal Team Games Course.**

The first interview was conducted in the first two weeks of the Formal Team Games course that participants were enrolled in. In the first interview I aimed to explore students’ initial understanding of positive social interaction and meaningfulness in PE before they had been exposed to a teacher educator whose practice was informed by the pedagogical principles of LAMPE (Learning About Meaningful Physical Education) (Ní Chróinín et al, 2018). It was intended that from the analysis of the interview data, I would be given a snapshot into how participants who were enrolled in their fourth year of their PE program at Mountainview University understood positive social interaction based on their previous experiences learning to teach PE in contexts both inside and outside of the university (for example, other formal and informal educative experiences, sporting experiences).

The second interview was conducted in the final two weeks of the twelve-week semester. This was done so I could explore ways that participants’ understanding of positive social interaction in PE changed or was influenced by the teacher educator’s prioritization of meaningful experiences as enacted through the pedagogical principles of LAMPE.

From analysis of the interview data, two main themes were created and they were evident throughout the first and second interview. These are: (1) Being part of a community, and (2) Acknowledging ways positive social interaction can lead to pupils’ personal growth. These two themes will be the reference point in which data from both interviews are
presented and compared, and serve as a way to organize this chapter. In this way, I demonstrate how the participants’ understanding of positive social interaction developed throughout the duration of the Formal Team Games course. Through these themes I will showcase the data analyzed and make a case that when prioritized and made explicit through a teacher educator’s practice, university students can develop a deeper and more complex understanding of positive social interaction and its role in meaningful PE experiences.

**Being Part of a Community**

As explained in Chapter 2, having students feel a sense of community is an important part of positive social interaction in PE. Some features of a supportive community include a sense of belongingness, trust, emotional safety, and affiliation (Allender et al., 2006; Baker, 2006; Goodenow, 1993; Light et al, 2013). When these conditions are provided, a sense of community can serve as a way to prevent the common fear in PE where students may feel embarrassed or not skilled enough during activities, which can hinder their participation (Allender et al., 2006; Battistich et al, 1997; Light et al., 2013).

From analysis of data generated in the first interview, participants had what I consider to be a superficial understanding of the nature and role of a sense of community in PE, focusing mainly on indicators of what a community in PE is and how it functions. It is important to note that throughout this chapter I use the word “superficial” as a descriptor of the participants’ lack of thoroughness and depth when articulating their understanding of positive social interaction. I explicitly state this to avoid any misinterpretation of the results, due to the frequency of its use. After spending about twelve weeks in the Formal
Team Games course, however, the participants developed a more complex understanding of community and were able to more clearly articulate how to create a sense of community in their future PE classes. I present the data analysis on the theme of community in the following three sub-sections: (1) Participants’ initial understanding and interpretation of being part of a community in PE, (2) Growth in understanding of the nature and role of community at the end of the Formal Team Games course, and (3) Development in participants’ understanding on being part of a community over the duration of the Formal Team Games course.

**Participants’ Initial Understanding and Interpretation of being part of a Community in Physical Education.** A primary way in which positive social interaction can contribute to a meaningful PE experience is through the development of healthy relationships and by providing students with a sense of community in their classes (Azzarito & Ennis, 2003; Hellison, 2011. In the first interview, participants recognized this and many expressed a view that meaningful relationships ultimately led to a more meaningful experience. Interestingly, participants spoke of the value of relationships and a sense of community, drawing from their experiences as learners (i.e., in school and university) and as prospective teachers in PE. In this I section expand on how the participants recognized the importance of relationships and being part of a classroom community and the ways these factors contributed to their understanding and interpretations of positive social interaction in PE.

Positive relationships – which tend to involve aspects of positive social interaction such as equality, supportive, trust, belongingness, respect for differences, and emotional safety (Allender et al., 2006; Baker, 2006; Barker et al, 2015; Goodenow, 1993; Ryan & Deci,
2000) – can lead to a strong sense of community in the PE classroom or in a community sports setting (Light et al., 2013). Some terms participants used to describe a positive sense of community were: “community” (Phil), “teamwork” (Phil), “family” (Kristen), “inclusive” (Kristen), “supportive” (Hillary), “encouraging” (Amanda), and “valued” (Jesse). These seven words were recurring descriptors when it came to explaining the features of a positive community in PE. As one participant (Jesse) put it: “So meaningful experiences for me... is everyone is participating, coming together, having a good time, and everyone is being included”.

In the first interview, several participants felt that relationships not only affected students’ enjoyment of PE but also influenced students’ levels of participation. For example, when asked if positive relationships had a large impact on their own continued participation in PE or sport (as learners), all eight participants in the first interview confirmed that positive relationships influenced their decision to initiate or continue participation. One participant, Bob, spoke about joining a track and field team saying: “Yeah, 100%... That’s part of the reason I joined the team; [it] was to meet new people, not just to compete.” It is clear that for Bob, creating new relationships played a crucial role in his ongoing participation in physical activity and it enticed him to try new physical activities, such as track and field.

In addition to initiating or maintaining physical activity participation, all eight participants in the first interview suggested that feeling a sense of community in a physical activity setting contributed greatly to their enjoyment of the overall experience. Participants made the following statements about the importance of community when

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2 All names are pseudonyms
recalling some specific sport/physical activity experiences: “We became a family” (Kristen), “Community, it builds relationships” (Phil), and “I think we have, as a program, a very family-based kind of approach” (Hillary). Two participants (Kristen and Hillary) initially used the word “family” to describe their understanding of a sense of community, which carries inferences for features of positive social interaction such as belongingness, trust, and support. So although the participants do not necessarily have the specific language to express a deep understanding of a sense of community and its nature, they are implicitly aware of a positive sense of community.

All eight participants supported the importance of positive relationships and a sense of community influenced their ongoing participation enjoyment in a PE or physical activity setting. This is indicates the significant role relationships and community play in participants’ experiences of PE and sport.

Although the participants observed a sense of community as being a key component of positive social interaction, analysis of data from the first interview suggests a lack of depth in understanding of the nature of a sense of community consists and its role in positive social interaction. For example, participants relied mostly on what I interpret as “jargon” rather than meaningful descriptors, placing emphasis on students “feeling good” and “being the same”. For example, in describing the most important elements of physical activity and sport participation Phil said: “I would say for sure friendship, like that’s positive social interaction, because even if someone is a stranger, you develop a friendship through sports”. In Phil’s quote an assumption is made that just because he and another are playing sports together, they will become friends. This quote captures the mindset that PE students or sport participants are participating for similar reasons and I
interpret this quote to reflect Phil’s shallow understanding of a sense of community by assuming that PE is populated by a homogenous group of students, with similar needs, interests, and desires.

When discussing how to promote participation in PE, which can be promoted by a sense of community (Light et al., 2013), Bill recalled his time as a student, saying: “I guess a lot of times if you have the confidence to just try [a new skill or task], whatever you might fail...”. This again is reflective of the participants’ superficial understanding of a sense of community, placing responsibility on the students to enjoy themselves or to “have the confidence” to try new things. As a competent mover, Bill likely felt confident to try new things when he was a student due to past successes, but many of his peers likely did not have the same level of confidence as him. In Bill’s quote, there is no acknowledgment on how a positive sense of community can allow students to try and fail – regardless of their levels of previous success – without the fear of ridicule or embarrassment, which is common in PE (Carlson, 1995).

While making friends and having confidence are helpful concepts to establish an initial understanding of a sense of community, other terms or phrases such as: respect for differences, empathy, and a sense of belongingness were missing features of the role and nature of a sense of community. With that said, these types of features of a sense of a community did become apparent in the second interview, as participants’ understanding of positive social interaction developed over the duration of the Formal Team Games course.

**Growth in Understanding of the Nature and Role of Community at the end of the Formal Team Games Course.** Almost all participants (6 of 7) felt that a sense of
community and belongingness are key components of positive social interaction and a meaningful experience in PE. Analysis of data from the second interview showed greater depth in participants’ responses compared to data analyzed in the first interview. For example, participants spoke of a sense of community involving: “equality” (Amanda), “relationships” (Baily), “communication” (Ophelia) a sense of “belongingness” (Natasha), “enjoyment” (Ophelia), “respect for differences” (Hillary), “safe” (Hillary), “trust” (Kristen), “inclusive” (Baily), “growing” (Hillary) and “encouraging” (Amanda). Many participants attributed much of their growth in understanding to the teacher educator of the Formal Team Games course. Specifically, they mentioned ways he intentionally modelled ways to establish a positive sense of community in PE. When discussing the teacher educator’s practice in relation to developing a positive sense of community, Amanda said: “I think it's really good actually that he knows all of our names and introduces himself”. Similarly, Bob and Kristen referred to the importance of learning names, saying: “I think it's big that he knows, not just the lab, but everyone in the class, he knows them by name. He always encourages [us]” (Bob), and “Well the first thing is he remembers everyone’s name” (Kristen). Kristen also explained: “He does a very good job talking to everyone, allowing us to share any stories... He also gives us choice” The data analyzed in the second interview reflected the participants’ deeper understanding of a sense of community through the depth of terms used to describe it as well as their awareness of how the teaching practice of the teacher practice promoted a sense of community. Participants portrayed a greater understanding of features that contribute towards a sense of community and how these features must be prioritized.
intentionally in order to develop a sense of community. Students from the class who completed exit slips also exhibited an understanding of a sense of community, describing a sense of community in PE as: “communicating with own team”, “encouraging one another”, “talking to the opposing team”, “leadership roles”, “cheering for one another”, and “helping one another” (multiple anonymous exit slips).

One aspect of community that was present in the second interview (but rarely mentioned in the first) was trust. Trust was mentioned in the first interview briefly, but was brought up far more frequently in the second interview (mentioned 20 times). As trust can lead to positive and powerful relationships (Baker, 2006), so too can positive relationships lead to building a strong sense of community. Trust was seen as an important part of building relationships not only between students (i.e., student-student relationships) but also between the student and teacher. The role of trust in student-teacher relationships was emphasized by Bob, who said: “Trust, trust is probably the biggest one” when referring to features of positive social interaction. Participants understood trust as helping the students feel safe and valued in the class. Participants explained that having trust in the teacher was important because the students place so much of themselves in the hands of the teacher and spend a great deal of time with their peers. Bob went on to say:

*I just think, if you don't trust someone, you can't really form a relationship with the person... You trust them to be honest with you, you trust them to help you, to tell you what you need to hear not what you want to hear. And I guess with coaches, you trust them to help you to the best of their abilities. To not hurt you I guess. Do what's best for you.*
Bob’s quote shows his feelings about how much responsibility teachers have in building trust with their students and recognizing the trust students place in them and how much they can mean to their students. The ideas captured in Bob’s comments suggest that the types of relationships a coach or teacher builds with their students has implications not only for participation in PE and/or sport, but also in their day to day lives.

