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**“I can work with that, but I know not
everyone can.”**

A Qualitative Study on Adolescents’ Experiences in Physical Education Class

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Foreword

The process of writing this final thesis for my master's program in public health science has been an interesting and rewarding journey. I have been driven by a strong interest for the topic as well as by a process that has been fulfilling on many levels.

Most of what I have learned during this thesis project is due to my very knowledgeable and encouraging advisor, Professor Knut Løndal of the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA). I have felt that I have been able to ask any questions, no matter how big or small, and I have always gotten very clear and constructive answers and advice from you. As a result, I feel that I have learned a lot through this master's project. Thank you!

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Abstract

Background: Physical activity (PA) has a well-documented impact on peoples' health and well-being, and elevating the physical activity levels in the population has been an important objective for the public health community. Despite this, only about 20% of the United States population is meeting the PA guidelines developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in 2008. On a global scale, more than 80% of adolescents have insufficient PA levels. Schools have been suggested for promoting active lifestyles. The steep decline in PA levels between the age of 13 and 18 underpins the importance of intervening at an early age.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore adolescents' experiences with PE class. The study further aimed to answer the question of what degree it is likely that PE plays a role in elevating PA levels and, thereby, having a health-promoting function.

Methodology: Semi-structured life-world interviews with 8 seventh graders in Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A., were used for data collection. School documents, especially the PE standards from the students' school district, provided background information for the study.

Results: The study found that the students' experiences in PE class varied along the lines of whether or not they were involved in organized team sports in their free time. With minor exceptions, it was found that those students who have skills in team sports had good or very good experiences in PE class while those who lack such skills were either neutral or negative toward PE class. This reflects a strong sports discourse found in PE. The results showed that the students who lacked skills in team sports experienced minimal overall competence in PE class. The sports-skilled students experienced competence, but not as a result of competence support from the teachers. None of the students experienced relatedness with the teachers, but most students experienced some relatedness with other students. There was no evidence of any autonomy support for any of the students in PE class. It was also found that many of the students seemed to experience situations in PE class where their feelings of self-worth were threatened.

Conclusion: The likelihood that a student in the sample will have integrated and sustainable motivation for PE in its current form seemed to depend heavily on whether the student belongs to the sport-skilled or "non" – sport-skilled group. While the sport-skilled students already had intrinsic or otherwise integrated motivation for PE, the likelihood that the non – sport-skilled

students will gain such forms of sustainable motivation for PE was found to be slim. More research is needed to establish the consequences of low area-specific self-image found among students in PE class, as well as potential consequences for students' later choices connected to PA and healthy lifestyles.

Sammendrag

Bakgrunn: Fysisk aktivitet (FA) har vel-dokumenterte konsekvenser for menneskers helse og velvære, og heving av FA nivået i befolkningen har vært en viktig målsetning for folkehelsearbeid over flere tiår. Paa tross av dette, saa er det kun 20% av befolkningen i USA som oppfyller anbefalingene for FA som ble utviklet av U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) i 2008. Hele 80% av den globale befolkningen har utilstrekkelig FA nivået. Skoler har blitt foreslått som en aktuell arena for aa promotere aktiv livsstil. Den bratte nedgangen i aktivitetsnivaa som statistisk viser seg fra 13 til 18 aaralderen, understreker betydningen av tidlig intervensjon.

Hensikt: Hensikten med denne studien var aa undersøke ungdommers erfaringer med kroppsoeningsfaget (KOF). Studiet tok videre sikte paa aa besvare sporsmaalet om i hvilken grad det er sannsynlig at KOF har betydning i forhold til aa heve det fysiske aktivitetsnivaaet, og dermed ha en helsepromoterende funksjon.

Metode: For datainnsamling ble det gjennomfoert semistrukturerte livsverdensintervju med 8 syvendeklassinger (13 aaringer) i Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A. Skoledokumenter, spesielt maalsettingsdokument for KOF i ungdommenes skoledistrikt ble brukt som bakgrunns informasjon for studiet.

Resultat: Det ble funnet at ungdommenes erfaringer i KOF var delte avhengig av hvorvidt de drev med organisert lag-idrett i fritiden. Med smaas unntak ble det funnet at de elevene som hadde ferdigheter i lag-idrett likte seg godt eller veldig godt i KOF, mens de som ikke hadde slike ferdigheter enten var noeytrale, eller mislikte seg i KOF. Dette reflekterer en sterk sports diskurs funnet i KOF. Resultatene viste at de elevene som manglet ferdigheter i lag-idrett opplevde minimal kompetansestøtte totalt sett i KOF. De elevene som hadde ferdigheter i lag-sport opplevde kompetanse, men ikke som resultat av kompetansestøtte fra laererne. Ingen av elevene opplevde noe videre tilknytning til laererne, men de fleste elevene opplevde noen grad av tilknytning til andre elever. Det ble i studien ikke funnet noe tegn til at elevene opplevde autonomi i KOF. Det ble videre funnet at mange av elevene saa ut til aa oppleve at deres selvverd var truet i KOF.

Konklusjon: Sannsynligheten for at en elev vil ha en integrert og vedvarende motivasjon for KOF i sin naavaerende form var i denne studien avhengig av hvorvidt eleven tilhører gruppen med idrettferdigheter eller gruppen uten idrettsferdigheter. Mens de elevene med ferdigheter i lagsport allerede hadde intrinsisk motivasjon eller annen form for integrert motivasjon for KOF, saa ble det funnet at sansynligheten for at elevene uten ferdigheter i lagsport skulle komme til aa oppnaa noen form for integrert og vedvarende motivasjon for KOF var svaert liten. Mere forskning er noedvendig for aa kartlegge konsekvensene av lav omraade-spesifikk selvoppfatning i KOF for elevens senere valg knyttet til PA og sunn livsstil.

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1. Introduction

The focus in this study is the experiences of adolescents with physical activity (PA) in the context of physical education (PE) class. This study was conducted with informants in the seventh grade from the state of Wisconsin in the United States of America.

In our modern society, PA is no longer a “necessary” part of most people’s lives; hence, we are dependent on motivation and inner resources in order to develop and maintain lifestyles with activity levels conducive to health. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (2017a, para. 1). This definition from 1946 was a big step in the right direction as it broadened the term *health* from strictly referring to absence of disease and included the importance of well-being in regards to all the three domains of health: physical, mental, and social. However, WHO’s definition has been criticized, as it unrealistically calls for complete well-being and, therefore, classifies most people as not healthy (Huber, 2010). An improvement was seen in WHO’s Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, from 1986, where people’s resources and capacities are brought into the definition, and where health is seen as a resource for daily life (WHO, 2017b). The charter further states that the responsibility for health promotion is not the health sector’s alone, but needs to be shared across most sectors in society. In the face of chronic disease being on the rise throughout the world, Huber (2010) saw the need for yet a new definition of health. At a Dutch conference in 2009, Huber and colleagues agreed on a more dynamic definition and proposed that health is “the ability to adapt and to self-manage” (Huber, 2010, para. 10).

We have increasing knowledge about the link between bodily movement and a number of health indicators, including well-being (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2016s; Adair, Gordon-Larsen, Du, Zhang, & Popkin, 2014; Booth, Roberts & Laye, 2012; Laskowski, 2012). Despite this, many people live sedentary lives or lives without sufficient activity levels. This is particularly true for adolescents, ages 12-18, and older (Ntoumanis, 2005). There is no evidence in research to support the notion that it is a public health responsibility to promote high levels of physical exhaustion or athleticism. Rather, there are good reasons to encourage a certain level of PA on a regular basis and to avoid a sedentary lifestyle (DHHS, 2016c; Adair et al., 2014; Booth et al., 2012; Koster et al., 2012). Considering the well-known adverse effects of inactivity, the move toward increasing PA levels in the general

public is a worthwhile effort. However, this effort has been made over many decades in western societies without satisfying results (Troiano, Berrigan, & Dodd, 2008).

In this regard, many have emphasized the importance of the environments we create for our youngsters during their formative years (Abildsnes, Stea, Berntsen, Omfjord, & Rohde, 2015; Liukkonen, Barkoukis, Watt, & Jaakola, 2010). One arena with potential for a considerable impact on adolescents' attitudes toward PA is the school setting (Salmon & Lee, 2008). However, very little research has been done on how students' experiences in and motivation for PE class transfers to motivation for general PA (Standage, Gillison, Ntoumanis, & Treasure, 2012). Standage et al. (2012) attempted to close this research gap in a quantitative study and found that such transfer of motivation from PE class to motivation for general PA indeed exists, but that it depends on a student's type of motivation for PE, which further depends on processes in PE class and on how PE is experienced by the student.

Although there has been research done on the relation between schools' motivation-support and students' motivation for PE, most of this research has used quantitative methods (see 2.7 Research on the Topic). In order to understand this relationship, it is important to talk with students and to ask them to share their experiences with us. This is, therefore, what this study aims to do. Based on statistics that show a steep decline in PA levels starting around the age of 13 (Ntoumanis, 2005), which is seventh grade age in the United States, this age group was chosen for this study.

In the following, I will first state the research question before I provide background information on the health relevance of PA as well as statistics on PA on a population level, with emphasis on the U.S. I will further present previous research on the topic of adolescents' experiences in PE class before I give a brief summary of the school district's PE standards. I will then outline the theoretical frameworks and concepts that will be used in the discussion of the findings. The methods used in the study, including ethical considerations in conducting the study, will be thoroughly described before the study's results are presented. Finally, the findings will be discussed within the context of the school district documents, previous research, and the chosen theoretical frameworks.

Through this study, I am hoping to provide insight into the PE and PA experiences of adolescents. It is my hope that this can help guide us in future work to create school environments where content and context, both emotional and physical, are conducive to

children's and adolescents' health and well-being while, at the same time, inspire them to choose an active lifestyle that carries into adulthood.

1.1 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to better understand how adolescents experience PE class. In order to gain insight on this topic, I seek answers to the following questions:

Overall question:

How do seventh-grade students in Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A., experience physical education class in the public-school setting?

Based on the discussion of the adolescents in my samples, and their experiences in PE class, I seek to answer the additional question, as follows:

Secondary question:

To what degree does it seem likely that PE plays a role in elevating PA levels and, thereby, having a health-promoting function?

2. Background

This chapter will start with documentation on the association between PA and health. I will then provide information on the existing PA guidelines and how these guidelines are being met, as well as what goals that have been set for activity levels in the population and potential and possible arenas for promotion of PA. Thereafter follows an overview of the school districts' objectives in regards to health and PE before previous research on the topic is being presented.

2.1 Physical Activity and Health

WHO defines PA as “any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that require energy expenditure- including activity undertaken while working, playing, carrying out household chores, travelling and engaging in recreational pursuits” (2016c, para. 2). PA is also commonly described in terms of the four dimensions: activity type, duration, frequency and intensity (Ekelund, 2002).

The link between even small amounts of PA and positive health outcomes have been thoroughly studied and well documented (DHHS, 2016c; Adair et al., 2014; Booth et al., 2012). Hence, PA has been shown to have large positive effects on health and well- being, both short and long term. There is evidence that regular PA reduces the risk of diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016a). The risk of high blood pressure, as well as high cholesterol levels, is also found to be reduced by an active lifestyle (CDC, 2016a). Furthermore, a sufficient PA level is a key factor in weight regulation and obesity prevention (Laskowski, 2012). Furthermore, muscular/skeletal health and mental health has shown to be positively impacted by an active lifestyle (CDC, 2016d). The DHHS found that increasing health benefits were associated with increasing amounts of PA, but that going from being inactive to including even a low level of PA represents a change with the largest potential for risk reduction in relation to premature death (DHHS, 2016b). The effect of sedentary behavior independent of moderate-to-vigorous PA has also been studied. Koster et al. (2012) conducted a study in the U.S. and found an association between objectively measured sedentary time and all-cause mortality, regardless of time spent on activities of moderate-to-vigorous intensity.

2.2 Recommendations for PA

The DHHS developed the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (2016a), which are in line with those developed by WHO (2016a). The guidelines do contain some specific recommendations for frequency, intensity, and duration for PA. However, the total amount, and not the specific components, is more important for gaining health benefits (DHHS, 2016a). In short, according to the PA guidelines, one hour or more of PA each day is recommended for children and adolescents (age 6-17). The DHHS suggests a combination of aerobic, muscle-strength, and bone-strength activities, but it is emphasized that age appropriate activities should be chosen (2016c). The recommendations for adults are to do aerobic PA of moderate intensity for at least 150 minutes a week, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous intensity, or a combination of the two (CDC, 2016b).

2.3 Meeting the Guidelines

On a global scale, more than 80% of adolescents have an insufficient level of PA, and 25% of the adult population also does not meet the recommendations for PA (DHHS, 2016f). Men are generally more active than women. Furthermore, the prevalence of insufficient PA levels is nearly double in wealthy countries compared to poor countries (WHO, 2016b). In the U.S., less than 40 % of adults are active on a regular basis, and as much as 25% are inactive (CDC, 2016c). Only about 20% of the U.S. population is meeting the PA guidelines (CDC, 2016a). The transition from child to adolescence represents a period in life that shows quite a dramatic negative change in activity levels. The largest drop in PA is seen between the ages of 13 and 18 years (Sallis, Prochaska & Taylor, 2000). Statistics further show that the activity levels in the U.S. are not evenly distributed across different groups and segments of the population (CDC, 2016c). White adults have a higher adherence to the PA guidelines compared to blacks and Hispanics; the more educated have a higher adherence than less educated; the “not poor” have a higher adherence than the poor; and, finally, men and younger adults have a higher adherence to the PA guidelines than women and older adults.

2.4 Goals for the Future

The DHHS’s Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion set a goal in 2013 to reach a 20.1% PA adherence level among the adult population by 2020 (2016e). This goal has already

been met, though barely. Although a modest ambition, this is a step in the right direction and on track for meeting the WHO goal of a 10% reduction in insufficient PA by 2025 (WHO, 2106a). The U.S. 2020 goal, which came out of the Healthy People 2020 Project, has newly included policy objectives for increased PA among children in childcare settings and schools in the U.S. (DHHS, 2016f). In the effort to improve health in the population, the Healthy People 2020 Project is guided by the overreaching goal of health equity with focus on social determinants for health.

2.5 Promoting PA

Many arenas, such as communities, worksites, healthcare settings, and schools, have been suggested for promoting more active lifestyles (CDC, 2016a). Considering that schools reach out to all children between 6 and 16, combined with the large amount of time spent on the school grounds, the potential impact of schools and teachers on the students becomes clear (Solmon & Lee, 2008). Furthermore, those early years are formative because habits get established (Abildsnes et al., 2015; Liukkonen et al., 2010). The fact that we statistically see a steep decline in PA levels between the age of 13 and 18 underpins the importance of intervening at an early age (Ntoumanis, 2005).

The CDC has pointed to the importance of school PE, in particular, as an arena for reaching the goal of more PA among young people (CDC, 2015; Ntoumanis, 2005). In addition to having more immediate positive effects on adolescent's well-being and health, it is well documented that the level of activity as a young person impacts health as an adult. This happens both directly, by preventing risk factors for chronic diseases from developing (DHHS, 2016a), and indirectly because health behaviors tend to carry into adulthood (Myer et al., 2014).

2.6 Documents From the School District

In this section, I will first provide information about the theoretical perspective I drew on when reading the school documents. Following this, I outline the strategic framework and PE standards from the students' school district.

2.6.1 Reading of the documents; my theoretical perspective

I will draw on Mik-Meyer and her theoretical perspective in regards to the reading and presentation of the school district's strategic framework and their PE standards (2005). Mik-

Meyer draws attention to three aspects of particular importance of attention in reading of documents. First, she points out the significance of the context or institution where the document was created, including a document's relation to other documents, and the context where the document is being read. When I read the strategic framework and the standards for physical education from the schools of the students in the study, I am aware that I read them specifically in the context of writing this research report. My intention to explore adolescents' experiences with PA and PE, as well as my own preconception of the topic, will, therefore, color how I read the standards and what parts of the standards I select for my summary of the standards. Secondly, Mik-Meyer suggests an examination of how social agents apply the information in the document in different situations. My insight in how the teachers and school leaders apply the standards is only accessible to me in an indirect and limited way through my informants. This is important for the reader of this report and me to keep in mind. Finally, Mik-Meyer empathizes the impact that structure and format can have on how people interpret a document. The typical format of the school district's documents has likely contributed to my reading of the documents as being a factual reflection on the agreed-upon objectives for PE. The format might also have led me to read the documents as if the written objectives, in fact, are being implemented in the classrooms throughout the school district. In the following, I call for awareness that such conclusions about factuality cannot automatically be drawn.

2.6.2 Strategic framework and PE standards from the school district

The overall vision for the school district attended by the participants of this study is that “every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student to graduate from high school ready for college, career and community” (Madison Metropolitan School District [MMSD], 2016, p. 4). Nine outcomes are further listed of which the most relevant outcome for this study is called “Wellness”:

Our graduates can self-regulate, monitoring and adapting their behaviors, emotions, and thoughts to the demands of a particular situation. They have strategies for coping with stressful situations and know when to ask for support. Our graduates know how to make choices that promote physical, mental, and emotional health and safety, helping them to be joyful and fulfilled (MMSD, 2016, p. 5).