One participant who exemplified a deeper understanding of community from her first and second interview was Ophelia. She entered the first interview with what I interpret as an idealistic view of positive social interaction and a sense of community in PE. I base this interpretation on her frequent mention of terms such as “encouragement”, “inclusion”, and “community” throughout her first interview. As explained previously, these are all fundamental aspects of positive social interaction and would definitely be present in a PE class that exemplifies positive community; however, the reason I mention this is because they represent what I consider to be fairly superficial ideas, perhaps even “buzz words” that one may expect form any student who has been exposed to a positive sense of community in a formal or informal education experience. Apart from these three terms, there was not much diversity or depth in understanding expressed by Ophelia in her first interview. For example, when asked what a PE class that promotes positive social interaction would look like, her response included only four codes: community, encouragement, inclusion, and engaged. So although she was expressing important aspects of positive community, none of the aspects described or explained represent what I would consider to be a great deal of complexity.

When Ophelia entered her second interview, she had already been a student in the Formal Team Games course for about three months, which represents the bulk of one semester.
In that time she demonstrated a heightened awareness of the attributes of a sense of community in PE, which is reflected in data analyzed in her second interview. For example, in her second interview, Ophelia referred to belongingness and emotional safety, saying: “Safe, to feel safe, exactly like belongingness. If you don’t feel safe, you’re not going to want to communicate how you feel”. Also when describing an experience of a strong sense of community the Formal Team Games course she said: “Everyone was really supportive and compassionate towards how that person was feeling and trying to make them feel included... By creating community in the classroom where everyone feel like they belong”. From this example and others, I suggest that Ophelia had a richer, more complex understanding of positive community in PE than before during the first interview.

To support this claim, in her second interview, Ophelia demonstrated a better understanding on how to create a positive community in PE, indicating that it takes time, it often must be done intentionally, and the physical educator has a responsibility to initiate and model that sense of belongingness, positive relationships, and community to the students in the PE class. This is evident in the following quote from the second interview with Ophelia:

*I think that in any type of setting there’s the ability to create a community feeling and create that feeling of belongingness, you just have to work on it. It sometimes doesn’t just come out naturally. You have to create activities that bring people closer together and get to know each other.*

Over the duration of the Formal Team Games course, Ophelia developed a deeper understanding of being part of a community in PE and her growth in this area is
indicative of the growth in other participants’ understanding of the role and nature of community. The salient aspects of her growth are the change from an initially idealistic and simple view of community to a deeper understanding of positive community and a heightened awareness of what community consists of and its features.

Overall, during the second interview, participants exemplified what I interpret as a greater awareness of the features of a sense of community in PE that more closely reflect ideas and concepts in the current research and literature this topic. Their responses included richer descriptions of the features of community that capture not only what it looked like, but what community consists of and how a physical educator can prioritize a supportive learning community.

**Summary of Development in Understanding of a Sense of Community.** Over the duration of the Formal Team Games course, most participants developed a deeper understanding of community in PE and its core features. In the beginning of the course, their understanding of community was fairly superficial and contained many assumptions about students in PE. For example, participants described a sense of community using terms like: *fun, friends, relationships, inclusion, and encouragement*. However, by the end of the course they had developed a more complex understanding of how aspects of community such as *belongingness, trust, equality, and respect for differences* can be emphasized in order to promote a positive sense of community in PE.

**Ways Positive Social Interaction can lead to Personal Growth**

It is suggested in the literature that positive social interaction can lead to personal growth and development (Hellison, 2011; Dyson & Grineski, 2001; Gray et al., 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Mayes, 2010). This view acknowledges the potential benefits of positive
social interaction, suggesting it can impact both student and teacher beyond “increased participation”, “a positive experience”, or “having fun” in class, which are fairly singular events that have immediacy but not necessarily longevity. Positive social interaction can have far-reaching effects on students’ lives inside and outside of the classroom and can impact their daily lives in their school years and beyond. Not only can positive social interaction contribute to a sense of belongingness for students in the classroom, it can also lead to important opportunities for students to learn about and take personal responsibility for their actions inside and outside of the classroom (Hellison, 2011; Mayes, 2010; Ní Chróinín et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000;).

In this section I detail participants’ development in understanding of how positive social interaction can lead to personal growth in the following three sub-sections: (a) Participants’ initial understanding on ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth, (b) Participants’ understanding on ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth at the end of the Formal Team Games course, and (c) Summary of participant development in understanding on ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth over the duration of the Formal Team Games course.

**Participants’ Initial Understanding of ways Positive Social Interaction can lead to Personal Growth.**

It is well documented that positive social interaction can lead to personal growth for PE students. Hellison’s (2011) Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) teaching model explicitly emphasizes personal growth through multiple levels. For example, students operating at the first level focuses on respecting themselves and each other. They then progress to the second level which involves participation and effort, the third level
emphasizes self-responsibility and evaluating their own decisions, the fourth level includes caring and helping others and looking beyond oneself, and in the final level, students are challenged to take their acquired personal and social responsibility to areas of their lives outside of the gymnasium (or PE classroom).

From my analysis of data generated in the first interview, participants did not demonstrate a strong understanding of ways a student in PE can learn about and take personal responsibility, or how they might contribute to and experience personal growth from a positive learning community. Despite a lack of complexity in participant understanding, they did recognize several key components of how students can contribute to and grow from positive social interaction, albeit in a superficial way. They often fell short of what I suggest to be a well-developed understanding. There was a focus on ideal behaviours or actions that participants felt students should embody. For instance, attention was directed toward students simply “doing the right thing” or “behaving” instead of ways students can learn to contribute towards a positive sense of community in PE.

Frequently named behaviours of the ideal, well-behaved student in a PE class were “supportive” (Hillary), “encouraging” (Amanda), “cooperation” (Bill), and “communication” (Ophelia). While these behaviours are important for students to learn and demonstrate, my interpretation is that they represent a limited understanding of how students can be responsible for positive social interaction, for they focused primarily on desirable behaviours and lack depth in describing how students can learn personal responsibility. To this end, I interpret this as a simplistic view of positive social
interaction in the sense that participants judged students through a binary “either/or” system: students were either supportive/encouraging/cooperative or they were not.

While there is some value in being able to name aspects of student behaviours that would facilitate positive social interaction and contribute to an improved classroom community, there was little discussion in the first interview about how positive social interaction can contribute to the growth and maturity of students. For example, there was a lack of description of what positive social interaction might look like if there was conflict or disagreement between the teacher and/or students. The participants who did acknowledge conflict resolution or disagreement passed over it briefly or had trouble coming up with a response. For example, Bob said that conflict resolution can contribute to students being: “Willing to progress together...look past mistakes...talk about problems”. Another participant (Bill) simply said “You have discussions and work it out”. I do not believe that these participants are wrong or are giving an incompetent response, but I interpret these responses as indicative of little depth in the consideration being given to conflict. That is, participants’ understanding and interpretation of conflict was fairly simplistic or it was nonexistent. As has been demonstrated in the literature, developing skills to deal with conflict resolution can be messy and it takes work to resolve.

Further, many participants lacked confidence in thinking about and responding to conflict resolution and appeared to be concerned about “being wrong” or giving a poor response as part of the interview. For example, when I asked: “How does positive social interaction play a role if there are students in the class that do not want to participate or cooperate?”, Amanda responded with:
I don't know. I think that'll be when the teacher needs to step in and create... I don't know talk to the students and get to understand the true issues of why this is happening. And that might create the positive interaction and it might not.... I don't know.... Because it might be with the teacher instead of the students.

It is important to acknowledge my feeling that participants were trying to tell me what I wanted to hear as part of the interview process, as it can assist in enhancing the trustworthiness of my interpretations (that is, all interpretations of data are not positively biased and I show the messiness of the research process) (Patton, 1999). The lack of depth of understanding was apparent when I challenged their view of positive social interaction in the interview, asking: “What would happen if two students did not like each other, or did not want to cooperate?” Amanda replied with: “As long as they’re engaged or doing the activity in phys-ed., I think that would be positive social interaction. And like as long as they're not fighting”. Instead of acknowledging ways continued exposure to or feeling part of a well-developed community can influence student behaviours and help develop ways to manage conflict over time, there was a greater focus on teacher control – “making the students behave” – versus working with the students and initiating a positive change in perspective and personal and social responsibility.

The theme of personal growth showed how participants had a hard time placing themselves in a situation where a community of learners might be disrupted by disagreement or conflict. Their understanding came off as fragile and dependent on a class full of homogenous individuals who thought and behaved “appropriately” and identically. They had an idealistic and superficial view on positive social interaction in
and this was consistent for all participants with little variability in both understanding and depth.

**Participants’ Understanding of ways Positive Social Interaction can lead to Personal Growth at the end of the Formal Team Games Course.** In this section I analyze data collected in the second interview that shows how the participants developed a deeper understanding of ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth and responsibility. In the second interview, participants identified personal responsibility to be one of the most important aspects of positive social interaction in PE. Personal responsibility was referred to by participants in several ways, such as taking responsibility for learning, personal growth, and establishing an identity, all of which are indicative of a deeper understanding of how positive social interaction can contribute to personal growth.

Learning was the third most common code in the second set of interviews and participants viewed it as an important part of a meaningful experience. Participants identified students as playing an active role in their own learning and personal growth in PE. Learning refers not only to formal learning through the curriculum, its expectations, and outcomes, but also to life skills, maturity, and personal growth. Participants believed that a primary outcome of positive social interaction was learning to become socially responsible, demonstrating personal responsibility, and making positive contributions to the learning community in PE. Participants suggested that once these are accomplished in PE, students can extend their understanding to make contributions to their communities beyond the classroom.
Participants explained that students should be encouraged to learn how to be personally responsible and how to interact positively with their peers and the teacher. For example, one participant (Amanda) explained that students need to learn “responsibility for yourself and others.” Participants placed much of the responsibility for positive social interaction on the students. As members of the community, participants felt students should be the primary contributors to their learning community, and not just enjoy the benefits that come with it. That is, they felt students needed to be accountable for their role in the community. This responsibility suggests that the teacher takes on an important role in portraying positive social interaction through their modelling and teaching students how to contribute to the community. Kristen explains that the teacher and students, have to be part of the community and that: “Regardless of who you are, whether you’re an athlete, have a disability, whether you’re female, male, the environment is inclusive to everyone... You’re open to everyone participating and it also comes to open mindedness.”

As students learn how to be personally responsible for their learning and their actions, participants suggested that they should be expected to give back to the community and be a “Team player and [take] leadership roles” (Baily). That is, personal growth within the PE classroom can overflow into the students’ lives outside the classroom. This is similar to the TPSR model, which final level challenges students to bring all they have learned in PE into their communities (Hellison, 2011).

Hillary exemplifies a pre-service teacher who developed in her understanding of ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth. In her first interview, much of the discussion revolved around positive aspects of classroom community in PE and features
of positive social interaction that she felt were important. For example, she described the features of positive social interaction as: “encouragement, supportive, and fun”. Hillary only referred to any type of personal growth twice in the whole first interview with both in references alluding to a desire for students to be “comfortable, to be yourself” (Hillary).

Hillary’s progression in her understanding of ways positive social interaction can lead to personal growth is seen through her depth of understanding in the second interview. Hillary referred to personal growth in multiple ways. For example, Hillary refers to: learning (x18), growth (x8), and respect (x3). Hillary mentions how personal growth contributes to the classroom community, saying: “Learning and growing, respect for differences is probably another learning and growing thing”. Similarly, she explains how other students’ personal growth improves her own experience and being able to participant with different groups of students: “Change the people that you play [with]... Respect for differences and [feeling] safe”.

Learning and growth were referred to as favourable outcomes of positive social interaction that could have a lasting impact on students. Hillary also discussed students learning from other students. In illustrating these ideas, she drew largely from her own experience in the Formal Team Games course, saying:

Learning from each other... It’s cool to see each other’s’ perspective on different things and being able to learn from each other. Learning and growing I think are big things. Just as a student I’ve learned a lot from different people. And not necessarily just about material, but the way that people interact, the way that people perceive things, the way people understand things. It’s really cool to see
how different people understand different things so that you can kind of have that perspective. Instead of [one]. (Hillary)

At the core of this quote from Hillary is how social interaction has led her to develop what could be interpreted as a greater sense of empathy and respect for differences for her peers. She also has become more self-aware on how her perspective is not the only perspective in the PE class and how much she can learn from her peers.

Experiences of Learning how to Promote Positive Social Interaction.

In this section I discuss participants’ reflections on their experiences of learning how to promote positive social interaction. This discussion will be divided into three main sections: (1) Participants’ initial experiences on learning how to promote positive social interaction, (2) participants’ experiences of learning how to promote positive social interaction at the end of the Formal Team Games course, and (3) participant development through their experiences of learning how to promote positive social interaction during the duration of the formal team games course. The findings from the first and second interview will be further subdivided into two sections: (A) Participants’ experiences of effective ways to promote positive social interaction and (B) What the participants learned from the practical component of the Formal Team Games course under the instruction of a teacher educator that prioritized positive social interaction.

Participants’ Initial Experiences on Learning how to Promote Positive Social Interaction.

The first interview was conducted within the first two weeks of the Formal Team Games course. Therefore, much of the participants’ experiences of learning how to promote positive social interaction in PE did not occur in the Formal Team Games course but in
previous formal and informal learning experiences. For example, participants drew from previous courses that are part of their PE program, or from former work or volunteer experiences that involved students or athletes in a PE setting. Despite only being in the Formal Team Games course for two-three weeks at the time of the first interview, participants indicated ways the teacher educator responsible for the Formal Team Games course impacted participants’ understanding of how to promote positive social interaction.

Participants’ experiences and interpretations of effective ways to promote positive social interaction. Participants drew from a wide variety of personal experiences to identify and interpret what they felt were effective ways to promote positive social interaction. For instance, the idea that the teacher had a strong influence on the functionality of the class and how the students interacted with the teacher and other students was brought up frequently and was expressed explicitly by many participants. Six of the eight participants expressed that teachers have an impactful role in promoting positive social interaction and creating an emotionally safe and accepting environment – or a strong sense of community – for the students. As one participant (Phil) said “If you as a coach or teacher don’t provide that safe environment or that healthy positive environment, you can’t get that influence going and that might help the kids encourage the positive interaction.”

Although participants did not generally present what I interpret to be a complex understanding of positive social interaction in the first interview, there was one participant who demonstrated a unique interpretation of how positive social interaction can be promoted that was not in line with the literature or the rest of the other
participants. Specifically, Bill identified positive social interaction as being grounded in competition and sport. He mentioned in his first interview: “*Competition really brings people together*” and “*Whenever there’s competition I always end up liking it*”. Although this perspective on PE may seem out of place in the current discourse in the PE literature, it is not uncommon for PE teacher education (PETE) students to highly value competition (Aggerholm, Standal, & Hordvik, 2018). Bill described himself as a skilled soccer player and has always experienced success in PE. He explained that, it was hard for him to understand the role and nature of competition in ways that were different to his own perspective. This was also evident in other parts of the interview. In essence, Bill drew almost exclusively from his experiences as a PE student and competitive sport participant, where he was a highly able and successful participant. For example, when asked how to manage a class where there are varying skill levels, his first response was based on his experiences as a student, where is teacher used an ability grouping approach: “*You can put the lesser skilled people in one game and the more skilled people in another game...*” (Bill). Although ability grouping can promote positive social interaction if used sparingly (Hallam & Ireson, 2010; Lou, Abrami, Spence, Poulsen, Chambers, & d’Apollonia, 1996), it has also been identified as heightening stratification. For example, higher-skilled students may learn to view low-skilled student as less able and perhaps develop a lack of empathy (Hallam & Ireson, 2010). While comments such as those made by Bill demonstrate the diverse ways in which positive social interaction can be interpreted, it also reveals the prominence of prior experiences in shaping PETE students’ perspectives about appropriate or desired teaching practices in relation to developing positive social interaction. Importantly, these
experiences may or may not reflect appropriate, inclusive, and powerful pedagogical approaches supported in the literature. I suggest Bill’s experiences do not necessarily align with those that are currently being espoused and supported by research. There is, therefore, a need for teacher educators to equip PETE students with tools and experiences that allow them to recognize their own biases and embrace the multiple ways positive social interaction can be experienced beyond the ways they have experienced themselves. Several participants drew on both their prior experiences as learners (as Bill did) while also using their brief experience in the practical component of the Formal Team Games course. At the time of the first interview they had participated in one practical or gym-based class as part of the course. Participants placed a lot of emphasis placed on the teacher’s role, explaining how the teacher is responsible for creating a space that allows students to experience positive social interaction. As students of teaching, participants in the research were being exposed to teaching practice by the teacher educator responsible for teaching the Formal Team Games course. Six of the eight participants recognized the teacher educator’s modelling as being impactful in shaping their understanding of teaching practice in relation to promoting positive social interaction. In referring to the teacher educator, Amanda said:

*He’s taught us a lot about... not what a good teacher looks like, more what a good teacher should be and he kind of lets you take your own spin on things. I think he’s the perfect in between of you can talk to him as a friend and you can talk to him as your professor. He obviously has that knowledge but he's willing to talk to you on a personal basis. I think it's really good actually that he knows all of our names and introduces*
himself at the beginning and a lot of profs don't take the time to do that and I think that's really important.

There are a lot of ideas presented in Amanda’s quote and it is a strong starting place to see how participants wanted to be treated as students, but also what they thought was good practice for a teacher.

In the following passages I unpack Amanda’s quote by starting each paragraph with an excerpt from this quote and identify how it captures both her experience and that of others, informing their learning about to promote positive social interaction in PE.

Excerpt 1: “… I think he's the perfect in between of you can talk to him as a friend and you can talk to him as your professor. He obviously has that knowledge but he's willing to talk to you on a personal basis”

This part of Amanda’s quote shows her recognizing the importance of teachers being professional and personable when communicating with students. Another participant (Jesse) made a similar statement, explaining that it is ideal when the teacher does not display arrogance, “[A] teacher or coach doesn’t think he’s the best thing ever.” This shows that the participants are thinking about their own teaching practice by engaging with their own learning about teaching that has come from the teacher educator’s (and other teacher educators’) teaching. In drawing from their involvement in the pre-service teacher to teacher-educator relationship, participants made sense of the importance of a teacher being “Open to criticism” (Jesse), “Really positive” (Bill), “Inclusive” (Kristen), and “Encouraging” (Ophelia). Although these comments were made in the early stages of the participants’ teaching careers, they show that at least several participants are thinking critically about the practice others and using this critique to inform their understanding of
their own teaching practice. As Amanda’s quote suggests teacher educators (and teachers) should walk a fine line between being a teacher educator but also being relatable and personable enough to connect with students on a deeper level. All participants related to this point of view.

Excerpt 2: “I think it's really good actually that he knows all of our names and introduces himself at the beginning and a lot of profs don't take the time to do that and I think that's really important” (Amanda).

This quote captures how something as simple as knowing students’ names can make a big difference in how university students respond to their teacher educators. The second half of this quote shows how much value Amanda puts on developing a relationship with their teacher educator. Bob also recognized this as important, explaining that the teacher educator of the Formal Team Games course would “…Talk to all of us. Introduce himself and ask how his summer was... He asked me how my summer was and was just chatting a bit.” The participants understood that the teacher educator took the initiative to get to know the students and was intentional in developing a relationship with them. Secondly, participants realized that the teacher educator’s modelling of positive social interaction in the class set a particular tone and climate for how he wanted the class to operate. As explained by Bill: “He was really positive and I think that reflects on to us... it sets the tone... I think that obviously reflected on us a... just ended up a total positive atmosphere.” Through the teacher educator being proactive in getting to know the students and being personable, participants learned that the teacher educator cared about each student and helped students feel valued.
In summary, participants highlighted the way the teacher educator modeled positive social interaction to them by forming teacher-student relationships. This was done through intentionally learning everyone’s names, greeting students at the beginning of the class, and taking an interest in their students’ lives outside of PE. Through this pedagogical approach, participants expressed the importance of teachers building positive relationships as part of their own teaching practice. Overall, participants learned from the teacher educator’s modelling that teachers have a responsibility to be “supportive” (Hillary), “encouraging” (Amanda), and “inclusive” (Kristen), as well as to take the initiative to create an environment where all students feel valued and connected.

The first interview gave insight into the participants’ initial understanding of positive social interaction in PE and what they believe to be an ideal situation or an ideal set of strategies and practices. It was interesting to see how much emphasis participants put on the role of the teacher, however, they rarely positioned themselves in that role. Instead, participants often approached the interview questions from the role of a student. Being four years into their concurrent education program, it was surprising to see how they still took a passive perspective on positive social interaction, where they positioned themselves more as participants and not as influencers of positive social interaction in PE and that their understanding of it was based more on what they would like to experience versus how they would promote it.

**Participants’ Experiences of Learning how to Promote Positive Social Interaction at the end of the Formal Team Games Course.** The second interview showed several changes in participants’ understanding of the role of the teacher and a greater depth in their knowledge of how they can contribute to positive social interaction in PE.
Participants acknowledged that the teaching practice of the teacher overflows onto the students and that the teacher should be intentional in modelling the social climate.