The district operates with eleven curriculum and instruction content areas, and one of them is physical education and health. (MMSD, 2017b). The vision for this content area is as follows:

The Physical Education & Health department supports high-quality, standards-based curriculum and instruction so that all students in the Madison Metropolitan School District are empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy lifestyle choices to enhance their overall quality well being. Our goal is for all students to become intrinsically motivated to pursue and maintain a lifelong, healthy and active lifestyle. (MMSD, 2017b, para. 1)

The physical education and health content area is divided into two sub-sets: physical education and health education. Separate standards are subsequently developed for both sub-sets. The front page of the PE standards documents predominantly features sports equipment, such as a football, a baseball, golf clubs, and a tennis racquet. In the process of developing the PE standards, the school district drew heavily on the work done by their colleagues at the state and national levels (MMSD, 2008). The PE standards document begins by defining a physically educated person:

A physically educated person is one who: Has learned skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities. Is physically fit. Participates regularly in physical activity. Knows the implications of and the benefits from involvement in physical activities. Values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle. (MMSD, 2008, p. 3)

Then follows a list of the intentions that support the overall purpose of PE:

The purpose of physical education is to: Involve the learner in a wide range of movement, knowledge, and skill-building experiences. Contribute to the learner's growing value system and his/her development of responsible attitudes and behavior essential to a healthy lifestyle. Promote understanding and appreciation for differences among people in physical activity settings. Develop the habit of choosing to regularly participate in physical activity as part of a health-enhancing personal fitness plan. Expand options for wise use of leisure time (MMSD, 2008, p. 3)

Characteristics of PE based on certain beliefs among physical educators are subsequently listed and will be summarized in the following: PE curriculum must be developmentally appropriate and implemented with careful attention to the individual learner who is considered unique. Learners need to be made responsible for decision making in regards to their own PA involvement by becoming increasingly independent learners. The final characteristics of a desired PE environment are one in where each learner can grow in “self-esteem, respect for, and an understanding of others” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4).

The PE Standards and the teaching and learning developed from them address six goals:

- “1. Achieve his/her highest level of competency in movement skills” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). This is related to individual and team sports, including offensive and defensive strategies, and dance.
- “2. Understand and apply movement concepts and principles to the learning and development of movement skills” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4).
- “3. Understand the cost and benefits of participating regularly in health enhancing physical activities” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). This includes choosing and participating in a variety of PA that promote fitness goals.
- “4. Demonstrate responsible personal and social behavior in physical activity settings” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). This includes social skills and problem solving as well as practicing “skills repetitively to improve performance” or engaging in “activity to improve health status without having to be reminded to stay on task” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4).
- “5. Understand and learn to respect differences among people in physical activity settings” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). This includes identifying “his/her personal strengths and weaknesses and how these contribute to the physical activity in which he/she is engaged” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4).
- “ 6. Understand that physical activity provides an opportunity for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction” (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). This includes identifying and engaging in PA outside the PE setting, have positive feelings toward PA while knowing the importance of communicating in dual and team sports and striving for success.

From the standards document we can further read that the PE curriculum in middle school has a focus on skills in individual and team sports: “Increasingly complex and integrated movement patterns are presented that focus on individual and team sports skills, dance, and gymnastics” (MMSD, 2008, p. 5). This builds on fundamental movement skills learned in elementary school. The emphasis is on exploration through a diverse curriculum, rather than on “developing high level of specialized skills” (MMSD, 2008, p. 5). There are also opportunities to “integrate Health Education, Environmental Education, and Education for Employment into the Physical Education curriculum” (MMSD, 2008, p. 5). It is considered a large benefit to avoid the “perception that PE is an ‘academically soft’ area of study” (MMSD, 2008, p. 5).

2.7 Research on the Topic

It appears that previous research on youths’ experience of school PE and its role as a determinant of PA later in life has focused mainly on the formal PE class setting. After a

thorough search in large international databases, I found that the majority of the studies were conducted in Europe (mostly the northern part); relevant studies on the topic from the U.S. were scarce. A vast majority of the studies had used qualitative methods to answer their research questions. Many of the studies had looked at children's and adolescents' perception of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which are constructs of self-determination theory (SDT), in relation to their experience of and attitude toward PA and PE. A large number of the studies had examined the significance of children's participation in organized sports for those experiences. Also, gender differences were explored in many of the studies.

2.7.1 Quantitative research

One study looked at secondary school students in Estonia and how their perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were connected to their participation in sports outside of school (Vira & Koka, 2012). The researchers here found that boys (not girls) involved in extracurricular sports perceived a significantly higher autonomy and relatedness support from their teachers than did their fellow students without this sports experience. Children with high sports involvement, regardless of gender, both had higher perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

In another quantitative study, researchers from Finland used both SDT and achievement goal theory as they attempted to document how the motivational climate in school PE impacted sixth-grade students' affects and behaviors (Liukkonen et al., 2010). Looking at enjoyment as an outcome, Liukkonen et al. (2010) found that a climate characterized by task involvement, autonomy, and social relatedness was a predictor for enjoyment while an ego-involving climate showed a negative association. They further found that high levels of anxiety were related to an ego-involving climate. Despite the fact that they found both ego and task-involving climate to trigger students' effort in PE classes, the researchers suggested that the effort would not necessarily be equally sustainable in the two climate settings. This study found no differences between genders in regards to the impact of the motivational climate in PE classes.

Safvenbom, Haugen and Bulie (2014) were also interested in children's degree of enjoyment in PE and found it to be generally high (in Norway), which is in line with results from previous research. However, since this study included a wider age range of children (13- 19 years), Safvenbom et al. were able to also show a steep decline in attitudes from middle school to high school that was even larger for girls than for boys. A second objective of this study was to

determine predictors for self-motivated participation in PE. An interesting discovery was that involvement in unorganized sports did not at all carry over to self-determined motivation in PE while organized sports participation did. Among the children involved in organized sports, Safvenbom et al. found no gender difference. However, they did find a gender difference among the children who were not involved in organized sports. Girls in this group had significantly lower self-determined motivation compared to boys in the same category. According to the authors, these findings confirm previous research and indicate a dominant “sports discourse” in PE.

A Japanese study of middle school students seems to implicitly confirm the notion of a sports discourse in PE (Ishii & Osaka, 2010). Ishii and Osaka found that children with a low level of competency in sports experienced high level of stress in PE. Ishii and Osaka’s recommendations include encouraging students to improve their sport skills outside school in order to reduce stress in PE class.

Through a longitudinal study conducted in Norway, Kjoenniksen, Fjoertoft, and Wold (2009) studied young adults’ current attitudes toward PA and how those attitudes related to organized sports participation and attitudes toward PE in their youth. In this sample, participation in organized youth sports was the strongest predictor for current PA levels among men. For women, it was their PE experiences that had the strongest influence on the degree to which they had an active lifestyle later.

Standage, Gillison, Ntoumanis, and Treasure (2012) used a prospective design as they looked at how health-related quality of life, physical self-concept, and measured activity levels were impacted by perceptions of autonomy support from the PE teacher. Autonomy support from the teacher in the PE setting positively predicted satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. The researchers further found that a feeling of competence predicted physical self-concept while a feeling of relatedness predicted health-related quality of life. The students’ autonomous motivation for PE was positively predicted by both autonomy and competence, which subsequently predicted autonomous motivation towards exercise. Such autonomous motivation for exercise again predicted both measured activity levels and health-related quality of life and physical self-concept.

2.7.2 Qualitative research

In order to give children a voice, Lewis (2014) conducted a qualitative study in which she

researched ninth graders' experience of PE through semi-structured interviews. Using the SDT constructs, Lewis found that many ninth graders disliked PE due to lack of control. Many of her interviewees referred to controlling teacher behavior, but also to little variety in activities during PE class. It is noteworthy that, among those with low motivation for PE, many were active children but did not necessarily have skills in traditional team sports. Through interviews with the least motivated children, Lewis (2014) found that these students "leave feeling embarrassed or humiliated and future participation is reluctant compliance rather than positive engagement" (para. 28). It should be noted that none of the students who rated themselves as three or lower on a competence scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest) during the selection process were willing to be interviewed.

Narrative interviews in Portugal were used by Martins, Marques and y Carreiro da Costa (2015) in their search for predictors for active and passive lifestyles among adolescents. They found that many factors related to the adolescents' activity levels but that attitudes toward PA and PE emerged as strong determinants for PA. The differences in the children's attitudes to the subject became larger over time. Those who liked PE from the beginning grew to like it even better while children who had started out not enjoying PE class liked PE less and less over the years.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical frameworks that I have chosen based on their relevance for the discussion of the findings in this study. As I was interested in the adolescents' experiences in PE class, and how these experiences might translate into motivation for PA in general, I had a priori chosen to use the *self-determination theory* (SDT). During the collection and analysis of the data, I discovered interesting phenomena that I found meaningful to bring in to the discussion. These phenomena have to do with the students' "self-image" and their feelings of "self-worth" in relation to their experiences in PE class. I, therefore, decided to bring in theoretical concepts from self-image theory. I have mainly drawn on concepts from the *self-evaluation approach*, which is derived from Mead's *social interactionism*, but also somewhat from the *outcome-expectation approach*, which is derived from Bandura's *social cognitive theory*.

3.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Ryan and Deci's SDT (2000) is a framework for the analysis of how contextual factors and people's experiences of the context impacts people's motivation for behavior. In regards to how people's motivation for a certain behavior is formed and maintained, SDT is particularly strong in the way it incorporates psychological needs of the individuals, as well as the significance of contexts. SDT distinguishes between two main categories of motivation: *intrinsic motivation* and *extrinsic motivation* (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The social context plays a crucial role in both cases. The causes and environmental impacts on a-motivation is also included in the SDT framework.

In the following I will give an outline of SDT as the theory has been applied to physical activity (Ryan et al., 2009). SDT in its generic form is meant to apply to all areas where behavior and motivation for behavior is involved.

3.1.1 Intrinsic motivation

To the degree that people are engaged in PA because the activities are experienced as fun and enjoyable, this is considered intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2009). Young children are usually intrinsically motivated to be physically active. However, based on what is known about declining activity levels among youths starting around age 13 (Troiana et al., 2008), this form of motivation seems to taper throughout adolescence. SDT does not focus on the examination of

reasons for intrinsic motivation as that belongs to other fields of study. However, a sub-theory of SDT, *cognitive evaluation theory*, looks at factors that facilitate and diminish intrinsic motivation for behavior. Cognitive evaluation theory suggests that a person's feeling of autonomy and competence in a particular situation will impact whether a person remains intrinsically motivated, or not, for the behavior in question. The theory emphasizes, however, that feeling of competence will only facilitate intrinsic motivation when the person also experiences autonomy.

3.1.2 Extrinsic motivation

When a person is motivated for a certain activity for reasons other than the inherent enjoyment or pleasure of the activity itself, she is said to be extrinsically motivated (Ryan et al., 2009). In the area of PA, people are often motivated by a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic motives. However, to the degree that the desired outcome lies outside the activity itself, the person is extrinsically motivated. According to a second sub theory of SDT, *organismic integration theory*, extrinsic motivation is a complex term that includes four different types of behavior regulation. Accordingly, there are four sub-categories on a continuum depending on to what extent the behavior in question is autonomous or, in other words, integrated to the self. When the behavior is solely contingent on externally controlled rewards or punishments, this is called *external regulation*. *Introjected regulation* is also a form of controlled behavior, but here the person's motivation is based on internal rewards. In the last two regulation forms, the behavior is autonomous to some degree. *Identified regulation* refers to a situation where the person identifies or values the behavior, and *integrated regulation* is the most autonomous regulation with a high degree of self-endorsement for the behavior. According to organismic integrated theory, internalization is more likely to occur in a social environment that supports the person's feeling of relatedness and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Also, an autonomy supportive context facilitates internalization of an external goal, but autonomy support also has the additional potential for integration. For a social environment to be able to support autonomy, it needs to also be supportive of both competence and relatedness. Applied to PA, the more integrated and autonomous the behavior is, the more likely it is that the behavior (activity) will be experienced as positive, and the better the chance is that a person will stay with the activity regardless of circumstances (Ryan et al., 2009).

3.1.3 A-motivation

In the case of a-motivation, the person has absolutely no motivation for the activity, neither intrinsically nor extrinsically. There can be different reasons for a-motivation, and motivational intervention may be different according to the person's particular situation.

3.1.4 Basic psychological needs

SDT is further concerned with factors in the environment that are likely to facilitate behavior per se, as well as factors causing more integrated and autonomous behavior (Ryan et al., 2009). According to yet another sub-theory called the *basic psychological needs theory*, all people have three basic psychological needs that must be met in order to experience integrated motivation, as well as for experiencing overall well-being. First, a person needs to have a feeling of competence that includes both a minimum of actual ability to carry out an activity and also a sense that people in the environment see you as being competent. Secondly, a person needs to feel a certain degree of autonomy, or self-regulation, in relation to the activity. The last requirement, according to the basic psychological needs theory, is for the person to feel relatedness to other people in the context of the activity. Such relatedness is crucial for well-being and integrity and occurs when the person feels included and cared for. To summarize, the basic psychological needs theory suggests that an environment that supports competence, autonomy and relatedness will contribute to the experience of joy as well as facilitate internalized motivation. Such a needs-supporting environment will, therefore, lead to a larger degree of persistence for the behavior.

3.2 The Significance of Self-image

The term *self-image* is multi-faceted and has been given different meanings in literature. I will use Skaalvik's definition of self-image in the following presentation (2006). Hence, self-image will be defined as: "All perceptions, self-evaluations, expectations, beliefs or knowledge that a person has of herself" (Skaalvik, 2006, p. 66, my translation). It is assumed in the definition that the person has conscious access to this knowledge about herself but that a particular piece of the self-knowledge only will be brought to consciousness in situations where this is applicable. There is a close relation between self-image and people's feeling of self-worth and self-acceptance, and further between self-worth and mental health and well-being (Skaalvik, 2006). I will use a definition of self-worth that is used by many within the self-evaluation

tradition who, by self-worth, mean a “person’s acceptance of, and overall respect for himself” (E.Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013, pp. 90-91, my translation). In addition to the significance of self-image on self-worth, and subsequently on mental health and well-being, a person’s self-image has, according to Rosenberg, importance also because of its impact on behavior (cited in E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Or in other words, people act according to their “implicit or explicit notion about what kind of person he/she is” (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013, p. 79, my translation). Hence, the determining factor for behavior is not necessarily the actual features of the person, but rather how the person has come to perceive him or herself (Skaalvik, 2006).

In addition to a person’s general self-image, his self-image in a specific area is also of large importance as it has consequences for the person’s choice of “activities, motivation, goal setting, effort, endurance, strategies, and level of achievement” (Skaalvik, 2006, p. 71, my translation). A person who has low self-image in a specific area will, according to research, experience higher levels of anxiety and stress in a situation of learning or performing. The reason for this, applied to a school setting, is that the student with low self-image will anticipate failure in a situation that is regarded as important. Subsequently, this will likely threaten their feeling of self-worth. Because people have an inherent need to protect their self-worth, they will look for strategies to achieve such protection (Skaalvik, 2006). Depending on the situation, they may try to either hide by not seeking help or come up with excuses to explain their failures. Research suggests that results from effort are perceived as a part of the self in cases where the person has involvement (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). By not getting involved, and not putting effort into a task, a person can seek such excuse for lack of success and thereby protect their self-worth. In many situations, the chosen strategy for many will be to choose different activities altogether (Skaalvik, 2006). In the school setting, however, this is usually not an option that is available for the students. This makes it, according to Skaalvik (2006), even more important that schools focus on creating environments conducive to students’ feeling of self-worth. Most of the research on the significance of area-specific self-image has focused on academic self-image and has only, to a very small degree, been related to sports and PE (Skaalvik, 2006). However, the limited research, within sports and PE confirms the results from academic areas described above.

According to E. Skaalvik and S. Skaalvik (2013), it is important to distinguish between a person’s real self-image from *self-representation*, which is a strategic choice made by the person regarding how she wants to present herself in a certain situation. It has been suggested that

people with high and low self-worth differ in their self-presentation (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). People with high self-worth tend to focus on their strengths, take risks and ask for attention when needed, while those with low self-worth are characterized by avoiding attention from fear of having their weaknesses exposed.

3.2.1 Two separate approaches within self-image research

Two approaches have developed within the pedagogical field in relation to research on self-image (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Both have been pre-occupied with self-image in relation to achievements and are, therefore, highly relevant to motivation and learning in the school setting. The two approaches have overlapping views, but there are some differences in emphasis and language. To summarize, the *self-evaluation approach* has been pre-occupied with self-image in a global sense as it is reflected in a person's self-esteem and self-worth, while the *outcome expectation approach* has focused on the student's expectations in regards to managing specific tasks. And, while researchers within the self-evaluation approach have emphasized the significance of external sources for self-evaluation, the outcome expectation approach has focused on internal sources. Finally, while the self-evaluation approach emphasizes the emotional aspects of self-image, the outcome expectation approach focuses on the cognitive aspects. I will in the following focus on three ways in which a person's self-image is impacted, as they are relevant for the discussion of the results in this study. The first, *genuine mastering experiences*, is a construct from the outcome expectation approach, while the two others, which are *evaluations from others* and *comparison*, are retrieved from self-evaluation approach (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013).

Genuine mastery experiences. A person's experiences in regards to mastering of specific skills or tasks is considered the most influential source of his or her self-image (Skaalvik, 2006). As obvious as it may be that actually having skills and knowledge in a defined area will tend to impact a person's self-image positively, it is important to keep in mind considering the significance of providing children and youth with opportunities for such mastery experiences. One important way for achieving this is to help them setting realistic goals.

Evaluations from others. According to ideas from social interactionism, one important source for forming a self-image is a person's perception of other people's evaluations of themselves (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). This has been called *reflected interpretations* or

the *mirrored self*. In a school setting, children are constantly being evaluated by teachers and co-students. According to Mead (cited in E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013), a child gets increasingly better at predicting other people's reactions toward themselves as a result of being able to take the perspective of others. Through this process, the child internalizes the values and beliefs of others, and subsequently the child evaluates himself based on those values and beliefs of others. Over time the child is exposed to many different people, and groups of people, and their respective value systems. Altogether these people and groups represent what Mead refers to as the *generalized other* (cited in E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). The child will then start to judge himself based on the general norms in their social environment that they perceive. However, some people will have more of an influence on a person's self-image than other people will have. These influential people are referred to as the *significant others* (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Only to a certain degree can the child choose his or her significant others because some people in their lives, like parents and teachers, will have this position regardless. Such people will potentially have a large impact on the child's self-image. Despite the fact that people generally are exposed to many different environments as well as different situations within those environments, research shows that a person's self-image stays, relatively speaking, stable over time. This does not mean that the child's self-image is immune from *reflected interpretations* from, for example, teachers and fellow students. In fact, whether a student is being seen, included, and acknowledged in the school setting, as opposed to being overlooked and excluded, can impact the student in a potentially severe way (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). In addition to the more formal assessments of the student's achievements (grades) in school, teachers and students give out strong signals of inclusion and acknowledgement, or the opposite, through comments and actions toward the child. Hence, a child's feeling of exclusion will have a large impact on his or her feeling of self-worth.

Social comparison. The theory of *social comparison*, developed by Festinger, focuses on the direct comparison with each other that people are engaged in (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). In many situations, there are no objective measures for self-assessment, which means that comparison with others will give information on the relative achievements in a group. Social comparison will always be subjective in nature and is colored by the people who are engaged in the comparison. The same achievements and behavior will be valued differently in different social groups/settings, and such groups are referred to as *reference groups*. The members of a

reference group are usually similar as far as age, experiences, and general behavior patterns. While some reference groups are chosen by the members, this is not the case for a class in school. Members of such a reference group are, therefore, dependent on the group to work in such way that they are psychologically and emotionally protected (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Research has shown that both evaluation from others and, even more so, social comparison, has shown to indeed have a significant impact on self-image of children of all ages (Skaalvik, 2006).

3.2.2 The significance of psychological centrality

Belonging to the self-evaluation approach, *psychological centrality* is a concept that refers to the assumption that it is of larger importance for people's positive self-image to have success in areas that is regarded as valued and important by themselves and/or their environment (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). It follows that a negative self-assessment in a particular area does not necessarily lead to a reduced feeling of self-worth, but that this will depend on the value given to the area. It is important to notice that people tend to protect their self-worth by de-evaluating areas where they are not successful, while they tend to value areas where they are doing well. However, it is very hard to insist on a de-evaluation of an activity or area that is given high value in the general culture or the environmental setting where the activity is happening. Values and norms in the settings where a child or youth belong can potentially have a tremendous impact on the child's self-image for two reasons: First, the social values are the basis for others' judgments of the child; second, the child will most likely internalize those values themselves. The child will, therefore, hold herself up against those values. Particularly in the case of children and young people, the environment is of crucial importance for them to have mastery experiences.

4. Methodology

In this chapter, I will first share some information about the scientific foundation on which this study is based. Then follows a description of the chosen methods for data collection and background information as well as the recruiting of informants. I further give a detailed explanation of my research process from data collection through the transcription and analysis process. Finally, ethical aspects related to this study will be described.

4.1 Scientific Foundation

In this project, I wanted to shine light on the topic of school-related PA. Because I wanted to look at this issue in depth from the angle of the children's own experiences with emphasis on nuances, I chose to use qualitative methods as I set out to seek new insight in this area. According to Malterud (2011), qualitative methods are tools for "descriptions, analysis and understanding of all types of phenomena" in general, and for "human interaction and experiences in particular" (p. 28). Qualitative methods have a unique ability to allow for open questioning, and they lend themselves to present variations and nuances. For these reasons, I found them to be a good fit for my project.

As opposed to seeking universal truths, research is, within the qualitative research tradition, looked upon as a process where new questions keep coming up (Malterud, 2011). Qualitative methods are based on *phenomenology* and *hermeneutic approaches*; in other words, on human experience and interpretation. The goal is to explore meaning in peoples' lives as it is experienced within their own cultural and social setting. Phenomenology is a broad field within philosophical theory and builds on the premise that human experiences, in themselves, represent valid knowledge (Malterud, 2011), an understanding that I draw on in the present study. My position as a researcher, though, is one in which I will interpret my data with explicit use of pre-knowledge in the form of theoretical frameworks in the field as opposed to having a purely descriptive phenomenological approach. A hermeneutic approach implies interpretation of text (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) where interpretation of meaning is central. One of several principles of interpretation within the hermeneutic approach is the *hermeneutic circle*. What this means is that a text gets looked at as a whole and then gets broken down to parts before going back to the whole. The whole will now be seen in an enriched way. Through a continuous spiral like this, a deeper understanding of meaning will emerge.

Within the hermeneutic approach, there is a strong awareness of the researcher's position and pre-knowledge in the area of study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In fact, a text's meaning is always derived from a context where the researcher him or herself is seen as having an inevitable and welcomed impact on the research process. An important implication of the hermeneutic approach is that there is such a thing as a legitimate diversity of interpretation as a consequence of asking different questions of the text. The researcher's lenses and process, however, must be explored and acknowledged for the reader as a part of explaining exactly how the research results were found. There is, in fact, a wide agreement today that there is no such thing as research being pure and independent from the researcher. This goes for both qualitative and quantitative research (Malterud, 2011). The question, according to Malterud (2011), is "not whether the researcher influences the process, but how" (p. 37). Therefore, many experts have empathized the significance of the researcher's positioning and perspective for the outcome of the project. The term *situatedness* is used to describe the researcher's efforts to be open and explicit about her/his own preconceptions in regards to the topic in question (C. Neumann & I. Neumann, 2012). Description of the researcher's situatedness is regarded as being of crucial importance for the validity of the research results. This said, Malterud (2011) does point out the importance of standing back during the process and trying to be true to the informants' own stories.

4.2 The Researcher's Situatedness

According to C. Neumann and I. Neumann (2012), there are three types of situating: *field situating*, *biographic situating* and *text situating*. Field situating is reflecting upon how you, as a researcher, are perceived by the informants, including the potential influence this might have on the data collection process. In the case of the current study, the area of residence of my informants is also the area where I live myself. Naturally, I was acquainted with the families of some of the informants. In other cases, my connection with informants went through mutual family friends or acquaintances. I am aware of the potential impact this might have had on me as a researcher, but I made a conscious effort to prevent this familiarity to have any influence on me when conducting the research. Biographic situating is the researcher's own personal relations to the topic and how this might potentially influence the research process. My own relation to the topic of physical activity has two aspects: First, PA has, to some extent, been a part of my own

way of living for my entire adulthood. Second, I have throughout my adulthood been preoccupied with the importance of PA for people's health and well-being. This engagement has been both personal and professional (my previous career as a physical therapist). However, my PA interests have never included organized sports as my own form of PA, although I have always enjoyed and supported my nephew's and niece's participation in organized sports as well as my own children's participation in sports. Looking back on my own upbringing, my lack of sports experience definitely had an impact on how I experienced PE class. The nature of this impact was negative but not devastating to me. Text situating has to do with reflections on possible future consequences of the research report. It is very important for me as a researcher to consider the potential consequences for the school community in which the research was based in as well as the potential consequences for the informants for my study. Hence, I am very well aware of the importance of the confidentiality aspects of the presentation, as well as the importance of presenting valid and reliable conclusions. I will return to this topic later when I write about ethical aspects of research.

4.3 Background Information Data

As background for my interviews with the seventh graders, I wanted to collect descriptive information about the context and situations in which their school-related PA experiences derived from. There are two ways in which this kind of information can be collected: either indirectly through people's descriptions of situations and events or directly through observation of people's interactions and the socio-cultural framework for the situation in question (Malterud, 2011). Both methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Generally speaking, *direct observation* may potentially provide very good and first-hand data on social interaction as well as on the setting in which the interaction takes place. However, this method, according to Malterud (2011), is insufficient for interpreting people's life-world, their motivation, and their way of thinking. The second method -- *indirect descriptions* -- is the use of conversations, which has another important advantage: The chances of misunderstanding that can occur as an observer may be reduced because one hears the information in the participant's own words. A disadvantage is that an interview, as opposed to direct observation, only gives indirect description of what the interviewee experienced.

My original intention was to use direct observation for the purpose of collecting background

information with emphasis on description of the social interaction in the student's setting (the school). As it turned out, however, I did not get access to any of the school districts within practical distance to my home, and I, therefore, had to diverge somewhat from my original plan. The reason given to me from the school districts for this rejection had to do with lack of resources for accommodating my needs in the process. What I ended up doing was to collect background information on social interaction and the school setting through the interviews in a more thorough way than I otherwise would. Although this meant that I missed out on the advantages of first-hand observation data, I did enjoy the advantage of listening to the adolescents' own way of talking about aspects of the framework. This turned out to provide me with useful additional information about the meaning that this had for them.

4.4 Qualitative Research Interviews

The term *qualitative research interview* is used by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) to distinguish this open interview form from the more common earlier research interview studies where standardized procedures were used. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) further characterize the qualitative research interview as one in which the interviewer and the interviewee together produce knowledge. It has been common practice within qualitative research to use a general, non-philosophical version of phenomenology as an approach. One important implication for interview research is the focus on the interviewee's experienced meaning of his or her life-world. There are several varieties of qualitative research interviews and the choice between them depends on the purpose of the research, or, in other words, what the researcher wants to gain knowledge about (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). As mentioned above, I used semi-structured life-world interviews as my tool for data collection. This interview form is characterized by flexibility as far as how questions are asked as well as the order of questions. The researcher still has a well-thought-out plan for what to cover during the interview, but is also open for unexpected topics to arise during the conversation. With reference to the inspiration from phenomenology, the idea is to get insight into the interviewee's life-world as it is experienced by her or him. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), this kind of interview is, therefore, well suited when you want the interviewees to share part of their everyday lives. More specifically, the goal is for the interviewer to get an understanding of how the interviewees interpret and find meaning in their own lives. These qualities of the method are well aligned with my intention to

explore adolescents' experiences with school PA, as well as the meaning these experiences has for them in their lives.

4.5 Recruiting of Seventh Graders

In a qualitative study, like the present one, the researcher will form a *strategic sample* (Thagaard, 2009). This means that the informants are chosen based on how they fit the purpose of the study. In the case of the present study, I had planned to first strategically select a school based on demographics and then select students through *quota sampling* from that school. Quota sampling is used for the purpose of insuring a large variance in the sample in regards to categories defined by the researcher (Thagaard, 2009). Based on these categories, the researcher decides how many participants (quota) are desired in each category.

It is not unusual for a researcher to be denied access to the desired setting for data collection through formal channels. In such cases, one needs to get in touch with prospective informants in a different way. When a sample is formed based on where informants are possible to find, this is referred to as *convenience sample* (Thagaard, 2009). A common way that this happens, according to Thagaard (2009), is by the use of the so-called *snowball method*. The way this works is that the researcher contacts some people with the desired traits or qualifications. These people are subsequently asked to contact other people with the same traits or qualifications. This way the "snowball" rolls until there is enough people who meet the requirements for the study.

Since I was not admitted into any of the schools in the area where I live, I defaulted to getting together a convenience sample with the use of the described snowball method. Accordingly, I ended up getting in touch with seventh graders for my project through my own social network with the use of email and personal contact. My only inclusion criteria at this point was age (grade) and that the adolescents were enrolled in a public school, not a private school, within practical distance to my home. Potential downfalls of this type of sampling will be discussed in the method discussion chapter later in this report.

First, I sent out an email to people I knew who were either parents of seventh graders themselves or who knew parents of seventh graders. This email included a brief outline of the project, information about what I was looking for, and assurance of confidentiality. I asked that they consider my request. I heard back from 11 families who were willing to be considered for the project. At this point, I delivered to them more detailed information letters (see Appendix A

and Appendix B), consent forms for both parents and students (see Appendix C and Appendix D) as well as a questionnaire (see Appendix E) that I asked the students to fill out. The questionnaire had four questions: 1. If the student is male or female. 2. How well she or he likes to be physically active. 3. How well she or he likes PE class. 4. If she or he was willing to be interviewed by me for the project. Based on the students' answers on the questionnaire, I selected eight students through quota sampling (Thagaard, 2009). I was looking for the broadest possible variation in my sample as far as gender, how they generally like to be physically active, and, finally, how they like PE class.

Within qualitative research, the researcher's determination of sample size may be guided by the maximum number of informants that will allow for comprehensive analysis of the data (Thagaard, 2009). Based on the scope of the present project, which is a master's thesis of 30 academic units (according to Norway's higher education system), the number of eight adolescents seemed to be a reasonable number. However, I did expect that this number of interviews would be large enough to give me sufficient amount of data to be able to conduct a meaningful analysis according to the purpose of the project.

Another guiding principle for determining the number of informants is whether or not one is able to get to the point of *saturation* (Malterud, 2011). Saturation means that you have enough informants so that additional informants do not contribute more information. However, according to Malterud (2011), it is not the number of informants that determines the relevance of the results to similar settings, but that the sample is adequate. I was prepared to conduct additional interviews if I found that this was needed. This was not the case, and I, therefore, ended up interviewing 8 seventh graders for my project. I refer to the methodology discussion chapter later (see 6.5 Discussion of Methodology) for further considerations as to what degree my sample can be considered adequate.

4.6 Interview Guide

My intention to analyze the data within the framework of SDT informed me in developing the interview guide (see Appendix F) used for the interviews. According to SDT, there are three conditions within a social context that are crucial determinants for motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). These conditions have to do with to what degree they offer support for autonomy, relatedness, and competence and are argued to be important for people's level of self-motivation.

Accordingly, I wanted to make sure that I included questions that would likely give me information about the degree to which the students felt that the school environment was supportive of their autonomy, relatedness and competence (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

I first developed a topic interview guide (see Appendix G) with items on the adolescents' experiences with and preferences for PA and PE and more specifically on items based on the theoretical concepts from SDT. I then went on to write the actual interview guide, which contained a more detailed list of possible questions that I could ask during the interviews (see Appendix F). I included questions I believed would invite the adolescents to talk about the topics that I wanted to cover. I started with general questions about their overall relation to PA that I thought would make them feel comfortable and relaxed while, at the same time, give me useful information. Subsequently, I formulated questions about what they had done as far as PA on that particular day. After I learned that I could not do observations at their schools, as I first planned, I included questions about opportunities for PA during the school day and also about the framework for PE class.

4.7 Data Collection: Interviews

Prior to the actual interviews, I conducted two pilot interviews with adolescents about the same age as the other interviewees. The main benefit for me of conducting pilot interviews turned out to be that it provided me with useful interview practice. This way, I felt better prepared for the actual interviews. This preparation allowed me to be less preoccupied with my own role and more relaxed and focused on the seventh-grade students. The importance of this has to do with the validity of the results. The use of qualitative interviews is, as mentioned earlier, a process where the researcher and the interviewee produce knowledge together (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Everything possible should be done during interviews to allow for responses that reflect the interviewees' experiences and thoughts (Malterud, 2011). I had a strong sense that my preparation for the interviews, including the conducting of pilot interviews, helped me create an atmosphere conducive to this objective.

In planning for the actual interviews, I gave each interviewee a choice about where the interview would take place. The reason for this was that the environment, for many, can be important in order to feel comfortable in a potentially stressful interview situation (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). In a phenomenological perspective, a situation characterized by safety and

trust is a crucial determinant for what insight we are able to get from the informants' life-world (Malterud, 2011). The options that I suggested were as follows: at their own home, in a small private conference room at a local public library with a convenient location for them, or at my house while no one else was around. Four of the students, who live within walking distance to where I live, chose to come over to my house. Of the remaining four, who all live within driving distance to me, two of them chose for me to come to their house, and the other two chose to meet me at their local library.

The duration of the interviews was between 31 and 47 minutes. I used my cellphone to record the interviews. This is common practice and has considerable advantages (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I, as an interviewer, can then focus on the person and the dynamics of the interview, and can also go over the recordings multiple times afterwards to catch nuances from the conversations. Prior to each interview, I always had a brief informal chat with the students (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I included a short reminder of their confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any time with no questions asked. I also empathized the conversational nature of the interview as well as thanked them again for being willing to talk with me for my project. I made a reference to the recorder and the interview guide in front of me and told them that this was my checklist so I wouldn't forget to ask something. Such a briefing has both an ethical aspect and an aspect relevant to the validity of the results, due to the relaxed atmosphere of the interview. In addition, I said a few words about English being my second language, and asked them to not hesitate to let me know if I was expressing myself unclearly.

I started out every interview asking an open question about how they liked PA and what aspects of PA they liked (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). In my next question, I tried to connect to something they had said, and that is how the conversations unfolded. In order to cover everything that I had planned to cover, I sometimes needed to introduce a new issue to the conversation from the interview guide. I continued with mostly open-ended questions and let them talk without interruption with only a very few exceptions where I felt clarification was needed. A few times, I stopped some of them in a soft manner as they started to share names of others. I avoided leading questions during the interviews, and I made an overall effort to be perceived as neutral as possible as far as how I generally feel about the topic in question (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). This specifically applied when the students told me about themselves. I made an effort to be supportive of them as individuals. However, I avoided value-laden

comments in response to them telling me about their preferences or how well, or not, they do in regards to PA or other matters. This was important in order to make sure that the students felt free to express their own views and feelings. These kinds of considerations are of particular importance when the informants are children or youths as they can easily be led to answer what they think is expected from the adult interviewer (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). After the interviews, I had a short debriefing where I asked how the students thought it was to be interviewed and if they felt they had represented themselves in a way that they were happy with (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). I also thanked them again and told them how much I appreciated their willingness to share their stories, and for supporting my project.

4.8 Transcription and Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed by myself with help from a trusted confidante from whom the adolescents' identities were kept hidden. The sound tracks were labeled with letter codes, and the interviewees were not identifiable. My assistant was instructed to transcribe word by word within reason. For the purpose of validity, I listened carefully to all of the recordings and checked the transcriptions up against what I heard. I did this when I still had the interviews fresh in mind, and I made some changes based on how I remembered the conversation, including tone, context, pauses, and other things that were of importance to the meaning in the conversation (Malterud, 2011). During this process, I kept my focus on what I thought was the interviewee's intended message at all times. I also used a *slightly modified verbatim mode* in order to avoid the interviewee sounding childish or foolish (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). This mode also allows for better readability.