**Participants’ experiences and understanding of effective ways to promote positive social interaction.** In the second interview, the language used by the participants showed a greater depth of understanding of what their future students need instead of what they would personally want to experience. They understood that they were the minority as physical educators and that not everyone has a similar PE experience (Ntoumanis, 2005). As such, many felt they would need to create markedly different PE experiences to those they experienced as students themselves. For example, Hillary said: “I’ve enjoyed phys-ed for my whole life”. I followed up her comment by asking: “If we take out the ability levels, would you still feel wanted...?”. She responded with “Probably not”. This dialogue shows that Hillary had come to recognize that her ability levels or skills contributed significantly to her enjoyment in PE and that without high ability, she admits that she probably would not feel wanted or valued in PE. That is, her teacher tended to value her as a student because she was competent and able – she perhaps embodied a similar identity to that of her teacher. I interpret Hillary’s self-awareness and critical view of her PE as capturing a more complex understanding of positive social interaction than was exhibited at the beginning of the course. Moreover, her comments are reflected in the literature, where it is suggested that ability levels often dictate participation levels in PE (Bernstein et al., 2011).

When discussing positive social interaction and ability or skill levels, Hillary implicitly refers to the relationships between social interaction and motor competence. As mentioned in Chapter Two, it is suggested that the features of meaningfulness be thought
of as working in an integrated manner (Beni et al., 2017). In Hillary’s quote in the previous paragraph, it can be seen how strong motor competence shaped the nature of her interaction in her experiences of school PE. In this case Hillary shows how improved motor competence can be a driver for positive social interaction.

In the second interview, participants’ understanding of promoting positive social interaction included important strategies and considerations such as being intentional, taking time, and developing meaningful teacher-student relationships. Participants recognized that positive social interaction does not always happen spontaneously or organically, but often the teacher needs to intentionally ensure that it is promoted and experienced by everybody. In the next section, I analyze ways participants acknowledged how they learned to intentionally promote social interaction in the Formal Team Games course.

**Learning about ways to promote positive social interaction in the Formal Team Games course.** As with several participants’ responses from the first interview, participants in the second interview viewed the teacher as someone who could be a “positive role model” (Natasha) and who took responsibility to model positive social interaction to their students. Based on the modelling of teaching practice offered by the teacher educator responsible for the Formal Team Games course, there was extensive discussion surrounding how a teacher educator can influence the behaviour of the university students.

One participant (Kristen) identified things the teacher educator did that she appreciated and thought was reflective of how a teacher educator can model positive social interaction for university students: “He does a very good job making sure he talks to
everyone, allowing opportunity to share any stories, that kind of thing”. For example, he would often make time for students to share announcements with the class about events going on inside or outside of the university experiences (for example, social gatherings and sporting events). This quote shows how Kristen recognized specific actions taken by the teacher educator that promoted positive social interaction and how these actions were important and meaningful to Kristen as both a learner and as a future teacher.

Through their exposure to several pedagogical models, participants also identified how they could be used to promote positive social interaction in PE. There was variation in which models or strategies participants felt best promoted positive social interaction, those being mentioned: Cooperative Learning (mentioned by 1 of 7 participants), Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) (mentioned by 5 of 7 participants), Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (mentioned by 4 of 7 participants), Sport Education (mentioned by 5 of 7 participants), and Direct Instruction (mentioned by 1 of 7 participants).

It is important to mention that some participants (4 of 7 participants) decided that a blend of models and strategies would be most effective in promoting positive social interaction. The most popular blend was TPSR with either TGfU or Sport Education. This suggests that participants recognized that models such as TGfU and Sport Education provided a powerful structure for an inclusive PE experience when blended with TPSR, which has characteristics that are better aligned with positive social interaction (Metzler, 2011).

Amanda described how one of the strengths of TPSR is how students are able to self-reflect on their behaviour:
I think it's interesting to see and have it written and try and identify yourself. Like "Okay we’re playing volleyball and the ball came over here but we stopped our game so that the other team can come get their ball, what level are we?". I think that's good and you can see that... It's almost like setting a goal for yourself. Like I don't want to be a level 1, I want to be level 5. And having that list of things that you can do. I think it's good. Yeah so you can see yourself, you can see your progression throughout.

Amanda’s description of the strengths of TPSR is consistent with the other participants. TPSR adds to the other pedagogical models without disrupting their core benchmarks, and explicitly highlights or promotes positive social interaction in a way the other models do not. So by combining TPSR with the other models, they achieve a synergy of implicit and explicit prioritization of positive social interaction (Sun, Slusarz, & Terry, 2005)

Despite distinct differences between foundational principles of each of these models, participants explained that as long as the model or teaching strategy promoted “community” (Amanda), “belongingness” (Hillary), were “inclusive” (Baily), and “safe” (Hillary), that it was an appropriate and valuable tool for the teacher. These insights shows a level of critical thinking as participants were able to identify several benefits and weaknesses of multiple teaching models and are making an effort to make up for potential shortcoming of the teaching strategies by blending them together.

Participants and non-participants alike appreciated the teaching practice of the teacher educator and how he strived to promote positive social interaction in the practical component of the Formal Team Games. Through my observations of the practical
component, some ways the teacher educator consistently promoted positive social interaction during the five times I observed the practical component of the course were:

- relational time integrated into the lesson plan (allowing time for the university students to interact freely between activities),
- class reflection time (allow time for the university students to give feedback to the teacher educator or encourage their peers),
- personally interacting with each pre-service teacher over the course of the lab,
- significant amounts of time spent in small groups and activities that encouraged peer to peer interaction,
- inclusive group making techniques that left no “extras”,
- open body language, and
- publicly acknowledging the positive actions various university students (e.g., being encouraging, accepting peers to join their groups, helping with equipment, and having a positive attitude towards learning and interacting with their peers).

Through the teaching practice of the teacher educator, students in the course (both research participants and non-participants) were able to, in my opinion, experience positive social interaction in the practical component of the Formal Team Games course. I infer this through my non-participant observations and interactions with the research participants. In the practical component of the Formal Team Games course, I observed the university students responding positively to the teacher educator’s efforts to promote positive social interaction by: (a) being comfortable giving their ideas, (b) watching, being engaged, and paying attention to the teacher educator, (c) the university students laughing, joking, encouraging, and participating in the games with each other, (d) the
university students publicly acknowledging that they made “new friends” during class reflection time.

One thing mentioned in the second interview that was not mentioned before was how participants thought it was important for the teacher educator to be explicit about why they are doing certain things, particularly concerning how they can promote positive social interaction. Five of the seven participants thought that the teacher educator explaining and reflecting out loud on teaching decisions increased their understanding of positive social interaction. Natasha explained: “Like he [The Teacher Educator] always says what he’s doing... Like he’ll explain. Like he’ll do something and say ‘did you see what I just did there?’”. One Participant (Baily) said:

He questions us and not just as a student but in a teacher’s role. Like why am I doing this?... He’ll literally say, like he’ll give us an activity and then he’ll say ‘I could tell you were bored and that’s why I’m going to change this. He’ll tell us why he’s changing it because of our body language.

Similarly (Ophelia) said:

Well [he] always points out things that he’s reflecting [about]... He goes through and reminds us that he’s giving us choice here, or he’s giving us choice here because of this, or I’m thinking this right now because this happened. That’s helpful for us because we learn from that and it makes my experience meaningful because that’s what I’m there to do.

By allowing university students to be exposed to his thinking and pedagogical decision-making participants begin to see situations from both the perspective of a student and as a teacher. This important aspect of teacher education was not mentioned in the first
interview, and suggests that many participants may not have learned important concepts, strategies, and approaches from other formal and informal experiences of learning to teach (inside and outside of the university). This leads to a suggestion that if teacher educators do not explicitly voice their thought process or the reasoning behind their decisions, pre-service PE teachers may miss important opportunities to be exposed to the complexity of teaching practice, and may not develop a deep understanding of how to promote positive social interaction. Positive social interaction should therefore be experienced and articulated to university students in order from them to develop a deeper and complex understanding, so they are able to take that into their own classrooms in the future.

Summary. Analysis of the second interview data showed that participants developed a deeper understanding about promoting positive social interaction in PE. The major difference between the first and second interview was how the participants demonstrated awareness of themselves as students and teachers. They were comfortable learning from the teacher educator of the Formal Team Games course, but also saw that what and how he was teaching as a university-based teacher educator could translate into their teaching practice in schools in the future. This applied not only to participants’ understanding of how to promote positive social interaction but also to other important pedagogical decisions they may be exposed to as teachers. For example, Baily said: “He questions us and not just as a student but in a teacher’s role. Like why am I doing this? If someone hands in an assignment late, what would you do?” In specific reference to modelling positive social interaction and the ways it can influence participants’ future practice, Amanda said: “He respects us... always been very approachable... gets to know
everybody on a personal basis, I think that’s very important. I think it translates too… my future as a teacher. He has definitely made a meaningful impact on myself.”

Chapter Summary

Most participants demonstrated a deeper and more complex understanding of positive social interaction at the end of the Formal Team Games course. The second interview produced more descriptive codes that reflected a deeper understanding of positive social interaction than the first interview. I interpret this as indicative of participants using less “buzz” words and explaining their thoughts on major topics surrounding positive social interaction. Some examples of descriptive codes that were referenced frequently in the second interview were belongingness (x20), trust (x20), learning (x40). These three were present in a much higher volume in the second interview, and I interpret as indicative of a deeper understanding of positive social interaction as was previously observed.

Overall the participants attained a more complex understanding of positive social interaction, especially when it came to implementing key elements such as meaningful relationships, developing a sense of belongingness, and creating an inclusive community of learners. In the first interview, participants were more focused on indicators of positive social interaction, or what it looks like (for example, fun, laughing, verbal communication, and friends), where in the second interview, they were more aware of what it consists of (for example, a sense of belongingness, trust, personal growth, community, relationships), and how it can be implemented (for example, meaningful relationships, teaching strategies/frameworks, building a community of learners, an authentic teacher). Although not all participants either began or ended in the same place, interview data suggests all progressed significantly over the course of the semester. With
this in mind, it is not a question of “if” positive social interaction can be taught to university students, but a question of “how” it can be taught in a way that is relevant and relatable to them and their future teaching practice. Participants expressed an appreciation for the teacher educators teaching methods that emphasized professional relationships between pre-service teacher and teacher educator and allowed the teacher educator to be authentic and relatable to the students while maintaining appropriate boundaries. They benefitted from the teacher educator bringing elements of positive social interaction to the surface through reflecting openly about teaching decisions, reinforcing the idea that university students cannot simply learn the concepts through osmosis, instead positive social interaction should be experienced and explicitly articulated to them through reflection or discussion so that they can not only understand what positive social interaction looks like, but what it is and how to implement it as well. Importantly, participants felt they had learned important concepts, strategies, and reasoning – what things can promote positive social interaction, how they can be promoted, and why they might promote them in their classrooms. This suggests that participants went beyond searching for “tips and tricks” of teaching practice but were able to better identify theories that underpin the practice of promoting positive social interaction in PE.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, I identify the significance of the contributions of this research and contextualize the results in the broader literature. I do this by returning to the research questions, addressing how each question can be answered by the data that were collected and analyzed. As this is a grounded theory research study, at times in the chapter I introduce theories that were evident in the data and that help to make sense of the results. The reader should be aware that some theories are also returned to that were introduced in the literature review (See Chapter 2). I also make claims about ways the results might inform PE teaching and teacher education practice and the aims of PE teacher education programs. These claims are not meant to represent generalizable truths, however, the findings from this research study may influence individual PE teacher educators’ practice based on the extent to which the findings resonate with the reader and their knowledge of their own unique context and university students with whom they work. This chapter is organized into four sections: (a) Summary and discussion of main findings, (b) Implications, (c) Limitations, and (d) Conclusions.

Summary and Discussion of the Main Findings

The methods used in this research enabled the collection of rich data from university students that helped provide insights into their understanding and interpretation of positive social interaction in PE and how they would plan to enact it in their future practice. One of my main aims in this chapter is to demonstrate how the analysis of data allows me to address the research questions and identify the main findings. As a reminder to the reader, the research questions were:
1. How do pre-service PE teachers understand and interpret the role positive social interaction plays in a meaningful PE experience?
   a. What does positive social interaction in PE mean to them and what does it consist of?
2. How do pre-service PE teachers learn to articulate positive social interaction as part of their evolving PE teaching practice?
3. How do pre-service PE teachers envision themselves planning and enacting strategies and approaches to promote positive social interaction when they are teaching in classrooms?

In relation to these questions, analysis of data led to four noteworthy findings. One of the noteworthy findings that I drew from the analysed data was that: (a) university students demonstrated a basic understanding of positive social interaction at the beginning of the Formal Team Games course when compared to the features of positive social interaction described in the literature. Therefore, the university students did not enter their fourth year with a deep or complete understanding of positive social interaction in PE. Next, (b) university students grew in the ways they communicated their understanding of positive social interaction during the Formal Team Games course. When looking at both individuals as well as the group of participants as a whole, the data showed that there was progress towards developing a deep or complete understanding of positive social interaction in PE. I also found that (c) university students suggested the teacher educator’s practice in the Formal Team Games course fostered growth in their understanding of positive social interaction and contributed to deepening their understanding of it. The analysed data showed the importance of the teacher educator’s
teacher education practice, or how his teaching practice when it came to educating university students, as being instrumental in the development of the university students’ understanding of positive social interaction in PE. Lastly, despite growth, (d) university students exhibited gaps in their knowledge and understanding of positive social interaction at the end of the Formal Team Games course. So although there was growth in all of the participants, none displayed a complete knowledge of positive social interaction in PE and still had gaps in their understanding when compared to the current literature. In the following passages I expand on each of these findings, situate them in the existing literature, and connect them to the research questions. As stated before, this is not an attempt to generalize these claims for every pre-service PE teacher; however, it is an attempt to bring awareness to the topic of positive social interaction and how PE teacher educators can emphasize it to foster a deeper understanding in university students. It is also an attempt to describe how my research builds on the literature base regarding positive social interaction in PE.

**University Students Demonstrated a Basic Understanding of Positive Social Interaction at the Beginning of the Formal Team Games Course.** The analyzed data highlighted that the university students entered the first interview, which occurred in the first two weeks of the 12 week semester, with a superficial understanding of positive social interaction and how to promote it as future physical educators. As in Chapter 4, I use the word “superficial” throughout this chapter as a descriptor of the university students’ understanding of positive social interaction to reflect their lack of thoroughness and depth in understanding of positive social interaction. Participants’ understanding of positive social interaction at the beginning of the Formal Team Games course reflected
“buzz” words or “jargon” that is commonly used within the teaching field, that were neither descriptive nor conveyed a solid understanding of main concepts or principles. Specifically, participants tended to identify positive social interaction in the following ways in the first interview: community, fun, friends, encouraging, and teacher-driven. Although these are important aspects of positive social interaction, this is not an exhaustive list and left substantial gaps in their understanding. For example, participants in the first interview did not refer to foundational features of positive social interaction such as belongingness, which is an integral part of positive social interaction as supported by self-determination theory (Goodenow, 1993; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci 2000), emotional safety, or the freedom to share ideas, both of which contribute to students willingness to participate and reduces students fear of ridicule – a common occurrence in PE (Allender et al., 2006; Azzarito & Ennis. 2003; Carlson 1995). In addition, there was little mention of concepts such as trust (Baker, 2006), or respect for differences which allows a heterogeneous group of individuals to co-exist harmoniously and contributes to a sense of community (Barker, et al., 2015; Koltko-Rivera, 2006). This may be because of participants’ tendency to envision their future classes as mostly homogenous and that their students will be similar to them in terms of the students they would teach, their interests, and behaviours.

This claim affirms Pajares’s (1992) view that university students’ initial assumptions and beliefs about teaching are formed early in their lives and careers. These assumptions and beliefs are often resilient to contradictions, even if those contradictions are caused by reason, schooling, or experience. This means that those assumptions are well established by the time the pre-service teacher begins their program. Participants’ assumptions and
beliefs about positive social interaction reflected this general trajectory in that their superficial understanding of positive social interaction may be attributed to experiences early in their lives as school students and youth sport participants. It may be that until these were explicitly challenged (through the teacher educator’s explicit questioning and articulation of teaching decisions and practice), they had been mostly resilient to prior contradictions. Thus I am led to believe that the participants never received any education about positive social interaction prior to the Formal Team Games course or had not been prompted to confront their personal beliefs about teaching. Thus they entered the Formal Team Games course with a shallow understanding of positive social interaction.

Coupled with a superficial understanding of positive social interaction, participants also demonstrated a limited repertoire of practical or pedagogical knowledge about how to promote positive social interaction, through using, for example, established pedagogical teaching models or teaching strategies that promote or emphasize positive social interaction, such as Teaching Games for Understanding (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), Sport Education (Siedentop, 1998), Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (Hellison, 2011) and Cooperative Learning (Dyson & Grineski, 2001). This was surprising, since the participants are in their fourth year of the Mountainview PE teacher education program and all students had been exposed to several of these models and other strategies that promote positive social interaction prior to this point in their program. Through the interviews, it became clear that the participants may not have reflected deeply about the features of positive social interaction and how pedagogical models can be used to promote or emphasize positive social interaction in addition to helping them achieve learning outcomes or curriculum objectives geared toward physical development.
One thing participants did demonstrate in the first interview was an understanding of how positive social interaction can be a contributor to a meaningful experience (Beni et al., 2017; Kretchmar, 2006), and they also reflected on ways positive social interaction played a role in contributing towards their own meaningful PE experiences.

The analyzed data showed that university students in the Mountainview University PE program initially had a superficial understanding of positive social interaction that was quite idealistic in that they were aiming for an “exact” manifestation of their understanding of positive social interaction in their future PE classes when they entered the Formal Team Games course. Their idealism generally did not make room for common and typical challenges teachers might face in promoting positive social interaction in schools such as dealing with interpersonal conflict, motivating unwilling participants, and school cultures generally being resistant to change (Lawson, 1983; Richards, Templin, & Gaudrault, 2013; Templin & Richards, 2014). Moreover, their responses did not reflect sophisticated understandings of positive social interaction as explained in the literature. In the first two weeks of the 12-week semester, their responses were relatively simplistic and lacking in clarity.

**University Students Were able to more Clearly Communicate their Understanding of Positive Social Interaction during the Formal Team Games Course.** During their time in the Formal Team Games course, participants were more able to clearly communicate their understanding of positive social interaction and how to implement it. Specifically, participants communicated a clearer understanding of: the features of positive social interaction, contributors to a positive social interaction experience, as well as how to prioritize it in PE using a variety of teaching models and strategies.
The analyzed data from the second interview showed an awareness of features of positive social interaction that was not present in the first interview and how those features contribute to a meaningful experience in PE. For example, participants identified *emotional safety* (Allender et al., 2006), *support systems* (Allender et al., 2006), *community* (Battistich et al., 1997; Light, et al., 2013), *inclusiveness* (Barker, et al., 2015), *respect for differences* (Barker, et al., 2015), *positive relationships* (Allender et al., 2006; Battistich et al., 1997), *belongingness* (Goodenow, 1993; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000), *connecting* (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and *trust* (Baker, 2006) as foundational features of positive social interaction in PE. Although the participants did not refer to self-determination theory specifically, participants in the second interview highlighted the need for students to feel a sense of relatedness, belongingness and connectedness to their peers and teachers in PE, an aspect of positive social interaction that is emphasized by Ryan and Deci (2000) through self-determination theory. The heightened awareness of features of positive social interaction indicated that participants had grown in how they communicate their understanding of positive social interaction over the duration of the Formal Team Games course.

The participants also communicated an understanding of how pedagogical models in PE can be used to prioritize positive social interaction. This was evident during the second interview where several of the participants discussed implementing a variety of models to promote positive social interaction in their future classrooms. Participants discussed how teaching models like Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), Sport Education (Siedentop, 1998), and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) (Hellison, 2011) can be used to promote positive social interaction
in PE. I interpreted the participants’ decisiveness in naming established models to promote positive social interaction in their future classrooms as an increase in their understanding of positive social interaction and appropriate teaching strategies in PE. Participant growth could also be inferred from the many who suggested using multiple models in the form of a models-based approach to practice (Hastie & Casey, 2014; Metzler, 2011) in order to maximize positive social interaction while still meeting the needs of students and conveying curriculum material. Models-based practice was included in both the theoretical and practical components of the Formal Team Games course. This suggests that participants were engaged with what they were learning in the course, had acquired a more complex understanding of positive social interaction, and were beginning to think critically about appropriate pedagogical models and strategies they could use and adapt to emphasize the strengths of teaching models while minimizing their weaknesses. This study affirms that the TPSR model is an appropriate choice when prioritizing positive social interaction through its use of explicit levels and explanation of desirable behaviour, and that suggests that there may be merit in applying them in tandem with the structure of another teaching model in order to provide students with a positive social interaction experience (Hellison, 2011).

Data from the second interview suggests that university students were better able to articulate their understanding of positive social interaction with descriptors that was more closely in line with concepts reported in the literature. For example, participants of the second interview identified key features of positive social interaction such as belongingness, trust, relationships, and a supportive community (Allender et al., 2006; Baker, 2006; Goodenow, 1993; Light et al., 2013). Many participants attributed their
growth to aspects of the teacher educator’s practice in the Formal Team Games course which prioritized positive social interaction by planning for the participants to both *experience* it as well as having it explicitly *articulated* to them.