Another important consideration in a transcription process is to make an effort to protect the interviewees' indirect confidentiality for future readers of the report, as well as the indirect confidentiality of persons who were talked about in the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In my transcription process for this study, I changed geographical names and descriptions of places, as well as other potential identification markers. This said, I was aware throughout the transcription process that a transcribed text is never a true and complete representation of what the interviewees meant to express during the interviews (Malterud, 2011), let alone the experienced reality that the interviewees refer to. However, my focus throughout the process was to minimize these discrepancies as much as possible.

According to a hermeneutic approach, the main focus of the text analysis in the present study is on interpretation of meaning, which emerges within a context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I started considerations of the analysis part of the project before conducting the interviews as I asked myself how I wanted to analyze the data after I collected it. These considerations led me to the decision to use SDT as a framework for discussion of the findings. This decision informed me during the development of my interview guide and my follow-up questions during the interviews, as well as it guided my entire analysis process. The analysis process then continued throughout all the interviews as well as during the transcription process. The main part of the analysis occurred after all the interviews were transcribed. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), this way of integrating the analysis process into all the sequences of a research study gives important advantages in the sense that the analysis gets easier, but more importantly, the analysis will be more securely based.

During an interview, there will always be a small degree of general interpretation from both the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This was apparent to me several times during my conversations with the adolescents as they, in a sense, interpreted themselves as they became aware of issues and circumstances from their own lives. This might sometimes have been a result of their own thought process as they were talking and/or as a result of me prompting follow-up questions or mirroring their own statements. My reflections back to them would be based on my interpretation of their answers, and my questions would, to some degree, be guided by what I heard them saying and what meaning I interpreted that it had for them. Although I covered the topics from the interview guide in all of the eight interviews, the emphasis and direction in the conversations varied quite a lot. During the weeks of interviewing, my ongoing analysis of the previous interviews influenced my following interviews, in the sense that I brought new perspectives to the next interview. At the same time, I did my best to start with an open mind toward each new child and to that particular child's unique experiences.

The transcription process also entails some inherent analysis through the decisions one has to make regarding punctuations and such (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As aware as I was of this while transcribing, I several times went back to listen to the recordings in order to make sure I derived the intended meaning from the written text.

I chose to use *systematic text condensation* in my analysis approach. This is a well-known and theory-anchored analysis method inspired by Giorgi's phenomenological analysis and

grounded theory (Malterud, 2011). According to Malterud (2011), systematic text condensation is a useful tool for transverse analysis like my own. In a transverse analysis, information from several informants are combined as opposed to longitudinal analysis where one single informant is followed over time. Although systematic text condensation is inspired by phenomenological analysis, the use of this analysis method, according to Malterud (2011), does not require extensive knowledge about phenomenological philosophy. In the following I will walk the reader through my own post-transcription analysis process which I based on Malterud's outline of systematic text condensation.

With all the eight transcriptions in hand, close to 100 pages altogether, I started out reading them one by one to form a general impression. I did my best to be open to what the children's voices in the data material were telling me without being influenced by my preconceptions in regards to the topic. I then read the transcriptions again, and this time I highlighted the text in different colors in order to separate broadly the parts of the text where the student had expressed any form of meaning and the parts that contained a description of what was happening as far as PA in the school setting. On several occasions, the two overlapped. Next time around I only read the text that covered any kind of meaning from the students' perspectives. While I read, I consecutively wrote down themes that were covered. I was liberal in what I included, and I did not worry about themes to be overlapping or even repeated. I then organized the items on the list into themes and also eliminated doubles. As a result, I was left with eight themes that I identified. At this point I went back to the text and retrieved the meaning units in all of the interviews. The next step, according to Malterud (2011), was to sort all the meaning units according to the themes from before. This process is called *coding* and results in code groups. Subsequently, the theme names were adjusted according to content. Some were renamed or even eliminated if I found that they did not contribute toward answering the research question. I eventually ended up with eight named code groups with partly overlapping meaning units. Some of the code groups were closely aligned with the variables from the theory (SDT) and topic interview guide, while others were not as much. During this process, I "cleaned up" the meaning units in the sense that I sometimes combined statements within one interview and eliminated irrelevant text. In these cases, I indicated missing text by displaying an ellipsis [...]. I also removed some of the "uhhms," "aahhhs," and repetition of words, and such. I stayed otherwise close to the original language of the students. For each code group, I then wrote a summary of

what the students across my sample had expressed in relation to each of the code groups. I pointed out commonalities as well as varieties between meaning units within a code group.

By going back to the full interviews and reminding myself of the context where the different meaning units belonged, it became increasingly apparent to me that there was a pattern where the interviewees had contributed asymmetrically to the code groups, both as far as simple numbers but also in regards to content within the code groups. At this point, at least two categories of students started to emerge from my data. By going back and forth between the meaning units and the full interviews, I became increasingly confident that it would be useful to split the student sample into categories for my further analysis. I spent some time figuring out whether it was best to create two or three categories, but I eventually identified two. Despite variations within the two categories, I found that the students belonging to each category shared important characteristics and experiences. These characteristics and experiences also distinguished students in one category from the students in the other category on matters that were central to the research topic.

The next natural step was, therefore, to organize all the meaning units into the two categories while keeping the sorting system with code groups from before. The unique characteristics of the categories now became even clearer to me, based on their asymmetrical contribution to the code groups. Working with one category at a time, I wrote a summary based on the content of all meaning units within each code group, and I also included several quotes. I chose to keep a person indication reference for all the single meaning units, as I felt that each of the children's complete personal story was so unique. This contextualization reminded me and helped me to better understand the meaning behind the meaning units. Malterud (2011) emphasizes the importance of re-contextualizing as the final step in the analysis process. During this process the validity of the results are checked against the original context they were derived from. In my case, it had been natural to work with re-contextualizing throughout the analysis process, but was also done again in this final phase of the analysis process as well as during the next step in the process, the result presentation.

During the course of the analysis process, it became increasingly apparent to me that some of the findings called for the use of additional theoretical terms, outside of SDT, as basis for a meaningful discussion of the findings. I refer back to this paper's section on theory for an outline of the additional theoretical terms chosen.

4.9 Ethical Aspects of This Research

This report is the final research project as part of my master's degree in public health science (folkehelsevitenskap) at a university in the country of Norway and is, therefore, subject to the laws and regulations concerning research in Norway. Accordingly, this project did not require approval from the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REK) in Norway. However, despite the fact that the data collection was done in a different country, the U.S., the project did have to obtain approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). Such approval was sought and received with only minor changes required (see Appendix H). Those changes were made in the final design and execution of the project.

Important ethical guidelines for medical research involving humans were compiled by the World Medical Association (WMA) in the WMA Declaration of Helsinki in 1964 (2013). The declaration was later amended by several countries, including the U.S. in 2002. Although the declaration is addressed primarily to physicians, some of it, especially article seven, is commonly thought of as applicable in a broader context: "Medical research is subject to ethical standards that promote and ensure respect for all human subjects and protect their health and rights" (WMA, 2013, para. 8). The Helsinki declaration has been guiding the ethical aspects of the present study in the sense that I, in all stages of this project, have strived for the highest ethical standards in regards to my informant.

According to the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee (2016), there are mainly three areas of importance when it comes to ethical considerations in research. These are: informed consent, confidentiality and the obligation to not cause harm.

4.9.1 Informed consent

Written informed consent, as well as assent letters (for minors), were handed out to one family at a time to the families of seventh graders who was willing to be considered for my research study (see Appendix C and Appendix D). These forms were handed out together with information letters (see Appendix A and Appendix B), and signed by one of the parents and by the student, respectively, before the seventh grader was asked to answer a short questionnaire that I would use in the selection process (see Appendix F). I also went over this information orally with the families and opened up for any questions they had.

4.9.2 Confidentiality

The fact that the informants' confidentiality would be protected throughout the process as well as in the report was conveyed both in the information letter and orally prior to any involvement in the study, including before answering the questionnaire. During the entire process, there were no names or other identifiable information attached to the questionnaires, recordings, or transcripts of the interviews. Instead, I used letter codes for my own use of the data. After the interviews, the recordings were immediately transferred from my cellphone to a password-protected computer in order to be transcribed. When not used by me, the transcriptions of the interviews were locked up in a personal safe. The adolescents were anonymized and given fictitious names in the final report. As mentioned above (under 4.8 Transcriptions and Data Analysis), I changed geographical names and other potential identification markers in some places. This was done in order to minimize the risk of indirect identification of the informants and anyone they talked about during the interview. After this project has been completed and reviewed, all of the recordings as well as the written material about the informants will be deleted /destroyed.

4.9.3 Consequences

While conducting research on human subjects, there is a responsibility on the part of the researcher to “ensure respect for all human subjects and protect their health and rights” (WMA, 2013, para. 8). This includes making sure that everything possible is done to prevent the human subjects (informants) from suffering in any way as a result of participating. This applies during the data collection as well as after the report is finished. During all the contact I had with the seventh graders and their families, I made a special effort to treat the adolescents and their families with respect and gratitude. I did what I could to make them feel comfortable and valued for what they were doing for me and my project, without being worried about any repercussions for themselves. I especially emphasized that they need not worry that their schools and teachers would ever know what they told me.

Special considerations on ethics are needed when working with children and youth in research (Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee, 2016b). One reason for this is the uneven power balance between researcher and the child. My informants are considered young adolescents, and those considerations apply. Examples of measures that I took to minimize this gap was to ask them for help due to English being my second language as well as setting an

informal tone for the conversation. More on this can be found in the chapter on method discussion in the discussion section (see 6.5 Discussion of Methodology) of this report.

As much as there needs to be a rigorous focus on reducing risk of potential harm for human subjects in research, there is also reason to believe that there can be immediate positive outcomes as a result of participating as an informant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It was with great joy that I noticed eagerness and excitement from most of the adolescents who seemed to appreciate the opportunity to talk to someone (me) about something of significance in their life. One told me, “Finally someone who will listen to what we kids think.”

As mentioned earlier, there is a special responsibility on the part of any researcher to present reliable and valid results in qualitative studies with human subjects. Such research can only be conducted with the willingness of people, and sometimes institutions, to give their time and resources to support research projects. They should be able to expect quality and ethical work in return. Another aspect is that research potentially may entail implicit critique of the institutions or entities that the informants represent, which should further put demand for trustworthy and thorough work from the researcher.

As for all research with human subjects, there needs to be an intentional and serious effort toward a positive contribution to society at large, in addition to having a purely scientific justification for the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is my sincere and humble wish that this will be the case for the present study.

5. Results

In this section of the report, I will present the results of the qualitative analysis of the data. My intention is to show the broad picture of the data with the pattern that emerged and to point out individual differences between my informants.

All of the students report very few opportunities for being active at school other than during recess, in PE class, and the necessary walking between classes. With an exception of very few instances of physical activities being incorporated in the academic classes, there seemed to be mostly sitting during those class periods. All of the students have one recess during the day where the time is divided between eating lunch and going outside. They seemed to end up having between five and 15 minutes left for recess after they finish eating lunch. Some of the students said they play and run around with friends during recess. Several of them choose to just talk, or walk and talk, with friends as they find that opportunities for this during the school day are rare. Activities like swinging on the swings, using the zip-line, and giving piggyback-rides were mentioned by some as things they do during recess. This section (as well as the discussion section that follows) will, therefore, focus on the eight adolescents' experiences in PE class (according to the research question). This section, however, starts with a presentation of descriptions of PE class as they were shared with me during the interviews. This description chapter is meant to provide background information to better understand the experience chapter that subsequently follows.

5.1 Descriptions of PE from the Whole Group

Seven out of the eight students attend the same school, and this school was, therefore, the basis for those students' information. The last student referred to a separate school in the interview, which is where she attends. Within the same school, some of the seven attending students probably belonged to separate student groups for PE. With possible exceptions, they seemed to all have the same teachers, but different numbers of teachers depending on the particular class size. I have mostly included information where the students' descriptions were the same or very similar. When I diverge from this rule, this will be noted explicitly. While this chapter almost exclusively refers to descriptions, I have occasionally included brief references to the fact that the student sample diverges in the students' feelings about different aspects of PE

class. The students' experiences and feelings about PE class will be thoroughly explored in the chapters following this one.

5.1.1 General

All of the seventh graders in my sample have very similar descriptions of the framework for and the content of PE class. On an average, they have PE class two to three times a week; each class lasts approximately 50 minutes, including a total of 10 minutes to change into and out of gym clothes. Students are all required to change into gym clothes. Most of them seem to be fine with this requirement.

5.1.2 Facilities

As for the seven students who attend the same school, PE class is held in a large gymnasium, which is approximately the size of two basketball courts. The one student attending a different school has her PE class held in a "fieldhouse" with bleachers. In both facilities, the floors are marked with lines for different sports. There are also basketball hoops. In addition to the indoor facilities, the PE class at both schools is partly held outside. There, they have access to sports fields and general school ground outdoor areas. At the school of the seven students, there is a hill beside the sports field.

5.1.3 Class size

The students are all in large PE classes of between 60 and 90 students. Although they are in a big gymnasium, most of the students I talked with described it as crowded with that number of students. This was viewed as problematic for everyone and seemed particularly to be a problem during the running portion of the class period. One girl told me, "I love running, but running around in that small gym is kind of annoying. There's a ton of us, so you run into people and people trip. One actually got hurt one year."

5.1.4 Co-ed class

At the two schools where all my interviewees were enrolled, the PE classes were co-ed, where boys and girls are taught together. Two (out of four) girls said during the interviews that they perceive the boys to be loud and dominant. One girl said, "The boys are very competitive, so if you do something wrong they will often yell at you. And that is not fun." She went on later to say that the boys who are really competitive don't pass the ball to the girls even when they try to participate.

5.1.5 Content of PE class

Generally, the PE class period starts inside with the students sitting down while listening to the teachers. This is a time for the teachers to take attendance and present information, including the agenda for the day. After listening to their teachers, the students start working on fitness/warm-up stations followed by running before they go outside (weather pending) and do their main activity, usually a sport. The teaching of PE class is divided into units that last for approximately two weeks, with each unit referred to by the students by the name of the sport/activity. Prior to each unit, the teachers teach the students about the sport/activity. Examples that the students gave me of exercises used in the fitness stations were passing or kicking a ball back and forth, doing push-ups, lifting weights overhead, and doing stretching exercises. Each station was said to last for a minute or two. Several interviewees told me that music was usually played in the background during their workouts at the stations.

The running part of the class period seemed to last for about four to eight minutes, where the students run circles in the gymnasium. Every month or so, the students are either timed on running a mile or they take a “pacer test.” The pacer test is a field test that consists of running 20-meter shuttles back and forth. The running speed is slow in the beginning and increases every minute thereafter, until the individual student fails to maintain the shuttle in time.

When talking about both the fitness stations and the running portion of the class period, the students are very similar in the way they perceive what the teachers are looking for. The students told me that, during these activities, the teachers emphasize staying on task and finding a steady pace for themselves. One boy said this about how he heard the teachers during work at the fitness stations:

What they want you to do is do pretty much what they say, like balancing... balance for 15 seconds. And you should keep a steady pace and not like.... If you're doing curl ups, not do three and then talk to your friend. Do it consistent one every three seconds.

All the students described the station-part of PE to be highly structured and organized where the directions on what they should do in each station is made very clear.

Before the main activity, the teachers give mini-lectures in which they explain how to do the activity, including the rules of what is usually a sport-related game. The students also told me about other activities such as track and field, archery and gymnastics. Unique activities offered

at the school where only one of the students attends are rock climbing, roller skating, and a kayak/canoe unit.

5.1.6 Organization of PE class

My impression, based on the students' statements, is that the number of PE teachers assigned to each PE class is determined by the number of homeroom classes having PE together. One homeroom group of approximately 30 students would have one PE teacher. This teacher has the main responsibility for those 30 students, including the grading of them. The norm seems to be that there are two to three homeroom groups having PE together, which amounts to about 60-90 students taught by two to three PE teachers.

One student described a new way of organizing the sports section of her PE class, which she thought of herself. The background for this change was that she and others found it problematic to do the sports activities with a group where the skill levels were so different. Her solution was to divide up the group of students according to skill levels and/or their levels of competitiveness. She said to me, "So, I have the opportunity to go with the super competitive group and actually play, which is much better for me." As a consequence of the girl's suggestion, the teachers started to divide the students into three groups prior to forming teams instead of randomly picking teams from the whole student population. In all of the eight students' PE classes, it appears that the selecting of teams for playing sports are always done randomly through a numbering system.

5.1.7 Grading in PE class

According to the perceptions of this student group, their overall grade in PE is broadly based on the teachers' observations of the students' participation level, on general behavior, such as coming to class on time and work ethics, and, finally, on the students' results on written tests. Every quarter the students take a written test where they are tested on their knowledge of the rules of the sports that they have been taught. As far as their participation in activities during PE, all the students seemed to perceive that the teachers assess them on effort and ability to find a sustainable and steady pace for themselves and on whether they stay on task. Despite this, most of the students also feel that if they don't perform to a minimum level, this will lower their grade. There is also a perception among some of them that their grade is, at least to some extent, based on what the teachers expect the average ability level to be at their age.

5.1.8 Perceptions of the PE teacher's role

There seemed to be a high degree of consensus among the students regarding what they perceive the teachers' role to be during PE class. They generally described a situation with minimal one-to-one interaction between teacher and student. Except from giving general information and mini lectures, the students find that the teachers take a distant role of watching and grading without hardly any interaction with the students. One girl said, "The gym teachers are not really that involved. They sort of just watch to make sure we are following the rules, and they also just watch the games we are playing." The student sample was highly divided in regards to how they felt about this perceived distant teacher role. While some of the students viewed the minimal individual teacher attention as a natural consequence of what the teacher role is supposed to be, others were very critical of the way the teachers act and teach. However, regardless of the differing viewpoints on this, several of the students pointed out how individual attention hardly is possible due to circumstances. With reported class sizes being up to 90 students, most of the students question the teachers' ability to pay attention to the students individually. One boy said, "They have to look over all of us, and they are not going to see us as individuals as much because there are so many kids and there are three of them (teachers)." Students shared with me some minor exceptions from this distant teacher role such as occasional comments from the teachers: "Set a nice pace", "Yup, all the way up and all the way down."