Participants identified Teaching Games for Understanding or TGfU (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), Sport Education (Siedentop, 1998), Cooperative Learning (Dyson, & Grineski, 2001), and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility or TPSR (Hellison, 2011) as appropriate pedagogical models to promote positive social interaction. Moreover, participants suggested blending pedagogical models, the two most common combinations were TGfU and TPSR or Sport Education and TPSR. The common justification for these two combination was that both TGfU and Sport Education provide an appropriate lesson structure that can be implemented in PE that puts students in a position to experience positive social interaction, however, by incorporating TPSR, the physical educator is explicitly promoting positive social interaction due to the explicit “level” system of TPSR. This demonstrated participants acquiring a deeper understanding of positive social interaction *as well as* how to promote it. With that said, although they acquired a deeper understanding of teaching models used in PE, their understanding was limited to a theoretical view. Specifically, participants were unaware of the many challenges presented to physical educators, and so their understanding did not extend to how to effectively implement teaching models in the realities of a PE classroom.

**University Students Suggested the Teacher Educator’s Practice in the Formal Team Games Course Fostered Growth in their Understanding of Positive Social Interaction.** The finding that university students’ ability to articulate an understanding of positive social interaction was enhanced by the teacher educator making his practice
explicit builds upon work by other teacher education researchers. In particular, research by Loughran (2006) and Bullock (2011) demonstrated that the assumptions university students bring with them about teaching practice through the apprenticeship of observation is hard to disrupt and requires teacher educators to engage university students in open discussions and experiences that highlight the complexity and problematic nature of teaching practice. For example, Bullock (2011) explained that one of the tasks of the teacher educator is to disrupt some naïve understandings of teaching practice through the teacher educator making their tacit knowledge of teaching explicit to university students, and to make their practice a site of inquiry. From the non-participants observations and interviews, the teacher educator of the Formal Team Games course was able to do this through openly reflecting with university students about teaching decisions and explicitly explaining the thought process behind teaching decisions. Several participants, such as Bob, Ophelia, and Baily specifically referred to these strategies as helping them develop deeper and richer understanding of positive social interaction. In turn, this deepened understanding (compared to the first interview) was demonstrated through analysis of data from the second interview.

It appears that many participants initially approached teacher education from the perspective of student-learner and not necessarily as student-teacher. The outcome of assuming a role solely as a learner (and not as a future teacher) was that initially the participants were participating in the class activities and drawing their own conclusions on why activities were effective, if they met curriculum expectations, or if they promoted positive social interaction. However, the teacher educator intentionally and openly reflecting on his teaching decisions introduced the participants to his perspective on the
course activities, material, and preparation process for the practical component of the Formal Team Games course (Ní Chróinín et al., 2018). Loughran (2006) refers to this practice as helping pre-service teachers see teaching from “the other side of the desk” – a problematic point about the apprenticeship of observation highlighted more than forty years ago by Lortie (1975). By openly reflecting on his practice and his interpretations of the university students’ learning experiences, the teacher educator was exposing university students to the teacher’s perspective on learning and on teaching (e.g., lesson planning, teaching decisions, positioning in the classroom) (Ní Chrónín et al., 2018). Making his inner thought processes explicit to university students about positive social interaction supports views that teaching cannot be learned through “osmosis” – where students of teaching simply observe teaching practice -- but must be explicitly articulated (Ní Chrónín et al., 2018). However, several authors suggest this is not often easy for teacher educators, nor does it come naturally (Bullock, 2009; Loughran, 2006). In this way, the participants were able to think more critically about their experiences as learners and as teachers in the Formal Team Games course; a crucial aspect of facilitating growth in pre-service teacher and university PE students (Bullock, 2009; Ní Chrónín et al., 2018).

The participants indicated that the teaching style of the teacher educator was a major factor in their growth of understanding in positive social interaction. The teacher educator explicitly grounded his practice in the principles of LAMPE (Ní Chrónín et al., 2017). Ní Chrónín et al. (2017) articulated several pedagogical principles of LAMPE to help teacher educators support university students in learning to facilitate meaningful experiences for young people. Data suggests that participants benefitted from the teacher
educator’s practice, as he intentionally included university students in the reflection process when it came to his teaching decisions, challenging them to position themselves as learner-teachers, and engaging them in discussion about the features of positive social interaction and guiding their critical thinking process to a deeper understanding of positive social interaction. As mentioned in the Literature Review (See Chapter 2), positive social interaction is an integral component of a meaningful experience, and was emphasized through the LAMPE framework (Beni, et al., 2017; Kretchmar, 2006; Ní Chróinín et al., 2018).

All data collection methods (Non-participant observations, exit slips, and participant interviews) indicate that most of the participants felt they benefited from having positive social interaction experienced and articulated, and that one without the other may not yield as great an increase in depth of understanding of positive social interaction in university students (Loughran, 2002; 2006; Hatton & Smith, 1995). Bullock (2009; 2011), Davis (2006), Loughran (2002; 2006), and Ní Chróinín et al. (2018) express the importance of including pre-service teachers in the reflective processes of teaching practice and of teacher educators making their tacit knowledge of teaching explicit to students. These practices help make learning to teach a site of inquiry in order to educate pre-service teacher about aspects of teaching that might not be “obvious” as well as to disrupt pre-conceived assumptions on the role of the teacher (Loughran, 2013).

In short, much of the data analysis supports literature on pre-service teachers and university students entering teacher education with assumptions developed through their apprenticeship of observation during their time spent in schools over the course of their life, and that those assumptions must be disrupted and challenged in order for the pre-
service teachers to leave the program with a greater understanding of their role as an educator (Bullock, 2011; Davis, 2006; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Korthagen, Loughran, & Russell, 2006; Loughan, 2002; 2006; Ní Chróinín et al., 2018; Nilsson, 2008). However, it also extends this concept by applying it specifically to positive social interaction in PE and how university students can develop a deep understanding of positive social interaction and how a teacher educator can adjust their practice by being aware of university students’ assumptions and how to disrupt them.

Data from the non-participant observations showed the benefits of the teacher educator articulating the complexity of positive social interaction with university students through his practice. The interviews corroborated these insights, with participants specifically referencing aspects of the teacher educator’s practice as being positive and helpful in their experiences of learning to teach in general, and specifically learning to promote positive social interaction. For example, university students identified the following teacher education practices as being meaningful to them (as learners and future teachers) and which contributed towards their understanding of positive social interaction: (a) organizing inclusive class activities, such as cooperative games or modifying activities to encourage meaningful participation for all skill levels (b) using strategies and pedagogical models that privilege positive social interaction such as Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (Hellison, 2011) and Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994), (c) remembering students’ names and making an effort to develop a relationship with them, and (d) openly reflecting with the class on how he is promoting positive social interaction through his teacher education practice, such as unpacking experiences of pedagogical models in-the-moment with university students.
Throughout the 12-week semester, I conducted non-participant observations of the practical component of Formal Team Games course where I focused on the teacher educator’s practice and ways he emphasized positive social interaction as well as the university students’ response to his practice. I observed that the teacher educator prioritized positive social interaction consistently in several ways. For example: (a) class reflection time (allow time for the students to give feedback to the teacher educator or encourage their peers), (b) personally interacting with each pre-service teacher during each class, (d) open and inviting body language (e.g., facing students when talking to them, making eye contact with all students when giving instructions, using hands movements when talking instead of crossing arms, and smiling or being approachable), and (e) publicly acknowledging the positive social interactions of university students (e.g., being encouraging, accepting peers to join their groups, helping with equipment, and having a positive attitude towards learning and interacting with their peers).

The combination of having positive social interaction *experienced* as well as *articulated* through questioning and reflecting helped university students make connections between lived experiences that embodied positive social interaction, the features of positive social interaction, and established pedagogical models that promote positive social interaction (e.g., Teaching Games for Understanding, Sport Education, Cooperative Learning, and Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility).

**Despite Growth, University Students Exhibited Gaps in their Knowledge and Understanding of Positive Social Interaction at the end of the Formal Team Games Course.** At the end of the Formal Team Games course, there was marked growth and development in the university students’ understanding of positive social interaction.
However, the analyzed data from the second interview showed they still had gaps in their knowledge and understanding, and thus any claims about improvement are partial at best.

For example, an aspect of positive social interaction that was not expressed or communicated was the topic of conflict management and resolution, which can lead to developing deeper relationships and increasing respect for differences (Allender et al., 2006; Dyson & Grineski, 2001). Participants in the second interview had trouble describing positive social interaction when there was division, conflict, or when they would be teaching a heterogeneous group of students that did not respond positively when encouraged to develop and contribute to a sense of community in the classroom.

Their understanding of positive social interaction was therefore not well rounded, which is common among university students or even seasoned teachers (Fletcher & Baker, 2015). There was little discussion about how to manage conflict while still prioritizing positive social interaction. Indeed, it appeared the participants did not consider conflict management to be included as part of positive social interaction, yet conflict management and managing disagreements is a key aspect of positive social interaction and can lead to deeper relationships and a richer sense of community (Battistich et al., 1997).

While participants developed a firmer grasp of various features of positive social interaction over the duration of the Formal Team Games course, there was not uniformity when it came to describing their understanding of positive social interaction. So although the group on a whole developed a deeper understanding of positive social interaction in relation to their initial understanding, on an individual level, all participants emphasized certain concepts while also revealing particular gaps in their understanding. Some areas of emphasis included: “trust” (Kristen), “belongingness” (Natasha), “equality” (Amanda),
“respect for differences” (Hillary), and “inclusiveness” (Baily). Some common gaps in understanding were: (a) equating fun with positive social interaction (Amanda), (b) favouring higher skilled students over lower skilled students (Baily), (c) lack of understanding on how students can personally grow from experiencing positive social interaction (Kristen), (d) poor description of a positive learning community (Natasha), and (e) lack of empathy or the importance of empathy (Bob).

There is a bulk of literature surrounding what positive social interaction is and how it can be implemented, so it is understandable that university students did not attain a complete understanding of positive social interaction in four months. The gaps in understanding of positive social interaction revolved around conflict management and resolution, and a general lack of understanding of how positive social interaction can foster personal growth in students. Fletcher and Baker (2015) emphasize the difficulty in not just promoting positive social interaction and community among university students, but also the features of positive social interaction. Although many university PE students have experienced a sense of community, teacher educators face a difficult task in unpacking and identifying the components that contributed to a sense of community, as well as how to how to replicate in other PE classes, which will no doubt be unique in their own context (Fletcher & Baker, 2015).

Although the collected data reflected a growth in participant understanding of positive social interaction, none of them exhibited a complete understanding and each of them had their individual gaps. This was expected due to the sheer amount of literature surrounding positive social interaction and the unique past experiences of each participant. However, gaps in participant understanding are important to note, since it situates this study in the
realities of teaching and acknowledges that the teacher education practice that was highlighted in this study as an effective way to teach university students about positive social interaction, which may ensure growth, does not ensure a complete understanding of positive social interaction in university students. Gaps in their understanding may also be attributed to the fact that all of this study’s participants have not yet entered their Teacher Education program where there will be a greater focus on directly disrupting student beliefs and biases in order to align them with evidence based teaching practices.