The seven students who attend the same school described a typical situation where the PE teachers stand on top of a hill looking down while the students play the different sports. The overall perception among the informants was that the teachers are watching to make sure everyone is participating, and to mark it down if they are not. One interviewee said, "They are watching us and grading us on how we keep a steady pace and if we are messing around or not."

5.1.9 Choice during PE class

None of the children believe that they really have any significant impact on decisions regarding what activities they do in PE class. An exception from this is one student (from the separate school) who told me that they have free gym time for part of the class period a couple of times per semester. Some students are fine with not being able to make choices about type of activities they do in PE class while others miss this opportunity. Most students believe that they do have a certain amount of choice when it comes to intensity level for themselves during activities, which is something they appreciate.

5.2 Experiences of PE class from the Whole Group

In this section I will look at how the eight students in my sample experience PE class. In my total sample of eight, two categories of adolescents emerged with similar characteristics relevant to the research topic in question. These two categories will in the following be referred to as the “sports enthusiasts” and “those who cope.” As groups, the students in each of the categories differ from each other, but there are several examples of variations within each category. There are also student experiences that are shared across both categories. Broadly speaking, the two categories differ in regards to what type of activities the adolescents enjoy, which again is closely connected to their experiences in PE class. Students belonging to the “sports enthusiasts” category, which I will label C1, are all enthusiastically interested in team sports as their main form of PA, and they are all involved in organized competitive sports in their free time. The competition and winning aspects are very important to their enjoyment of PA for all of them. Three out of four students in this category have a really positive experience with PE class overall while one has mixed feelings about PE class and is critical to how the class is taught. The four students in the category that I have called “those who cope”, which I will label C2, talked about a variety of activities that they like to engage in, with none of them being team sports. These four students mentioned several aspects of PA that they enjoy. The competition and winning elements of PA were present for some, but it was not dominant for the group as a whole. Most of the C2 students were significantly more critical of the teaching of PE, compared to C1 students, and generally did not like the class very well.

Before I describe the two student-categories more in-depth, I have a short section on what the students shared with me about what they think is the rationale for having PE in school. The reason for separating this from the following presentation of the profiles is that their thoughts about the rationale for PE did not follow the lines of the two categories. I have given all of my interviewees fictional names that I will be using in the following presentation.

5.2.1 Students’ thoughts about the rationale for PE class

When asked about the health aspect of PA, none of the students saw this as an explicit part of PE class. All of the students shared their impressions of the reasons for the schools to teach PE class; only one of the students included the health aspect. The students expressed their thoughts about this in direct and, sometimes, indirect terms. Anthony said, “The teachers just

say that if you don't exercise enough you can get really fat and you won't be able to do anything." Both Isabel and Elisabeth implied that PE is about learning sports. This is what Elisabeth answered when I asked what she took away from PE class: "Sometimes it's kind of fun to learn about the sports. We had these professional ultimate Frisbee players come and talk to us, and they did some activities with us, and it was kind of fun." Isabel listed up a number of other subjects in school that she found useful: "These are all things that could give us a good steady paying job. Sports, for me, is not a very good job." Hannah was the only one of the students who expressed health as an explicit reason for PE. She told me: "I think somebody realized that we needed to be active at some point of the day. So, I think that's why they put physical education in there. Cause they want kids to stay healthy-ish." However, she didn't seem to think her school gave PA a priority: "I think the school itself is really focusing a lot more on grades than physical activity. I think they want us to do well in class more so than, be active." Ben was quite clear about what PE is not when he said, "I don't think PE provides much of a health aspect."

5.2.2 Category 1 (C1): "The sports enthusiasts"

Feelings about PA in general. The students in this profile very much like to be physically active, and all of them mentioned sports first when asked about what type of PA they like to do. They are all involved in organized sports in their free time, but one of them also mentioned doing other forms of PA, such as working in the yard, walking the dog and "just running around." All four talked enthusiastically about being active and doing sports in particular. The competition and winning aspects are very important to their enjoyment of PA for all of them; this includes PA both inside and outside the school setting. Hannah told me, "When I win, it's the best feeling ever." Some of them told me that they have a lot of energy, and that they have a difficult time sitting still. Connor said that he especially likes PA that challenges him for endurance, such as swimming and running. All four mentioned that a positive aspect of their experience with PA is being with friends.

Mostly accepting of school-offerings of PA. Just like the students in the C2 group, these four C1 students expressed that they wouldn't mind having more opportunities for being active during the school day. With that said, the three boys in the C1 group are generally very accepting of the way things are as far as PA in school. They don't really question what the

school offers as far as school PA in general or how PE class is taught. This accepting attitude was apparent to me in this dialogue with Connor following a question about what they do in PE class.

Connor: Every once in a while, we have a test. But, we pretty much always go outside and be active.

Interviewer: When you say go out and be active, is that usually what we call a sport of some sort? [...]

Connor: Yes. An organized sport.

Interviewer: [...] Right, right. Okay, so would you say what you do in gym is sort of aligned with our interests and what you would choose to do outside of school?

Connor: Yeah. They pick really fun games, and some pretty cool warm up stations.

Interviewer: Right. So, you really like pretty much everything you do in physical education?

Connor: Yeah, probably the most fun class I have.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. And, so are there ever things you are asked to do that you don't like that much?

Connor: When you lift weights above your head.

Interviewer: Okay....

Connor: That's probably the worst thing that they have us do.

When I asked Connor what he thought about the frequency of PE class, he said: “No, not really. It's fine having it every other day.”

Hannah, on the other hand, seemed to feel more strongly than the boys about her wish for more active time during the school day. She talked very positively about having to walk (fast) between classes, as well as about one teacher who incorporates movements in an academic class:

So, it was throwing a ball around. And that was really fun actually. He likes us to be active. I also think part of it is that he can't handle really hyper- active kids. So, he wants like us to get our energy out. 7th grade guys and girls.... that helps a lot.

All of this helps her to “edge off her energy level,” but she doesn't think the school as a whole focuses enough on physical activity, despite advocating for the national recommendations for PA. She is also quite critical to how PE is taught.

During recess, all four students in the C1 group typically run around, play sports and games, and talk with their friends.

Generally satisfied with PE class, with some major exceptions. The three boys in this category; Anthony, Jacob and Connor, talked, at least initially, entirely positively about their experience in PE class. They all enjoy that they get to do mostly sports-related activities during class, which is very well aligned with the things that they like to do in their free time. This match between interests and content in PE also goes for Hannah, who, despite this, is quite critical of other aspects of PE class. Something about PE that for Connor makes being in class even better compared to his free time is that he gets to do the activities he enjoys, and that there are friends to do it with without having to organize it themselves. The aspects of winning, “being good,” and comparing themselves to others are, for all four, important parts of their positive experiences in PE class.

As mentioned above, Hannah diverges from the three boys in that she is generally critical of the school’s PA-teachings, and particularly to the way PE class is taught. Despite the fact that she generally likes the focus on sports in PE, this is just like the boys in this group.

Hannah described a mixed picture of her own experience in PE: “Gym is okay. I like the opportunity to have physical activity. But it’s not fun, I would say. It’s fun in some things, but I’d say fun is something you enjoy all the time, so it’s like half fun.” With an exception of rugby, it is clear to me that the type of activities and sports offered in PE is, for the most part, well aligned with her own interests. As I will show later in this C1 results section, the reasons for Hannah to not like PE all the time seemed to be more related to her relation to teachers and co-students as well as to grading and lack of quality equipment. As a result, even doing an activity in PE that she normally really enjoys, like soccer, for her is “not as fun as actually playing soccer.” (By “actually playing soccer,” Hannah means competitive organized team sport outside school).

However, playing rugby in class results in additional problems for Hannah, and also elevates her other issues with PE class. The problems she experiences while playing rugby are related to feelings of being less competent, embarrassed and excluded. Connor turned out to also have some of the type of issues that Hannah had with feelings of exclusion. I will elaborate on both of their situations later in this section.

Not a lot of concerns about the distant teachers' role. The tree boys in this category generally do not question the PE teachers' role in PE class. Like the rest of the students in my total sample, these three also see "watching and grading" as the main part of what the teachers do during PE class. However, as opposed to the students in the C2 group, this did not seem to bother them for the most part. When asked about it, Jacob told me: "I just try my best, and I don't really mind what the teachers are doing."

Neither Anthony nor Jacob expressed in any way that they miss getting more attention from or interaction with the teachers. When I asked Jacob if he would approach a teacher for help if he had a hard time with something in PE class, he replied; "I would usually just try my best and see what my capability is." This lack of desire to involve the teacher for help was further illustrated during an instance where he fell in the mud and got wet and cold. He said he would have wanted to dry himself off, but, as he told, me: "I didn't ask. I just kept playing."

Connor, who initially talked about his feelings in regards to the teachers' role in the same way as Anthony and Jacob, said it this way: "You can ask them (the teachers) questions before and after class." During class "they just watch you and grade you." He explained to me that the teachers can't really approach you as an individual because there are so many students and so few teachers. When I asked if he wishes this were different he didn't seem to think this is a big deal. More important for him is to keep the organization that allows for team games:

Maybe one more teacher would be okay, but they have the class split up pretty nicely for games where you can split the whole gym class into two teams. Cause if there were three teachers it would be hard to split into two teams for games.

Not until I asked Connor directly about how more teachers in PE might have impacted his experience of PE did he share how more teacher attention potentially could have worked better for him.

I would think that they would give you more advice. And that if you are trying pretty hard that they would be more likely to see you instead of where, like the teacher always sees you, when you are not trying your hardest because you just tried your hardest and you are really worn down. Or you are seen twice as much and they see that you are working hard.

This is an area where Connor and Hannah have similar viewpoints in that they both believe that more teachers would mean more opportunities to get help and advice when needed. More

importantly, the teachers would see more of them in class and thereby get a more complete picture of their performance as a basis for grading them. They are both worried that the teachers only watch them during those (few) times when they are not performing at their best level, and that this impacts their grade unfairly.

Hannah, however, went much further in her critique of the teachers' role than Connor did, and the lack of attention seemed to have a much larger negative impact on her experience in PE class. This is part of our conversation about this:

Hannah: And you know also what a big part of the problem is? In my fifth hour gym class, there are 3 gym teachers and 90 students. Thirty for each gym teacher. So, I think that's also why they don't grade us, um, a bigger portion of our grade, on physical activity because they can't watch all of us. And like, there's a hill and it comes down onto the field. And they are standing on top of the hill and they can't see us all. [...] So, there's less opportunities for us cause there's not even enough teachers to pay attention to us.

Interviewer: Exactly. So, what would you need the teacher's attention for? What would be the benefit for you if there were more teachers and fewer students per teacher?

[...]

Hannah: Well, I think also they could see the try-level of people. So, not just grading you on it but seeing if you're actually trying to improve yourself if you get something wrong - if you are not understanding something. And I think the gym teachers miss that a lot. So, if they see you mess up, I think they just mark that down, [...] [...] and not ask you about it. So, I think if there were more teachers per student, they could see more... like why you messed up - and you could get help. Like in other classes with the teacher. Other smaller classes. Of course, there's the thing with the grades too. So, I think that would benefit me because This is gonna sound kind of braggy, but I don't often mess up but when I do, I feel like they are always watching [...] And I feel like it would be a benefit to have more teachers so they could help you instead of just judging you on what you messed up on.

So, we see that Hannah, even more than Connor, is very concerned about the fact that there are so many students and not enough teachers in PE class. And like him, she feels that when she makes a mistake, or doesn't understand something, the teachers automatically mark that down without seeing the broader picture of what she is good at. She also thinks the teachers fail to recognize that she is actually trying. She is, like the boys in this category, generally very confident in her abilities to play sports and also in her skills related to the physical aspect in PE

overall. However, she fears that the teachers miss this because they don't have enough attention to the students.

Some feelings of pressure. The feeling of pressure in PE among the C1 students is low overall. With that said, there are a couple of considerable situation-dependent exceptions to this general picture. Jacob and Anthony did not express any feelings of pressure or tough challenges in PE class. As for Connor and Hannah, it seemed like they felt the same way as Jacob and Anthony for most of the time in PE class. However, it was obvious to me that there were certain situations where Connor and Hannah struggled with a negative feeling of pressure to perform better.

As an illustration of the pressure-free mindset that I sensed from Jacob and Anthony, this is part of the conversation I had with Jacob about what typically happens during PE class and also how he experiences the “main activity portion” of the class:

Interviewer: Do you usually know the sports?”

Jacob: Yeah, most of them. Once in a while, there will be a sport that is new to me.

Interviewer: Okay. So, if you were to compare activities that you already know well and activities that are new for you, how do you experience those two situations? Are there any differences in how you experience gym class?

Jacob: Usually with the new activities, I would like try even harder to like Sometimes I really wouldn't understand it and then I'd get it wrong. But the activities that I know, I don't have to like focus as much and then just kind of do it.

Interviewer: Right, so it comes easier. But (sometimes) you try harder. Is that positive or a negative that you need to focus more in order to get it?

Jacob: It's positive.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Does that mean [...] where you already know it, does it almost get to be boring? Or is it equally interesting?

Jacob: No, it's fun because we are also playing it with a bunch of people, not always the same people. So, that is fun too.

While learning a new game like rugby, Connor also seems to have a “none-pressure” view of the situation:

Interviewer: Right, right. So, if you have a unit where you are not familiar with the sport - that particular sport - do you feel you learn it enough to be able to then play it?

Connor: Yeah. Like rugby. I didn't even know how to play. But then they taught me and now I am really liking it.

Connor reveals a similar attitude towards running the mile:

It also feels pretty fun once you become really good at something. And you can start comparing to your friends who are way better than you. Like running the mile, like being pretty bad and then building yourself up and then being one of the first people in the class.

To me it seems like the three boys' overall focus in PE is on having fun doing their favorite activities, mainly sports, but also some other forms of physical activities that they enjoy. An extra bonus for them is the opportunity to do these activities in a competitive fashion. However, as I mentioned above, while Jacob and Anthony seem to experience all of PE as a low-pressure situation, Connor also encounters situations in PE where things are very different:

A lot of my friends play soccer (organized) and I don't. So, they want to be on the other soccer players' teams. So, I am kind of excluded. Or I am just kind of left behind because no one would pass to me. But that's why I try my hardest so I can have fun in gym class.

It is clear that Connor feels considerable pressure during times when they play soccer in PE class, a sport that he is not experienced in. While he does not mind being inexperienced while they play rugby, the situation during soccer is very different for him.

During our conversations, all of the children in the C1 group brought up how they felt about the game of rugby, a sport that none of them had any experience in or knowledge about prior to doing it in PE class. (Through the interviews with all eight students in my sample, I learned that this particular sport was new to almost all of the kids in seventh grade). What was striking to me was how divided the C1 students were in how they experienced the situation, playing an unfamiliar sport like rugby in PE class. This division, in my sample (within this category) went along the gender line.

As we have already seen above, all three boys in the C1 group were excited about learning the new sport, and they all ended up liking it. When I asked Anthony whether he liked better "new" sports, such as rugby, or sports he was experienced in, he answered: "I think I like them both about the same because I am already in the sports I know how to play, and trying new sports is pretty fun for me." Connor had the same attitude: "Like rugby- I didn't even know how to play. But then they taught me and now I am really liking it." The boys in the C1 group,

including Connor, had absolutely no problems connected to their lack of skills in this sport, but seemed to view rugby as an opportunity to learn something new.

For Hannah, on the other hand, playing rugby, which is a new sport for her as well, feels that this the situation where she feels pressure in PE, and she feels it on several levels: “Having to run with the ball, and then the only way to be able to pass it is backwards – that’s just not very fun for me.” She particularly feels “clumsy” because she has to use her hands more than she is used to. It is apparent that playing rugby causes her to feel pressure because of different physical and strategic elements of the sport that make it hard because they are foreign to her. However, when Hannah starts talking about her classmates’ behavior, particularly the boys’ behavior, that she really becomes agitated. The following quote starts with me mirroring back to Hannah what she had just told me about pressure:

Interviewer: For you. More pressure. So, does that pressure have to do with what you just said? The pressure of, sort of, catching the ball, not allow for the other team to intercept?

Hannah: Yeah, it’s also [...] The guys at my school are often very competitive. So, if you do something wrong, they will often yell at you. And that is not fun. So, the pressure of not letting down, not wanting to let your team down is also there. [...].

Interviewer: Hmm. Obviously, it is co-ed, boys and girls together, and so, that colors your experience of phy-ed, it sounds like?

Hannah: Well, [...] the girls... my friends and I are really competitive too. But I think we are less inclined [...] to yell at people. Whereas the boys, I have heard swearing. I have heard yelling. There’s some pushing. And I think they take it way to seriously [...]

Interviewer: So, what does it make you feel then? [...] when you get something thrown at you, some words [...] from someone who doesn’t approve of what you do?

Hannah: [...] If it is a guy who I know and I know what they are going to say [...] I can just blow them off. But if it’s a person who I feel like knows what they are doing, and they know how to play the sport.... It’s even worse if it is a generally nice person. Boy or girl, it doesn’t matter. ‘Cause then I feel really embarrassed most of the time. Or, maybe even get a little bit angry because I really don’t like being accused of things. But usually I’ll just ignore it. But also, if I am like... [...] But, I mean, sometimes I know I totally deserve it

Although it seemed like most of the students in her class, including all four in the C1 group, are new to the game of rugby, Hannah is the only one of the four in this category who seemed to

suffer as a result of lack of skills in this sport. I asked Hannah whether she thought her classmates, who are generally inexperienced in sports, feel the same as her (during rugby). This is how she replied:

Well, I don't know. I mean, I guess it depends on their level of competitiveness. Also, 'cause kids who might not do sports just might not be competitive. And that's why they don't do sports. And I think they might not really care about gym class either. Not really care about doing the sport like kids who are competitive and just don't have the time to do sports. I think they might feel like I do during rugby in gym class a lot more.

What I hear Hannah saying is that she thinks someone who is competitive but who is being prevented from “doing sports” outside school might feel like herself during rugby. In this case, according to Hannah, a student’s desire to win is not matched with skills needed to win which results in “suffering.” In Hannah’s view the situation is very different for someone who chooses to not play sports outside school as this choice most likely, in her view, reflects that they are not competitive. In this case, she thinks they don’t care about how they do in gym class either and are, therefore, not likely to suffer from lack of sports skills.

Happy with the focus on skills in PE class. One example of the significance of skills for the adolescents within in this student category was shown in the previous paragraph about the pressure Hannah is experiencing during rugby in particular. It is apparent that having, or not having, skills is important for how she experiences this particular situation in PE class. Her lack of skills in rugby causes her to sometimes feel embarrassed, but there is also a positive aspect for her playing rugby: “The thing I really like about rugby actually is that it requires speed. And I really like the competitive thing. I really like seeing if I am faster than people, so that’s pretty fun.” The speed requirement is an aspect of this sport that works in her favor because she is good at running. Despite the negative consequences from lack of rugby skills, rugby apparently gives her an opportunity to demonstrate at least one thing she is good at. In either case, for Hannah, skill level is an important determinant for liking or not liking this activity in PE.

As mentioned earlier, in the description section of this report, Hannah came up with the idea to split up the students according to skill levels during sports in PE. When they implemented this in her PE class, this really seemed to improve her experience in class. The reason for this, she said, is: “The people around me know how to do it, so the game moves a lot faster. It’s a lot

higher pace. It takes more skill, and I feel like that is a lot more fun.” She showed here again how skills in an important factor for her during PE class.

The importance of skills and of being competent is also evident among the three boys in this profile. Connor is the one among the boys who expressed most clearly the joy he gets from comparing himself to others:

It also feels pretty fun once you become really good at something, and you can start comparing to your friends who are way better than you. Like running the mile; like being pretty bad and then building yourself up and then being one of the first people in the class.

Also for Anthony and Jacob, “being really good” and “winning” are important for their experience in PE class, and were mentioned as key ingredients in situations that they described as “highlights” in class.

Negative view of other “non-participating” students. All of the students in the C1 group did, at some point during the interviews, talk about a group of students, not including themselves, that I have called the “non-participating” students. This is how Connor described them: “Some people don’t really get involved in the gym class. They are just the people who just stand around and talk.” This behavior will, according to him, have consequences for themselves:

If you want to win the game, like a game of rugby, and you’re just slouching around talking to your friends, no one’s gonna want to pass to you. Because you might not see it (the ball) coming, and it might be a turnover. Or you don’t look as active and, like, you actually want to try.

Jacob feels that the non-participants also cause negative consequences for others: “If they are not really participating, it’s affecting the entire team.” All of the students in this category talked about these non-participants as if they did not even try to participate. The C1 students said these things about the non-participating students: “They just don’t want to do anything” “some people that just don’t even care” “they don’t even bother.”

The C1 students did not all use the same terms when they described the non-participants, but it seemed to me as they has the same views and feelings about them. To summarize, the C1 students see the non-participants as not caring (about the games or PE in general), not contributing and also as preventing others from playing “good” games. According to Anthony, the “non-participants are trying to get away with it.” He added, “They just, like, walk down the

field and back, with the play, just so the teachers think that they are doing something to help the game.”

As much as it seemed to me as the C1 students dislike these other students’ behavior and attitudes that they perceive from some of these other students, they also expressed an understanding for the mechanisms behind it. For example, Anthony said, “I can see why they are doing it because they just don’t really care about sports. They don’t like to play sports, so they just don’t want to do anything.” Connor added that “they” don’t feel bad about themselves when “they” don’t get the ball passed to them. Connor said, “They don’t really seem to mind. They just keep on talking to their friends.”

5.2.3 Category 2 (C2): “Those who cope”

Feelings about PA in general. The students within this category all enjoy being physically active, although they talked about it with different degrees of enthusiasm. None of them mentioned team sports as something they particularly enjoy. Examples of types of activities they like are swimming, walking, biking, skiing, making obstacle courses on playgrounds or in nature, hiking, jumping on a trampoline, and playing the game of tag.

One girl, Isabel, who said she likes to play tag, is also one of two who say they don’t like running. This may suggest that she likes running in certain contexts and not in others. When she mentioned playing tag, it was as an example of a game where she thought “...there is a lot of physical activity where we don’t realize there is.”

Several of them expressed that it is important for their enjoyment of PA that they can do it on their own terms. For the most part, they all seemed to prefer to engage in PA in a context that they perceive as low-pressure situations where the emphasis is on fun and not so much on competition. One described a situation like this as a chance to “have fun with friends and socialize, laugh and run around.” The only boy in this profile group, however, also shared that PA motivates him to “keep going, to keep pushing. And just have a great time doing it.” It seemed to me as if he referred to a kind of pressure that comes from within, that also applies to some of the other children in this profile, an internal desire to push themselves as opposed to external pressure to perform. In fact, he told me he feels “kind of free” when he gets to do PA on his “own time.” Only one of these four students is involved in organized, competitive sports (swimming). Another has joined a running club after school that focuses more on running as a

form of exercise rather than as a highly competitive event. The social aspect of playing and having fun with friends is an important and integrated part of PA for all of them. However, one of them also mentioned that her favorite, which is walking, is an opportunity for “thinking about things”, and for “letting her mind wander.” Another sees PA as a way to “get out your emotions.”

Not so happy with the school-offerings of PA. All four students in this category wish they had more opportunities for PA during the school day overall. They miss more chances to walk around and to stretch their bodies. All of them, at least partly, use their one recess to engage in some form of PA. This can be walking, running and playing sports. One gives piggyback-rides to her friends.

Not very satisfied with PE class. None of the four students in this category seemed very excited about PE class, and three of them – Ben, Diane and Isabel – clearly stated that they do not like having this class. All four were able to identify certain aspects about having PE that they appreciate. Ben and Isabel especially have big problems with the teachers’ role, the way PE is taught, and the overall framework of the subject. Elisabeth is also less excited about PE class compared to “her own” PA, but seemed to go along with the content and teaching of PE to a larger degree than the rest in this student category, and without questioning it as much. It is apparent with all four that their feeling of joy in connection to PA in general is replaced, either completely or partially, by a feeling of obligation in the PE class context. Or, like Ben told me: “A lot of time it feels more like a chore.”

Most of the students in the C2 group seemed to question the focus on competitive sports and running in PE class, although, it appeared to be an inevitable fact for some. Ben, however, seemed to have the imagination to think that things could have been done differently when he said:

I don't know- it kind of just feels the same. It doesn't feel like we're getting immersed into all the different kind of things that are maybe out there. It's kind of the same, even though we have different units. It's like the same idea throughout. So, I don't think we are getting the real feel.

The type of activities offered in PE class generally do not match the interests of the four students in this category very well, and the PE activities overall are not aligned with their preferred activities outside class. There are several exceptions to this general picture.

As I will discuss later in this section, it seemed to me as if all four students in the C2 group feel there is too much pressure and focus on performance and results in PE class. They differ slightly in the way they deal with this feeling. What they all seemed to have in common is a way of distancing themselves from the whole idea of PE as if it is not really for them. An example is when Elisabeth says: “I think about it reasonably. I am not gonna become an athlete. That’s not gonna be my job, so it’s not gonna matter very much for me.” It is as if she is saying: PE has to do with being good at sports. I am not aspiring to be good at sports. Therefore, PE is not for me. The place where I heard Ben making this separation between himself and PE class is when he said: “I get more out of it, and I feel that it’s more helpful to just do it on my own.” Isabel does not feel PE is doing anything for her: “I don’t need any more exercise than I am already getting.” As for Diane, she sounded somewhat alienated from the whole subject of PE simply through her feelings about the physical environment. She told me they have PE class in a large fieldhouse with bleachers and with “tracks around and all different lines and stuff that don’t make any sense to me.” For her, PE is just a matter of getting through: “I am usually thinking I can’t wait until I can get out of there and go to my next class.” While they all seemed to feel, at least to some extent, that PE class isn’t really for them, two of them conveyed a constructive attitude like the one Ben expresses when he says: “I am hoping to get the most I can out of it.”

Divided in their feelings about “the distant teachers’ role. All of the students in the C2 group (as well as in C1) agree on the nature of the teachers’ role in PE class to be mostly what we can call “a distant role of watching and grading.” The way they feel about that, however, differs. While Diane and Elisabeth seemed to accept the situation as “just the way it is,” Ben and Isabel see big problems with the lack of teacher involvement. They both acknowledged the teachers’ challenges with having so many students in the class. However, they were clear about the consequences for them as students, stemming from what they see as minimal encouragement or any kind of feedback or help from the teachers. This is part of my conversation with Isabel concerning the teachers’ role in PE:

Isabel: I don't exactly like the way they teach it. They don't show you very specifically how to play. If you are doing something wrong, they don't try to help you fix it. You are supposed to fix it on your own [...], and if you're not doing anything, they don't really tell you to do something [...]. I would think if you were doing something wrong with how you were playing, they might say, hey, why don't

you work on your footing for a little bit. And this is how you can do it. This is how you should fix it. Great. They (the teachers) just stand at the top of the hill, and watch you. And that's it.

Interviewer: So they are kind of distant in..... in a sense.... from you... maybe physically, but also just not present and connecting?

Isabel: Really what I think they are looking for is people who don't participate and that's about it. [...]

Interviewer: [...], plus you're quite a few kids running around in the facility. [...]

Isabel: But, 50 kids, you're bound to see someone trying, but messing one thing up [...] I get that they can't see everybody, but they are bound to see at least one person doing this. But I've never seen them try to talk with you and do something like that. And then this makes kids not want to participate.

It is apparent that Isabel does not approve of the teachers' lack of involvement during PE class. She feels that she and the rest of the students are not really taught how to do the activities in class, and that they don't get needed help when they are making "mistakes." She further seemed to suggest that this lack of teacher involvement is a conscious choice on the part of the teachers in the sense that they are only focused on seeing whether or not the students are participating. Ben talked very similarly about his experiences with lack of teacher feedback:

I don't feel like they really encourage us. They kind of tell us what to do and then they watch us do it. But, like, when you are doing something wrong, they don't necessarily... they don't really give us much feedback, I feel. They just kind of watch it happen. And if we're struggling, they write it down. I mean, I don't. I personally have never gotten feedback from any of them.

It is clear to me that they both see this situation as having a large negative impact on their experience in PE class. Isabel felt the teachers don't care what the students do as long as they get a good grade. If they don't, she said, they are just asked to "step up their game." This is a strategy, she said, is not doing any good.

All four students in C2 have, to some degree, issues with how the grading system works. This is what Ben said about grading in PE class:

Ben: And also, the way they grade us on them. It's, like, if we're not doing something right that they want us to do, it's, like, they just write down the whole fitness station and, like, that's just marked off.

[...] So, it's not really based on our own physical abilities I guess. It can be somewhat to the degree of, like, what they expect the average should be.

Interviewer: *That you at least put in what you can to.....?*

Ben: *What you can.... that's what I think. Like you should. It's to what physical level you can push it to. And since I really enjoy being active, I feel like it's kind of like taking away from the physical aspect... or just the enjoyment aspect.*

The students seemed confused about the link between what each of them do during class and how that translates in to a grade. They all believe that participation is, at least part of, what their grades are based on, but several of them have a sense that also their level of performance impacts their grade, which is something most of them expressed disagreement with. Some feel as if their performance is assessed as a comparison to an expected average for their age. The teachers have told Isabel that they don't grade them on how fast and long they can run, but on how much they improve. Isabel still feels that this is what is happening and that they don't have a right to do that.

Another problem they all see with grading is connected to the very limited possibility the teachers have to see the students "as individuals." Especially two of the students questioned how the teachers can get a full picture of each student, on which they can base their grading on, as long as they only see "snapshots" of their performance. Elisabeth, for example, feels the teachers fail to see that it can be many reasons you get a slow time running:

[...] in gym class, you only get that one snapshot at it. [...] That might have been either like lucky or they started [...] at the beginning of the group, you know. There's a big group waiting, and if you end up at the back you're more likely to get a slower time. So you only get that one look [...].

She compares the PE situation to her laid-back running club after school (cross-country) when she says: "In cross-country, it's different because you can set your own pace, and the coaches don't assume that you are not very good if you get an eleven-minute mile."

My overall impression of how the grading impacts the C1 students personally was that it does not phase them too much. Ben, for example, shared this: "Well, for me.... I tend to get good grades, so that doesn't bother me. But I know a lot of our school life is based on all grades across the board. And it can be kind of stressful." Elisabeth is also not very pre-occupied with grades: "I mostly just think about doing the activity right or I might think about something else, but I

don't really think about the evaluation that much on a daily basis." When I asked Isabel if she thinks about grades during PE class she said "no." And she went on:

I am usually thinking I can't wait until I can get out of here and go to my next class. I do wonder about my grades. I usually hope I get more than a 3, which is like a B. [...] I probably will get A this year because if you're participating then it's really easy to get a good grade. Unless, like, you behave badly and don't follow directions, then you might get a bad grade. [...]. I'm not too worried about that.

Especially Isabel and Ben shared thoughts about a lack of fairness in the grading system and about the impact this can have on other students. As far as themselves, none of the students in the C2 group seemed overly concerned about, nor preoccupied with, their PE grades. They seemed to have a general confidence in themselves, and tend to get good grades which they expressed in, more or less, direct terms.

Unhappy with lack of choice in PE class. Three of the students in this category said specifically to me that they wish they had more of an impact on what they do and/or how they do activities in PE class. As far as the type of environment and activities generally offered in PE, some of the C2 students expressed clearly that they wish this were different than the way it currently is. If Ben got it his way, he would want "a more encouraging environment of staying healthy within an active area rather than just learning about the different sports and their rules." At least two of the other three students in C2 expressed that they were not happy with the sports focus in PE class.

In addition to missing having an impact on the type of activities in PE, Isabel would have liked to have more freedom to make other decisions as well. She would like to be able to take breaks when she needs as well as going inside when she is cold. Another girl, Diane, wants to have more "free-gym-time" where they get to choose their own activity for part of the class period. If she could choose her own activity in PE class, she told me she would go for walks outside a lot.

Despite being told that teachers want the students to find their own pace, the C2 students expressed to me that they don't really feel they get to choose their speed or intensity for the activities. When Elisabeth, again, compared her experience of running in PE class to her experience in the after-school running club, she said: "It's different in the club because you can

set your own pace.” My understanding, based on my conversation with her, is that she believes this is also the case in PE class, but that it feels to her that not all speeds are equally accepted, and, therefore, she doesn’t quite feel that she has a choice on what pace she should set when running.

Feeling of pressure. With a possible exception of Diane, the other three students in this category seemed to suffer from a feeling of pressure in PE class. It looked like Diane, to a larger extent than the rest, accepts her status as one who, as far as PE activities goes, generally is “not good at it.” She does not put pressure on herself to perform better, nor is she generally concerned about what others think of her performance in PE class.

Interviewer: So, you don't feel negative encouragement from others. You did mention that you often don't get the ball passed to you.....?

Diane: Yeah. But that's really not too negative. They just kind of ignore you. But I really don't mind actually because I don't want to get the ball because I really wouldn't know what to do with it then. I don't really, really actually care about that.

Ben did, only to a certain degree, identify elements in PE class that makes him feel pressure. A typical situation would be when they play sports, an area where he does not have much experience. He shared with me a strategy he uses to cope in those kinds of situations:

Yeah, I mean, there's just some things I am just not as good at, and I just kind of have to - well, kind of fake it until I make it. Or, I'll just try my best and... you know... it will all [...] even out. So, it's okay. There are some things I am not good at, of course. We all have those things...

I hear Ben as if he feels a certain pressure to make it look like he knows how to play the sport despite feeling that he is not good at it. I also infer that he feels he is on his own as far as dealing with the situation, but that he has the inner recourses to do so.

Elisabeth and Isabel were the ones who most clearly expressed a feeling of pressure in PE class. This is a part of our conversation when I asked Isabel directly about pressure:

Interviewer: So when you talked about pressure before [...] where does the pressure come from?

Isabel: My fellow students.... No one tells me, hey you have to be up to par on this, you gotta do this. I just think, Wow, they can do this. I should be able to. I mean I am taller than them. I feel like my head thinks being tall is something that makes me better, that I should be better because I am taller.

But I am not. Actually, I weigh more, making it harder for me to do things. [...] So then, standing at the top of the hill kind of.... There's this one coach (teacher) that kind of just glares at everyone. That creates pressure. Seeing students run around like they're lightning creates pressure. If someone passes me while they are running, that creates pressure. When I am with my friends, I am distracted. I don't look around me to see everyone passing me. And I don't really mind as much when there is someone to distract me.