Implications

This study and its findings have significant implications for PE teacher education practice as well as for the research community that surrounds it. This section will be divided into two sections: (a) Implications for PE teacher education and (b) implications for future research.

**Implications for Physical Education Teacher Education.** The results and findings of this study are focused on PE teacher education, and although some pedagogical principles and concepts discussed in this study may be able to be transferable to other teaching contexts, I am hesitant to make that connection since this study was conducted solely in the context of a fourth year PE course, with seven out of the ten participants moving on to their two-year Teacher Education program. The findings from this study can impact how teacher education programs are designed as well as the teacher educators’ practices in that program, particularly in regard to: (a) teacher educators’ assumptions, (b) the prioritization of positive social interaction in PE teacher education, and (c) teacher educators’ practice in teaching pre-service PE teachers.
**Teacher Educators’ Assumptions.** In a way that is similar to pre-service teachers entering their teacher education program with assumptions, teacher educators carry assumptions about their students as well (Fletcher & Casey, 2014). It is important that teacher educators do not assume that their students already have a deep understanding of positive social interaction or that university students’ learning about positive social interaction will occur by default during their programs. The fourth year student-participants were able to recognize positive social interaction and describe some “indicators” of it after 12-weeks of learning with an teacher educator who intentionally prioritized positive social interaction, however, they initially did not have a deep understanding of positive social interaction and were not able to describe its features with great clarity or sophistication. If teacher educators assume that university students already have a deep understanding of positive social interaction when they enter their class, they may be doing their students a dis-service by not addressing it or prioritizing it in their course. This study shows that even upper year students initially had, what I interpreted, to be a superficial understanding of positive social interaction that was fragile and disconnected from the realities of teaching PE in a school. If a teacher educator is teaching a course in which positive social interaction could be emphasized, the teacher educator should make learning situations (about positive social interaction) explicit and thorough. As demonstrated in this research, the use of pedagogical models such as TPSR and Sport Education are appropriate strategies to help teacher educators make this emphasis explicit for university students both as learners and as future teachers.

**Prioritization of Positive Social Interaction in Physical Education Teacher Education.** The importance of positive social interaction in PE has been explained in
detail earlier in this thesis (See Chapter 2), however, this study reveals that even with its high importance, many university students lack a deep understanding of positive social interaction and how it can be promoted in their future classrooms and struggle to articulate how it can contribute to their future students’ experience. This emphasizes the importance of providing university students with a deep understanding of positive social interaction for PE teacher education programs in order for them to provide their future students with a meaningful physical education experience.

The impact positive social interaction can have on elementary to secondary school students is well documented and its benefits range from a comprehensive meaningful experience, increased participation, an active lifestyle, personal growth, and improved mental health (Beni et al., 2017; Barker, et al., 2015; Kretchmar, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Teixeira, et al., 2012). By reviewing the literature on positive social interaction and its potential benefits in PE and situating this research within that literature, this study supports the importance of positive social interaction and why it should be prioritized in PE teacher education programs. In the second interview, university students also saw the value of positive social interaction, in that they saw how positive social interaction contributed to their own meaningful experience in the Formal Team Games course as well as how positive social interaction can contribute to a meaningful experience for their future students. The process of university students acquiring a heightened awareness of how positive social interaction contributes to meaningfulness included intentional prioritization as well as constant reflection, critiquing, and questioning on their own experiences. It indicates how complex positive social interaction is, and it is only one feature of meaningful experiences as outlined in the Literature Review (See Chapter 2).
Therefore, although the features of a meaningful experience (e.g., fun, increased motor competence, delight, and challenge) may come across as somewhat simplistic and easily attainable, this study shows the possibility of them being complex and involving a large set of concepts and principles that university students need to engage with.

**Teacher Educators’ Practices for Teaching Pre-Service Physical Education Teachers.**

The participants in this research developed a deeper understanding of positive social interaction over the duration of the Formal Team Games course, and some of that growth and development may be attributed to the teacher educator’s practice and the ways he prioritized positive social interaction. As found in the results, in order for university students to develop a deeper understanding of positive social interaction, it is suggested that positive social interaction should be *experienced* by the university students during their teacher education, and have the features or contributors to positive social interaction explicitly *articulated* to them as well. This finding generally supports the promotion of the pedagogical principles of LAMPE (NíChróinín, et al., 2018), and suggests that other teacher educators may also benefit from using these principles as a guideline to support how they teach future teachers about prioritizing meaningful experiences in PE. Several participants referred to the articulation of the teacher educator’s practice as being essential in developing their understanding of positive social interaction, especially in a PE setting. Even if teacher educators do not implement the LAMPE framework in its entirety, it is crucial to prioritize positive social interaction to university students by having them *experience* it as well as have it *articulated*.

**Implications for Future Research.** This study fills a gap in the current literature concerning how pre-service PE teachers understand and learn positive social interaction.
This contributes to the fields of PE specifically and education generally by sharing the outcomes of prioritizing positive social interaction in pre-service teacher education and demonstrating how their experiences of learning to teach can be enhanced by teacher education practices that involve explicit articulation of pedagogical decision-making and engaging university students in exploring the complexity of teaching.

This research can inform future studies, particularly those that are longitudinal, and involve following students through their pre-service teacher education into their professional teaching careers. Such research would contribute to the impact of having a deep understanding of positive social interaction and how it informs their professional teaching practice after their teacher education program. Therefore, there is value in tracking students into and beyond their teacher education program to analyze the ways in which their understanding, interpretation, and enactment of positive social interaction develops during their Teacher Education program and beyond graduation and induction.

Moreover, such research may enable how teachers’ enactment of positive social interaction influences student learning and student experiences in PE. Further, this study focused on positive social interaction, which is only one component of a meaningful experience. Therefore, an explorative study investigating how university students understand other features of a meaningful experience (e.g., improved motor competence, challenge, delight, and fun) would provide insights into the complexity of these features.

Through this research it was clear that acquiring a complex understanding of positive social interaction is not easy and takes an intentional and sustained effort from the teacher educator or groups of teacher educators in programs.

**Limitations**
The major limitations to this research study is: (a) the small sample size, (b) the subjective nature of the study, (c) misinterpretation of vocabulary, and (d) the extent of participant understanding I was able to access.

The relatively small sample size of this research study (10 participants, 5 participating in both the first and second interview) can affect the trustworthiness of the data collected. Due to the population this study was available to (20 university students), I concluded that I had enough participants to carry on with the research process and that the data collected would be reflective of the population since it provided the opportunity to collect rich data by being able to develop meaningful relationships with each participant (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). I am not attempting to generalize the results in this study across all university students, however, it is an attempt to shed light on the topic of positive social interaction and university students. I believe the sample size is adequate enough to do that, and brings attention to one of the ways to prioritize positive social interaction in PE teacher education programs.

The subjective nature of the study may call into question the validity of the findings presented by me as the researcher. As the sole researcher for this study, I heavily influence how the data is presented and the conclusions that I infer from the data. I recognize that I am not able to totally remove myself from the research process and approach it with total objectivity, thus my past experiences and worldview will inevitably affect the study’s outcomes. However, I have attempted to uphold my research methods and have been as transparent as possible when it comes to how the data was collected, the data analysis process, and how the findings of this study are grounded in the collected data.
Much of the data were collected through open interviews where the participants and I conversed about their understanding of positive social interaction and their past experiences. Even though we were both conversing in English, there is the chance that either I or the participant misinterpreted the meaning of words or understood certain vocabulary differently, opening the possibility to the collected data (e.g., participant transcripts) not reflecting their intended meaning. To minimize this risk, I utilized member checking with each participant, and each participant was able to reread, edit, and finally approve of their transcript for data analysis. However, this only minimizes the risk for misinterpretation and does not guarantee perfect accuracy.

In the interview process, I questioned the participants’ understanding of positive social interaction and sought to understand how they viewed it in the context of PE. However, due to the nature of interviews, it can be assumed that I was only able to fraction of their total understanding, due to factors such as: participants not being able to clearly communicate what they understand themselves, lack of verbal prompts to access specific areas of their understanding, lack of time, how participant personality affects how open participants were during the interviews (e.g., introverts versus extroverts), and that it would be a bold assumption to claim that I have accessed their entire understanding in a half hour interview. In order to try and overcome these challenges, I tried to make the participants as comfortable and familiar with the interview process as possible and intentionally tried to develop relationships and trust with participants during the time I spent in the practical components.

**Conclusion**
This research study sought to access the voices of university students and shed light on their perspectives of what positive social interaction means, looks like, and consists of, as well as how they plan to enact it in their future classrooms. Thus, I emphasized the importance of positive social interaction as part of a meaningful experience in PE and the need for university students to have a deep understanding of it, and how to promote it through their teaching practice. The findings from this demonstrated that: (a) university students demonstrated a superficial understanding of positive social interaction at the beginning of the formal team games course, (b) university students were more able to more clearly communicate their understanding of positive social interaction during the formal team games course, (c) university students suggested the formal team games course teacher educator’s teacher education practice fostered growth in their understanding of positive social interaction, (d) despite growth, university students exhibited gaps in their knowledge and understanding of positive social interaction at the end of the formal team games course.

This study found that in order for university students to develop a deeper understanding of positive social interaction, it takes an intentional effort from their teacher educator. Teacher educator practices that were found to foster growth in understanding were openly reflecting with university students, articulating the complexity of positive social interaction in PE, as well as preparing inclusive activities so that positive social interaction is both experienced as well as articulated.

Understanding how certain teacher educator practices can assist university students in acquiring a deeper understanding of positive social interaction is instrumental in preparing those individuals to be able to provide a meaningful PE experience to their
future students. Social interaction is one of the six features of a meaningful PE experience (Beni et al., 2017) and teacher educators can encourage university students to develop a deeper understanding of it as well as how to promote it in their future classrooms. Therefore, future teachers can aim to prioritize a meaningful PE experience for their students which has the potential to encourage a healthy active lifestyle and improve overall enjoyment in PE.

Although the research captures the thoughts and experiences of a small group of university students from Mountainview University who had the opportunity to experience a fairly innovative teaching framework that emphasizes positive social interaction when educating future physical educators, there are implications for how other teacher educators might aim to provide university students with experiences that enable deeper understandings of positive social interaction and strategies to enable them to be promoted in school PE.
References


Appendices

Appendix A

Letter of Invitation for One-on-One Interview

Fall Semester, 2017

Title of Study: Pre-Service Teachers’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience

Supervising Professor: Dr. Tim Fletcher, Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

Student Researcher: Caleb Chee, Master of Arts Student, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

I, Caleb Chee, student researcher from the Department of Kinesiology at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project titled “Pre-Service Teachers’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience.”

The purposes of this research project are to understand pre-service teachers’ perspective on positive social interaction as it relates to a meaningful physical education experience.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview with me (Caleb Chee) in which you will be asked to discuss your experiences and perspectives of physical education and the teaching of physical education, specifically how it relates to your understanding of positive social interaction. Participants will be selected on a first-come first-serve basis.