Interviewer: *Right, and maybe you feel less pressured also when you run around with your friends? [...].*

Isabel: *Because my friends aren't... I am not gonna say bad, but they are not super-fast either. They are not those types of people who are really into physical exercise. They feel... similar to me.*

Isabel recognizes that she is not forced in PE class, but her experience in PE is obviously very different compared to when she engages in PA with her friends. The pressure she feels in PE class doesn't stem from what anyone is telling her, but rather from the impact that "glaring" teachers and skilled students have on her implicitly. When I asked Ben what he gets out of having PE, his answer focused a lot on getting a routine:

Well, I think some of it is routine. You know, you learn there is a routine there. And with all the stations, as much as I don't enjoy them, it does help to do them every other day. Some of them I really don't think are helpful, but there are some where I think: This has made me a bit stronger in my arms, or somewhere. And in terms of mentally, I guess that physically routine.... that we are just going to do it - even though it may not be exactly how I would want it. But we are gonna do it, and we are going to be miserable and we are going to stay healthy. We're going to do it anyway even though I don't like this. But I kind of have to do it. So mentally that attitude, that can help in all life. Especially like later on if you're gonna train for something. It's gonna help with the attitude, like, I don't want to do this, but I gotta do it.

Ben seemed to me to be talking about how he thinks that being pressured to keep up a routine may help building a kind of determined attitude that can be helpful. This can be seen as a way where he is trying to see a positive aspect of the pressure that he experiences in PE. The fact that he, earlier during our conversation, had shared with me that he thought he would have been better off without having PE at all, telling me that he doesn't see this possible effect to be of a very large significance for him.

Being ignored by fellow students. Isabel and Elisabeth expressed specifically to me that they, at times, feel negatively impacted by their fellow students, but not in ways that seemed to be devastating for them. None of the four C2 students regard themselves as very competitive, but these two, Isabel and Elisabeth, tend to be impacted by the competitive behavior of others. They use words like “overly competitive,” “really intense,” and “annoying” to describe some of the students in their class. Isabel points to, in particular, the boys being “loud and obnoxious.” Elisabeth, especially, seemed to work against this tendency to be negatively impacted and said she tries to not let the others behavior interfere with her during the games. None of the four C2 students reported any directly discouraging behavior or talk between the students. Their issues seemed to be more about how they feel about themselves in other students’ presence. Isabel, for instance, feels “put down” when other students don’t pass the ball to her. Elisabeth told me that it sometimes doesn’t feel good when she gets a compliment in sports because people usually only gives compliments to those they don’t expect much from. Diane, on the other hand, said she didn’t mind not being passed the ball to, as she wouldn’t know what to do with it anyway. She said the students really weren’t mean to each other, and that they just “ignored” her. It did not seem to me that Ben let his fellow students have much of a negative impact on him. He talked a lot about negative aspects of PE, but not once did he mention that he was concerned about what fellow students thought of him. None of the stories he shared with me touched on anything that prompted me to ask about his relation with fellow students in PE class, and I failed to ask about this directly.

Students’ feelings of not being valued. Although the C2 students themselves don’t feel that PE is aligned with their personalities, skills and interests, they generally seem to personally be able to “work the system” and to not let PE have an overwhelmingly negative impact on them. During my conversation with Ben, for example, he talked to me about how he handles not being good at sports, and how he just hustles through PE: “I can function on that kind of stuff well. It is maybe not necessarily the best, but I can work with that.” This said, the C2 students also shared with me situations where it looked like if their strategies and “coping mechanisms” did not work as well. Isabel told me (or herself): “I feel like I should be able to run around (fast). I should be able to do these things. But I am still a good exercise person if I can swim a 28.89!” But then, as she finds herself running the mile and other kids are lapping her twice while she is jogging at her own pace, she reveals: “I’ll feel like my own pace isn’t good enough.” She goes on, “I am a

strong person but in different ways, and those ways are not recognized as much. I can defend myself, I can swim fast, but I can't kick a soccer ball. I am sorry." I believe Isabel shows struggles to keep her feeling of worth by holding on to what she personally values, despite what she feels is being valued in the immediate PE environment.

Diane, who said she doesn't care about being a slow runner or being ignored while playing sports, also shared some of her vulnerability:

There is just a few other people that only get twenty something (timed running), so it really kind of singles out the people who can't run and the people who can run...it makes me feel that they (teachers) really don't care about our feelings.

When I asked Ben what he thought was the goal of PE, he had an interesting comment on how he thinks the teachers should try to make sure the adolescents stay active and well-rounded for the purpose of staying healthy. He went on: "It doesn't mean you have to be, like, playing sports necessarily, or doing this necessarily, because that's not everyone. And it doesn't mean that you're, like.... people shouldn't be judging if you can do this or not." From the context of the entire conversation I had with Ben, I interpreted this statement as that he feels the focus in PE, in fact, is not so much about being well-rounded, and that there is some judging going on in PE class of those students who are not sports-inclined. However, my overall impression from talking with the students in the C2 group is that they don't struggle a lot with feelings of personally being devaluated. An exception from this might be Isabel, but even she talks more about other students' suffering in this regard.

Students' thoughts about "other students" and their problems. Two of the students in the C2 group, Ben and Isabel, talked to me about other students in PE class who they thought of as having the same struggles as themselves, but who couldn't cope with them as well as they could. One example is in connection with the previous quote where Ben told me: "I think it works for me. Like, I can function on that kind of stuff well. It is maybe not necessarily the best, but I can work with that. But I know not everyone can." Our conversation continued:

Interviewer: Right. So, what might others feel in that situation who don't feel they are good at what you are doing (in PE class)?

Ben: I know some of them. They care and they are kind of like self conscious about it and they try to get better, but they are not..... So they don't feel as good about it because they don't look as good at the

sport [...] But some kids are just, like, you know what, I suck at this and I'm just gonna...I don't really care. So, there are two different ways people look at it. [...] I know a lot of the kids, some of them just don't try anymore. They just kind of walk through the activities. They kind of don't try their hardest or just kind of putting it off. Some of them don't do a lot of the things. Or they're - if we're like playing a game outside, they'll just stand on the field and just kind of walk around. They won't do it. And I feel that some of that is to the influence of the teachers, and how we are supposed to be active....

Interviewer: So it can be as a result of the influence of the teachers? Is that what you meant?

Ben: Yeah, so what they are doing can sometimes be the result of what they are saying about how they are active. About how what being active is, I guess.

Ben is talking about this “other group” of students who appear to have a different strategy, and probably a different ability than himself in regards to how they deal with a PE class where they don't feel that they fit in. He described students who have given up and suggested that the teachers play a direct role in this lack of motivation among those students.

Worries about getting physically hurt. It was only Isabel who shared with me worries about getting physically hurt during activities in PE class. I saw it as an issue that had a fairly large impact on her experience in class, and I choose, therefore, to include this, despite she being the only one person in my sample who talked about it. She mentioned this issue for me a couple of times during our talk, but I think the following quote captures the way she feels: “I don't like running around, like in soccer, because I feel like I am going to trip. And I am also scared of when there's a basketball or football flying at me. My first instinct is to close my eyes and cover my face.”

6. Discussion

The main research question of the present study is to explore adolescents' experiences in physical education class. In addition, I seek to answer a secondary question: To what degree does it seem likely that PE plays a role in heightening PA levels and, thereby, having a health-promoting function? In order to explore adolescents' experiences, I used semi-structured interviews as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). The results, based on the analysis of these interviews, are presented in the previous chapter (see 5.2 Results), and will be discussed in the sections that follow. The search for answers to the secondary question above, about the likelihood that PE has a health-promoting function, is done in this report through the following discussion chapter.

This chapter will have five sections. In the first section I will discuss the results of this study in the light of school documents. The second section will examine how the findings of this study relate to previous research on the topic of adolescents' experiences in PE. I will then relate the findings to the chosen theoretical frameworks and concepts: self-determination theory and self-image theory. Finally, a discussion of the methodology used in this study will follow.

6.1 The Results in the Light of School Documents and Standards

The main focus of this section is the students' experiences in PE class and how these experiences align with the schools' objectives for PE. However, in order to put the PE class in a broader context of the schools' overall teaching of health-related PA, I will also talk briefly about the relevant broader goals for the school district and how these relate to the students' experiences.

The district's strategic framework document lists "wellness" as one of eleven overall outcomes for their schools (MMSD, 2016a). Based on the way that the district further organizes the curriculum and content areas, it appears that the main responsibility for the teaching of health and wellness falls under the content area called *physical education and health* (MMSD, 2017a). This content area has two separate sets of standards, namely *health education standards* and *physical education standards* (MMSD, 2017a). This way of structuring the curriculum does not in itself necessarily mean that the teaching and conveying of values relevant to PA and health is limited to two formal classes: health education class and physical education class. However, as far as health education class, it is my impression that most of my informants had not been in such

a class in middle school so far. (One of them had been offered the class, but had been allowed to take an extra academics class instead). According to the standards document, middle schools are given a three-year timespan to offer the health education class; meaning, the students still could have the class ahead of them (MMSD, 2008). All students in this study had been in PE class as part of their regular class offerings during their entire elementary and middle school experience. However, the students seemed to not have been given opportunities outside of PE class for reflections on the significance of PA. They also did not have many opportunities for engaging in PA other than during PE class. An exception from this was the students who experienced movement and activity as an integrated part of one of their academic classes on a regular basis. All of the students also had a daily opportunity for being active once a day during lunch recess. Reflecting over the district's overall health goal "for all students to become intrinsically motivated to pursue and maintain a lifelong, healthy and active lifestyle" (MMSD, 2017c, para. 1), one might wonder if PE class alone, every other day, is sufficient. If some level of integration of PA in academic classes was more of a common practice and the students overall had more opportunities for PA during the school day, this might have helped toward meeting the above-mentioned goal. In addition to the immediate benefits of being active on a regular basis, such a practice would very likely help the students to think about PA as a naturally integrated part of daily life, which subsequently could model life outside the school setting and for the future.

For the time being, however, the students' health education seems to be almost limited to PE class. According to the PE standards document, "opportunities exist to integrate Health Education, [...] into the Physical Education curriculum" (MMSD, 2008, p. 5). Hence, health education can be integrated in PE, and two out of six goals, from which the PE standards are developed, do indeed concern the health and enjoyment aspects of PA. One goal is that the "student understands the cost and benefits of participating regularly in health enhancing physical activities" (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). Another is to "understand that physical activity provides an opportunity for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and social interaction" (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). When I asked the students about how the health aspects are incorporated into PE class, none of them were of the opinion that this is explicitly part of class. However, several of the students had some thoughts about the rationale for having PE in school. One student thought that part of the idea with PE was for the students to have a chance to be active for a while. Another student

had understood the teachers as if they said that people needed to exercise to avoid getting fat. It is possible that the students are left with making such inferences as a result of the teachers' lack of emphasis on the health aspect of PA as part of their teaching of PE class. Such a lack of emphasis could have different explanations if indeed accurate. It is possible that there is a conscious choice of the teachers to spend the time in PE class on direct experiences with PA as opposed to talking about PA's significance for health. Supposing that the students overall had positive experiences with PA in PE class, this could likely contribute toward the desired intrinsic motivation for PA. It is, however, hard to see how being active during PE class alone can be sufficient for achieving the goals connected to the understanding and the knowledge parts of the schools' goals for health education (MMSD, 2008). Keep in mind that one of the health education goals is to make sure the students are "empowered with the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy lifestyle choices to enhance their overall quality well-being" (MMSD, 2017c, para. 1). For these parts of the schools objectives to be met, it would seem reasonable that there would have to be some form of teaching and reflection with the students on the topic. It is further specified in the above-mentioned PE goals that the student chooses and participates in a variety of PA that promotes fitness goals (MMSD, 2008). Although the students' PE classes included a variety of sports activities, as well as running and dance, it seemed like activities outside the realm of sports were scarce. This was pointed out by several of the C2 students, those who preferred "alternative" activities; they thought the curriculum was too narrow. The school of one of the students, however, had a somewhat broader activity spectrum in her PE curriculum, but still with the main focus being on sport.

A third of the six PE goals are more directly connected to positive experiences with PA as the school district wants the students to "understand that physical activity provides an opportunity for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and social interaction" (MMSD, 2008, p. 4). This goal also includes identifying and engaging in PA outside of the PE setting and having positive feelings toward PA. This PE goal seems to correspond with the district's overall health education goal for the students to be intrinsically motivated for a healthy and active lifestyle (MMSD, 2008). In the present study, all of the students seemed to be intrinsically motivated for some types of PA, and they did all, to different degrees, express awareness of the health aspect of incorporating PA in their lives. The question in this context would be: Is this motivation likely to be, at least partly, a result of having PE at school, or is the motivation there regardless of the

students' experiences in PE class? From the results, we see that among those of the students who have positive experiences in PE – C1 students -- most of them like PE because they get to do mostly sports, which they love and already do in their free time. Even among this C1 group, however, most of them like doing this form of PA even better outside the PE setting. For the rest of the students in the study – C2 students -- their experience with PA in PE class ranges from somewhat negative to very negative.

Going back to the six goals for PE, the two first listed in the standards have to do with developing movement skills (MMSD, 2008). It is further specified that movement skills in the PE context are intended to be related to “individual and team sports, including offensive and defensive strategies and dance” (MMSD, 2008, p. 5). There is reason to believe that the students' skill level in these particular areas will increase somewhat as a result of PE, at least for those who are not already highly skilled from before. To what extent these students will gain skills in these activities, which are not of particular interest for them, is uncertain though. The bigger question is whether efforts to give them skills in these sports activities, which they dislike, will help toward reaching the school district's long-term goal for the students, which is to have a lifelong healthy lifestyle (MMSD, 2008). It is important to remember that this group of students already was engaged in a variety of physical activities in their free time.

The premise in the overall physical and health education goal for this district's schools is that “knowledge and skills [are] necessary to make healthy lifestyle choices to enhance their overall quality well-being” (MMSD, 2017c, para. 1). Subsequently, skills in the PE standards are seen in relation to sports and dance. In other words, it can look like there is an underlying assumption that having skills in sports and dance is a prerequisite for making healthy lifestyle choices. In this student sample, however, there seems to be plenty of self-initiated and enjoyable PA happening for all the students regardless of their skills in the particular PE sports.

6.2 The Results Compared to Previous Research

In the present study, there was an obvious division in the student sample in regards to how the students like PE class. The division followed largely the lines of whether they, in their free time, were involved, or not, in organized sports of the same kind that the school offers. The study showed a general pattern where those involved in such sports liked PE better than those who were not. These results, for the most part, parallel those from previous studies. An

association between involvement in organized sports, and students' experiences with and motivation for PE class, was revealed in research conducted in several countries in both the western and eastern part of the world (Safvenbom et al, 2014; Ishii & Osaka, 2010; Kjoenniksen et al., 2009; Lewis, 2014; Martins et al., 2015). A logical explanation for this could be, at least partly, that there is a predominantly sports discourse in the PE setting and that the focus on sports works better for those students who have experience with organized sports in their free time. It is noteworthy that those students in the present study who were not excited about PE class, to different degrees, all had a general interest in and were engaged in physical activities in a variety of ways in their free time, but this did not include organized sports. The same pattern was found in similar research by Lewis (2014) who also used semi-structured interviews to explore ninth graders experiences with PE. Despite the fact that Lewis had not been able to interview any of the adolescents who had rated themselves on the bottom third on a sports competence scale, she still found that several among the students with low motivation in his sample felt "embarrassed or humiliated" in PE class at times (Lewis, 2014, para. 28). These findings diverged slightly from the results of the present study where negative feelings of that magnitude were not expressed by the less sports-competent students, but rather by some of the sports-competent students. Possible explanations for this will be discussed below (see 6.4 The Results Viewed Through Self-Image Theory and Self-Evaluation Theory).

The motivation in the present study for exploring adolescents' experiences with PA in the school setting was based on the well-known significance of life-long activity for health and the assumption that the students' experiences with PA in school is one important determinant for a future healthy lifestyle. Results from studies by both Martins et al. (2013) and Kjoenniksen et al. (2009) suggest that such a link exists between people's experiences in PE class and later activity levels as adults.

While establishing or supporting such a causal link was not the aim of the present study, it was nonetheless obvious from the results that the topic of PE engaged the students to a large degree, as well as it brought out fairly strong feelings related to their experiences in PE class. On a speculative basis, I find it reasonable to interpret the present study results as supporting the notion that experiences in PE class is of relevance for future attitudes toward and engagement in PA. (More foundation for this conclusion will be suggested later in the report when the present findings are discussed in relation to theoretical frameworks).

Like the current study, many other research projects on adolescents' experiences with, and motivation for, PE class has also used constructs from SDT for this exploration. In the previously mentioned qualitative study, Lewis found that many ninth-graders disliked PE due to lack of control (Lewis, 2014). This lack of control had in Lewis's study been manifested through a perception of teachers to have a controlling behavior and also through a narrow option for type of activities in PE class. In comparison, the results from the present study suggest that students in this study felt that lack of control for them was mostly related to lack of activity choice. As far as the teachers' behaviors, the students in the present study largely talked about the teachers in terms of being distant and less as being controlling, *per se*.

One quantitative study concluded that autonomy and relatedness were predictors for enjoyment in PE class (Liukkonen et al., 2010). This finding was supported by another study where autonomy-supporting PE teachers predicted feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness among the students. Autonomy and competence predicted autonomous motivation for PE and exercise. In the present study, all of the students seemed equally distant to their teachers. Meaning, these teachers were perceived as distant to both the students who enjoy PE and those who dislike PE. Broadly speaking, the students' level of relatedness with the teacher, therefore, didn't distinguish between the students who enjoy PE and those who dislike PE. As I will discuss later, there is no reason to conclude that lack of relatedness is insignificant for outcomes related to future attitudes and engagement in PA. However, as far as immediate enjoyment in, and motivation for, PE class, it appeared that the students of the present study who had the strongest feeling of competence also enjoyed PE the most. The one exception from this was the student who generally felt competent in PE class but who disliked PE to the extent that she did not feel competent in particular activities. Hence, enjoyment was also in this case associated with a feeling of competence.

6.3 The Results Viewed in the Light of Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

In the following, SDT constructs will be used to discuss how factors in the PE environment may impact the student's motivation for PE class and for the type of PA offered in this class. Because the two identified student categories in this study – C1 and C2 -- differ in their overall motivation for participation in PE, they will partly be discussed separately. However, since they are all participating in roughly the same environment, and therefore exposed to the same

motivational climate, most of the following discussion will have relevance to both student groups.