The expected duration of your participation is approximately 30 minutes (i.e. one interview near the beginning of the semester and one interview at the end of the semester).

This research and its findings offer the following benefits. First, the findings of this research will contribute to the pedagogy of a meaning-oriented approach in physical education teacher education, as well as to the literature on this topic. Second, the reflection an interview participant will be asked to engage in may benefit their development as pre-service teachers.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself vie email.

Thank you,
Supervising Professor:
Dr. Tim Fletcher
Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University
905-688-5550 ext. 6358
tfletcher@brocku.ca
Student Researcher:

Caleb Chee
cc10cu@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board (File: 15-119-Fletcher).
Appendix B

Informed Consent for One-on-One Interview

Project Title:
Pre-service Teachers’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience

Supervising Professor:
Dr. Tim Fletcher, Assistant Professor
Department of Kinesiology
Brock University
905-688-5550 ext. 6358
tfletcher@brocku.ca

Student Researcher:
Caleb Chee
cc10tu@brocku.ca

Invitation
You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purposes of this research project are to understand pre-service teachers’ understanding and interpretation of positive social interaction as part of a meaningful physical education experience.

What’s Involved
As a participant, you will be asked to engage in two one-on-one interviews with the student researcher in which you will be asked to discuss your experiences and perspectives of physical education and the teaching of physical education, specifically in relation to positive social interaction and meaningfulness. These interviews will be audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Participation will take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

As a participant, you will also be asked to bring an artifact produced by you (the participant) to the first interview with the student researcher. An artifact is anything such
as a photograph, object, or text. The artifact you are being asked to bring should reflect your current understanding of positive social interaction.

**Potential Benefits and Risks**

This research and its findings offer the following possible benefits. First, the findings of this research will contribute to the pedagogy of a meaning-oriented approach in physical education teacher education, as well as to the literature on this topic. Second, the reflective process you will be asked to engage in during this interview may benefit your development as a pre-service teacher/beginning coach.

There is a risk that you may feel obligated to participate in this research because the supervising professor is your KINE 4P00 course instructor. However, please be assured that you are in no way obligated to participate in this research. Your participation (or lack thereof) will not have any impact on your course grade, and your identity will be kept anonymous from the course instructor, who will only have access to de-identified data.

**Confidentiality**

All information you provide will be considered confidential; your name will not be in any way associated with the data collected in the study. Please note that with your permission, your anonymous quotations may be used in final reports of the research. Please note that no information will be provided that will render your quotations personally identifiable.

Data collected during this study will be stored in password-protected files on password-protected computers in locked offices on Brock University’s campus. Data will be kept only until the completion of the final report, after which time any hardcopy documents will be confidentially shredded and electronic files will be permanently erased.

Access to identified data will be restricted to the research assistant, while access to de-identified data will be restricted to the student researcher (Caleb Chee).

**Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty.

**Publication of Results**

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. If you wish to receive a final report of this research, please contact student researcher, Caleb Chee (see contact information above) and he will provide you with an electronic copy.

**Contact Information and Ethics Clearance**
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Caleb Chee, the student researcher for this project, using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (File: 15-119-FLETCHER). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Consent Form

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: __________________________________________________________________

Signature: ___________________________________________ Date: ___________
Appendix C

Letter of Invitation for Work Samples

Fall Semester, 2017

Title of Study: Pre-Service Teachers’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience

Supervising Professor: Dr. Tim Fletcher, Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

Student Researcher: Caleb Chee, Master of Arts Student, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University

I, Caleb Chee, student researcher from the Department of Kinesiology at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project titled “Pre-Service Teachers’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience.”

The purposes of this research project are to understand pre-service teachers’ perspective on positive social interaction as it relates to a meaningful physical education experience.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to indicate your willingness to have samples of some of the work you do in the KINE 4P00 course to be used as data for the project. Specifically, myself the student researcher, is asking if you are willing to have two types of samples of your work used:

- Exit slips: These are brief, informal, and anonymous responses to questions about your experiences in the course and labs.
- Lab assignments: These are formal parts of the course requirements for the KINE 4P00 course that you would complete on a weekly basis (Whether you choose to participate in the research or not)

I, Caleb Chee, will collect the work from the course instructor only after the grades for the course have been released by the Registrar’s Office. During the term the student researcher will removed appropriate students’ work from the collected exit slips and lab assignments only after they have been graded, photocopied, and returned to the course instructor. After the term, I will contact you to ask if you are still willing to have your responses used as data. If you are willing, your name and student number will be removed and any responses used as data would be anonymized. Your willingness or non-willingness to use your work samples as data for the project will in no way affect the way you are evaluated in this or any other course.

This research and its findings offer the following benefits. First, the findings of this research will contribute to the pedagogy of a meaning-oriented approach in physical education teacher education, as well as to the literature on this topic. Second, the reflection an interview participant will be asked to engage in may benefit their development as pre-service teachers.
If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact myself via email.

Thank you,

Supervising Professor:
Dr. Tim Fletcher
Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology, Brock University
905-688-5550 ext. 6358
tfletcher@brocku.ca

Student Researcher:
Caleb Chee
cc10cu@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University’s Research Ethics Board (File: 15-119-Fletcher).
Appendix D

Informed Consent Use for Work Samples

Project Title:
Pre-service Teachers’ Understanding and Interpretation of Social Interaction as Part of a Meaningful Physical Education Experience

Supervising Professor:
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Invitation

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purposes of this research project are to understand pre-service teachers’ understanding and interpretation of positive social interaction as part of a meaningful physical education experience.

What’s Involved

As a participant, you will be asked to indicate your willingness to have samples of some of the work you do in the KINE 4P00 course to be used as data for the project. Specifically, myself the student researcher, is asking if you are willing to have two types of samples of your work used:

- Exit slips: These are brief, informal, and anonymous responses to questions about your experiences in the course and labs.
- Lab assignments: These are formal parts of the course requirements for the KINE 4P00 course that you would complete on a weekly basis (Whether you choose to participate in the research or not)

I, Caleb Chee, will collect the work from the course instructor only after the grades for the course have been released by the Registrar’s Office. During the term the student researcher will removed appropriate students’ work from the collected exit slips and lab assignments only after they have been graded, photocopied, and returned to the course instructor. After the term, the research assistant will contact you to ask if you are still willing to have your responses used as data. If you are willing, your name and student number will be removed and any responses used as data would be anonymized. Your willingness or non-willingness to use your work samples as data for the project will in no way affect the way you are evaluated in this or any other course.
Potential Benefits and Risks

This research and its findings offer the following possible benefits. First, the findings of this research will contribute to the pedagogy of a meaning-oriented approach in physical education teacher education, as well as to the literature on this topic. Second, the reflective process you will be asked to engage in during this interview may benefit your development as a pre-service teacher/beginning coach.

There is a risk that you may feel obligated to participate in this research because the supervising professor is your KINE 4P00 course instructor. However, please be assured that you are in no way obligated to participate in this research. Your participation (or lack thereof) will not have any impact on your course grade, and your identity will be kept anonymous from the course instructor, who will only have access to de-identified data.

Confidentiality

All information you provide will be considered confidential; your name will not be in any way associated with the data collected in the study. Please note that with your permission, your anonymous quotations may be used in final reports of the research. Please note that no information will be provided that will render your quotations personally identifiable.

Data collected during this study will be stored in password-protected files on password-protected computers in locked offices on Brock University’s campus. Data will be kept only until the completion of the final report, after which time any hardcopy documents will be confidentially shredded and electronic files will be permanently erased.

Access to identified data will be restricted to the research assistant, while access to de-identified data will be restricted to the student researcher (Caleb Chee).

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty.

Publication of Results

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. If you wish to receive a final report of this research, please contact student researcher, Caleb Chee (see contact information above) and he will provide you with an electronic copy.

Contact Information and Ethics Clearance

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Caleb Chee, the student researcher for this project, using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the
Research Ethics Board at Brock University (File: 15-119-FLETCHER). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Consent Form

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____________________________________________________________

Signature: _______________________________ Date: ___________
Appendix E

Unstructured Interview #1 Guide

**NOTE:** Participant should bring an artifact to the interview that, in their own view, represents positive social interaction.

**Intro:**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research. The interview will take approximately 30 mins. You should feel free to skip over, come back to, or change your answer to any question at any time during the interview. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any references to institutions such as schools, school boards, or universities will also be replaced with a pseudonym. You will be provided with a typed transcript of this interview several weeks after it is completed and you are free to change any responses as you see fit. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or my responsibilities as a researcher?

**Guiding Questions**

1. Tell me about your background in physical activity, sport, coaching, how does physical activity fit into your life?

2. Tell me about your artifact and why you brought it? What does it mean to you?

3. Did you have meaningful physical activity or physical education experiences? What made them meaningful?

4. Does positive social interaction contribute to meaningful physical education experience?

5. Positive social interaction is such a broad term, can you help me understand what it means to you?

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is social interaction to you in a physical education setting and why?
Appendix F

Unstructured Interview #2 Guide

Intro:
Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this research. The interview will take approximately 30 mins. You should feel free to skip over, come back to, or change your answer to any question at any time during the interview. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any references to institutions such as schools, school boards, or universities will also be replaced with a pseudonym. You will be provided with a typed transcript of this interview several weeks after it is completed and you are free to change any responses as you see fit. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant, or my responsibilities as a researcher?

Guiding Questions
1. Did you have meaningful physical activity or physical education experiences? What made them meaningful?
   a. Does positive social interaction contribute to meaningful physical education experience?

2. Two part question on their current understanding of positive social interaction.
   a. Positive social interaction is such a broad term, in 1 – 5 keywords (see Appendix G), can you help me understand what it means to you?
   b. Previously you mentioned x, y, z, as important components of positive social interaction, has your understanding of positive social interaction changed at all?

3. Here are my words (show list), do any of these mean anything to you?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is social interaction to you in a physical education setting and why?

5. How do you see yourself promoting your understanding of positive social interaction in your future classroom or physical education setting?
   a. Are the any specific teaching strategies or approaches that you personally think will apply? (sports education, TFfU, TPSR)
   b. What would you like your students to say at the end of your PE lesson/sport session?
## Appendix G

### Positive Social Interaction Keywords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe (no fear of ridicule)</td>
<td>Allender et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Allender et al. 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Light, Harvey, Memmert, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for differences</td>
<td>Barker, Quennerstedt, &amp; Annerstedt, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Strengths</td>
<td>Barker, Quennerstedt. &amp; Annerstedt, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to share ideas</td>
<td>Azzarito &amp; Ennis, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Allender et al. 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Lerner, Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, Phelps, Gestsdottir, … Von Eye, 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>Connell, Spencer, &amp; Aber, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>Goodenow, 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring Community</td>
<td>Battistich, Solomon, Watson &amp; Schaps, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Baker, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
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