C2 students (“those who cope”) are arguably not intrinsically motivated for most types of activities offered in their PE class. However, there are plenty of indications that everyone in this group had intrinsic motivation for other types of PE they were engaged in during their free time. I will let this point rest for now as I, in the following discussion, will focus on qualities of the PE environment and its theorized impact on motivation for participation in PE class and the particular form of PA that is offered in this class. I will be using SDT constructs and the theorized significance of *need satisfaction* for motivation for PE class as it is currently taught (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

From the results in this study, we see that the C2 students do participate in the PE class activities, admittedly not enthusiastically or self-driven but with some form of external motivation. Ben, for instance, said straight out that he didn’t really participate in PE for the enjoyment and that PE mostly felt like a chore. Diane shared that during PE class she usually couldn’t wait until she got out and could go to her next class. Using the terminology and concepts from organismic integration theory, a sub theory of SDT (Ryan et al. 2009), their participation is integrated to the self only to a low degree. They are clearly driven to participation largely by their interests in getting a good grade and in being compliant in the school setting. There were also elements of low integration of motivation among some of the C1 students (the “sports-enthusiasts”). Even Connor, a C1 student who really likes PE, had his focus on grades and said that getting a good grade was his biggest motivation besides having fun. From the tone and overall impression during the conversations with the C2 students, it appears that they were partly motivated by a need to protect their feeling of self-worth. All of the above-mentioned forms of self-regulation are very low in their level of autonomy, meaning that the behavior is controlled, externally and internally respectively. According to organismic integration theory, externally controlled behavior will not continue when the external incentives are not present. The sub theory further postulates that the more relative autonomous motivation for the behavior, the more persistent and enjoyable that particular behavior is for the person. In order for the students to move from such controlled behavior and into an autonomous motivation in PE class, it is theorized that the environment will have to offer support for the three universal needs that SDT postulates: the need to feel competence, the need to feel autonomy, and, finally,

the need to feel relatedness (Ryan et al., 2009). This is according to cognitive evaluation theory, another sub-theory of SDT. In addition to being a pre-requisite for a more integrated motivation, the satisfaction of those three needs are also necessary for a person's overall well-being. Such needs satisfaction or lack thereof, will be revisited throughout the remaining parts of this discussion as it relates to the students' PE situation.

In the PE context, the students in the "sports-enthusiasts" group, C1, seemed intrinsically motivated for some, if not most, of the activities offered in class. Connor said that PE is probably the most fun class he has, and the same was apparently the case for all but one in this C1 group. However, in order for their intrinsic motivation to persist over time, these students will, according to cognitive evaluation theory, need to experience both autonomy and competence in relation to the activities (Ryan et al., 2009). (Note: To the degree that these students have to rely on extrinsic motivation for participation in PE, they are, like the rest of the student body, also dependent of relatedness for integrated motivation as well as for overall well-being). The fact that the C1 students are defined by being experienced in sports, combined with the fact that sports is the main focus of PE, makes it very likely that they will experience competence in this context. This would probably be the case regardless of whether or not the PE environment generally was characterized by competence support for the students. If we look to the results of the present study, these results indicate that student interaction with the teachers is very limited overall. Several of the students from both groups described the teachers' role as watching and grading, and often from a distance. Hence, the students' need for competence support through their teachers seems to be in jeopardy. This suggests that any potential competence support would be left to interactions between students and/or from formal evaluation of the students through grades. And while grades may have been competence-supporting for most of the C1 "sports-enthusiasts" (because they got a good PE grade), it did not seem to work this way for Hannah, who is also a C1 student. While she clearly has overall competence in the activities in class, she does not feel that this is reflected in her grade. As a result, she feels lack of competence support, both in the form of encouragement from the distant teachers as well as in the form of a good grade. This lack of competence support, despite demonstrating her competence during class, does understandably cause her to be frustrated. It seems likely that this "double" lack of competence support can be part of the explanation why Hannah enjoyed PE class less than the three other students in C1.

In order for the larger group of students to feel a certain level of competence in PE class, they will all need positive and constructive feedback regardless of what skill level they enter class with (Ryan et al., 2009). In their current PE situation, there is no indication that the students receive explicit negative feedback or critique from the teachers. However, as a consequence of the distant teacher role, it seemed like the students tend to feel judged. This tendency seemed most apparent among the “cope-category” students. C2 student Ben feels like if they, as students, are doing something wrong or not doing it how the teachers want them to do it, the teachers will automatically lower their grade in PE. Another C2 student, Isabel, imagines that the teachers are looking at her and that she should be able to do more. The division between the C1 and C2 student groups could be explained by the different degree of the match between type of PA skills one has and the type of PA offered in PE. While there is a poor match between the PE content and the C2 students’ skill sets, the match for the C1 students is close to being perfect. However, even the “sports enthusiasts” were worried that their competency was hidden from the teachers as they felt they were only seen by the teachers when they messed up. The tendency to feel judged could, in part, be due to the fact that the teachers actually are required to assess the students’ performance. A number of environmental factors may further contribute to the students’ feeling of being judged. With the PE class being so large, between 60 to 90 students, combined with their mandate to evaluate performance in some form, the teachers apparently (and understandably) feel the need to walk around with a clipboard and take notes about the students during class. Some of the students talked about the insecurity related to whether they were the ones written about in a certain moment, and also related to what the teacher might have written down about them. It does seem as if this described situation, combined with minimal oral communication, makes for a situation where the students are getting less competence-support from the teachers, and they, instead, have worries about not being competent enough during PE class. As a consequence, the students will be less likely to develop a more integrated and persistent motivation for the activities in PE class and/or to maintain an integrated motivation to the extent that such motivation is already present.

As mentioned above, a second potential source of competence support lies in the way the students relate and talk to each other. From the present results, it looks like the students receive very different kinds of feedback from fellow students, depending on whether they belong to the C1 or the C2 group. While the C2 students tend to be ignored, at least during the team sport

activities, the C1 students seem to be at a higher risk of receiving more explicit negative feedback from students in their own category if they don't play according to the high standards in this category. Both Connor and Hannah, C1 students, had stories about feelings of exclusion from teammates in certain sports, and Hannah had experienced yelling and pushing from other students. Neither ignoring nor negative feedback is conducive to a competence-supportive environment. On the other hand, I did hear about how body language like "thumbs up" was used during team sports between those who were good in sports. There were also examples of verbal encouragement between the C1 students. It seems, therefore, likely that the C1 students have a larger likelihood for competence support from fellow students than the C2 students have.

The emphasis on the second of the universal needs is unique for the SDT framework, which is the need to feel autonomy (Ryan et al., 2009). If this need was met for the students in PE class, they would feel a certain degree of self-organization and independence in relation to the activities. For the C1 students, competence support alone would, regardless of size, not be sufficient for maintaining the students' intrinsic motivation. In order for the feeling of competence to enhance intrinsic motivation, the students will, according to cognitive evaluation theory, also need to feel a degree of autonomy in PE class. As for the larger group of students, the feeling of autonomy is required for an integrated and sustainable form of motivation to occur. According to the results from the present student sample, autonomy was not a dominant feeling among them. Although the results do not indicate that the students' teachers have controlling behavior, there also was no evidence that the PE environment supports the students' feeling of autonomy. Despite that several of the students expressed that they thought the teachers wanted them to find "their own pace" during the running and fitness-station activities, they all seemed to have a sense of very specific expectations toward themselves for how to perform. Based on the results of this study, the students were generally not involved in the learning process, including any invitation to reflect over the rationale for the subject. Especially among the C2 students, this study's results indicate that their participation was a result of their compliance for the sake of getting a good evaluation without a feeling of ownership or interest in being part of it. One example of student involvement was Isabel, a C2 student, who had occasional free gym time. Another example was Hannah, a C1 student, who suggested to her teachers that they should group the students according to skill level while playing sports. All in all, there was minimal evidence for autonomy support in the PE setting of the students in this study. Such lack of

autonomy support will, in addition to the lack of competence support, make integration of motivation for PE less likely. This is according to cognitive evaluation theory, within the SDT framework. (Ryan et al., 2009)

This above mention example, where one student contributed to the reorganizing of PE class, can also serve as an example of support for the third and final universal need according to SDT: the need for relatedness (Ryan et al., 2009). This entails a sense of connection and of being cared for and included by others in the environment. The student who was allowed to take part in this organizational decision-making experienced the feeling of inclusion, which probably led her to feel a certain connection with the teachers. There is reason to speculate if a minimum level of connection with the teachers also allowed for her to feel that she could offer such a suggestion. Yet another question is what impact this new organization has on students who lack sports skills, including the impact on their feeling of connection with the teacher. The answer to this question will likely depend on whether or not the environment allows for a stigma to be connected to a student's placement in a particular skill-level group. Issues concerning the related topic of the students' feeling of self-worth will be discussed in the following (see 6.4 The Results Viewed Through Self-Image Theory and Self-Evaluation Theory).

Any kind of relatedness and inclusion during PE class, however, seemed to be an exception as there is very little interaction overall between the students and the teachers. No one seemed to feel that there is any room for approaching the teacher during class, and any conversation with the teacher would, according to Connor, have to be initiated by the student. However, while some of the students pointed this out as a problem, others did not really question this teacher distance. It should be noted that the way "relatedness" is featured within SDT, someone's feeling of relatedness doesn't hinge on the actual time spent physically interacting, but rather as a sense of connection and a feeling of being included and cared for (Ryan et.al, 2009). The results of the study did not really give indications of much of either, and this goes for all students in both groups. This does not mean that the teachers don't care about the students and the student's well-being, but rather that the overall framework for PE class seems to make the students feel disconnected. While it was quite obvious that some students didn't feel that lack of teacher connection interfered with their enjoyment of the class, it is unknown whether those students would have enjoyed PE class more in a counter-factual situation where the teachers were more involved, as well as how they will sustain their enjoyment for PA over time.

As far as the relatedness between the students, it is obvious that they interact more with each other as a consequence of the nature of the activities. This is especially the case during team-sport activities, less so during the running part and the fitness station part of PE class. The fact that the students are set up to interact is, again, not necessarily an indication of connection and feeling of being cared for by each other. In fact, a feeling of being ignored seemed to be the dominant feeling among the “cope” group, and “exclusion was an occasional feeling among some of the “sports-enthusiasts.” Students from both groups, with only a few exceptions, were further preoccupied with worries of disappointing the other students on their team.

All in all, the results from this study describe a PE environment with low degrees of support for all three of the universal needs; the need for feeling of competence, autonomy and relatedness. According to the SDT framework, such environment is not conducive to integrated motivation for participation in the PE activities. An even more important question, one of those asked in the present study, is how such PE environment might impact the students’ motivation for PA beyond the PE context and the particular PE activities. Or, in other words, how does the students’ motivation, or lack of, for PE class translate into free time engagement in PA throughout their lives? It is my hope the next section will shine some light on this question.

6.4 The Results Viewed Through Self-Image Theory and Self-Evaluation Theory

As would be expected, the results from this study show that all of the students are pre-occupied with their perception of other’s evaluation of themselves to some extent. Most of them expressed that they want to get good grades, but the informal assessment, and signals received from teachers and (more so) other students, seemed to get equal or more attention from the students. According to ideas from social interactionism, a big part of how a person’s self-image is formed is based on the reflection of others’ judgments (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). The students in the present study will accordingly view themselves partly as a reflection of how other students and teachers view them in the PE context. There were some examples in the results of students giving verbal feedback to each other during PE class, but only one had received comments with negative value. As for the teachers, the verbal feedback also seemed to be scarce. But this does not mean that the students didn’t receive signals about what teachers and fellow students thought of their performance. Several of the students, for example, talked about situations in games where no one would pass the ball to them. This was perceived as a signal of

exclusion and devaluation. The fact that the teachers watched the students' activities from a distance, and often wrote on a clipboard as they were watching the students, made many students feel judged and insecure about their performance. The lack of attention and acknowledgement from the teachers was something many of the students talked about during the interviews. There were also examples in the present results of C1 students who, despite doing well in the activities, were confused and even frustrated because it was unclear to them if their skills were indeed seen and valued by the teachers. According to self-evaluation theory, when students are seen, acknowledged and included by teachers and others, this can send out strong signals on how the teacher and others evaluate the students (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). It was apparent in this study that the students did not feel seen by the teacher, and with only one exception, I found little evidence of inclusion of the students by the teacher. Based on the theorized significance of such acknowledgements and inclusion for the students, it would seem like a worthwhile effort to make this, at least, a possible option in the PE setting. Class sizes up to 90 students, even with three teachers, do not seem conducive to this objective.

However, in the present study, the strongest source of information in the PE setting that was available for informing the student's self-image was probably their internalized views of the perceived values of the activities in class. The significance of internalized views is described by Skaalvik (2006), and is based on ideas from social interactionism. It is assumed that the student will, over time, internalize the others' values, by which the judgments from others are based on. The students will subsequently judge themselves based on the same values (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Hence, the students who perform well, who have genuine mastery experiences in an area that is valued in the context, will judge themselves positively in that environment, which will contribute to a positive self-image (Skaalvik, 2006). The C1 students in the "sports-enthusiast" category indeed perform well most of the time, but with some significant exceptions that I will get back to. For the C2 students in the "coping" category, on the other hand, the type of activities in PE class was not aligned with their areas of interest and competence, and, as a result, did not generally perform well; they had very few genuine mastery experiences. All in all, it was apparent in the present study that the students had very different self-images in regards to the particular sports-related activities offered in PE class. It is further reasonable to say that having sport skills was highly valued in the PE context. This is conveyed implicitly to the students by being the main focus of the teachings of PE class, but it is also reinforced by the fact

that sports skills are highly valued in U.S. society at large. Conclusively, the combination of a highly-valued activity and high skills for some, and highly-valued activity and low skills for others, makes for two very different types of experiences in PE class. In the first case, for the C1 students, there is a likelihood of many contributions to a positive self-image for the students, while the C2 students in the second case would not be expected to have many of those contributions. The choice of traditional team sports as the main activity for PE seems to lend itself to divide the student population in regards to skill levels in a particularly explicit manner. This seems to be supported through previous research (see 2.7 Research on the Topic) as well as through anecdotal evidence. Considering also the unique nature of the PE subject in terms of having the students' skills on visual display for each other and for the teacher, this choice of content may add to the negative consequences of such skill division in class. With the endless amount of different types of PA possible, one might argue the value of broadening the spectrum of PA offered in PE, including a consideration of activities where none or few students have previous experience. The likelihood of such change of PE content will probably depend on whether skills in sports are seen as a goal in itself or mainly as a mean to a separate goal, which is for the students to lead active lives conducive to health and well-being (see 6.1 Results in the Light of School Documents and Standards).

According to self-evaluation theory, it is likely that students who have low area specific self-image will seek to protect their self-worth by devaluating the PE activities where they do not perform well and giving value to areas where they do perform well (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013). Generally speaking, such devaluation will, however, be hard for students in a PE context where the environment in itself is strong and the established value norms are enforced by norms in society at large (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). The fact that we are talking about young people makes it even less likely that they will be able to devalue areas that are endorsed by authorities, such as teachers and school administration. The result in this case will, therefore, more likely be that the students adapt and subsequently accept and internalize the values. Considering that being at school is not voluntary for the child, it is imperative that attention is paid to the school environment in order to make it conducive to students' feeling of self-worth (Skaalvik, 2006). The need for heightened attention to the PE environment in this regard has been underscored by the results of this study.

Drawing again on concepts in self-evaluation theory, the students who have low self-image

connected to the type of sports in PE will be assumed to enter PE class with an expectation to “fail” in the highly valued activities, the PE sports. The students will subsequently be at risk for having their self-worth threatened (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Higher levels of anxiety and stress are likely to occur in the type of situation above. This has been shown in research and has been suggested to be explained by the threatened feeling of self-worth (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Although there were indications in the present study results that the C2 students, to different degrees, were working on maintaining their feeling of self-worth, they seemed quite far away from losing this feeling. However, there are indications in the study results of the existence of a “third group” of students, of which there can be reason to speculate whether their feeling of self-worth was jeopardized. Some of the C2 students talked about this third group and what they suggested was that those students weren’t able to cope with the PE situation like they could themselves. It looked to me as if the two groups had similar challenges due to lack of competence in the area, but that they handled those differently.

Assuming the existence of this third group, I again turn to self-evaluation theory in order to discuss the possibility of different consequences of failing in PE class for those in the two groups: the C2 group and the third group. As a reminder for the reader, I use a definition of self-worth used by many within the self-evaluation tradition who, by self-worth, mean a “person’s acceptance of, and overall respect for himself” (E.Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013, pp. 90-91). Hence, the term refers to the value the person gives himself regardless of specific external incidences that occurs, and of how others view him. E. Skaalvik and S. Skaalvik (2013) further talk about self-worth as a buffer of inner security that allows one not to be pre-occupied with how they viewed by others (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013, p. 91). Based on the results of this study, it looks like such a global feeling of self-worth indeed is a characteristic of the C2 students. Hence, the name “those who cope” was given to describe the students in this category. From the interviews, there seems to be evidence that the students in the alleged third group, to a lesser extent, have been able to maintain such feeling of global self-worth. They may not have this “reservoir” that Festinger suggests could otherwise have been used in tough situations (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013, p. 104). This does not mean, based on research by Campbell and Lavallee (cited in E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013), that these students look at themselves as worthless “losers,” but rather that they lack a clear and coherent view of themselves (p. 91). As a consequence, their feeling of self-worth is more susceptible to signals from the environment.

When E. Skaalvik and S. Skaalvik (2013) further talk about *self-representation*, they refer to a person's chosen way to present herself, and they suggest that this depends on whether the person has a high or low self-worth. When the C2 students of this study generally seem to participate in the PE class in some capacity despite lack of skills, while the alleged third group does not, this might be explained by such a difference in self-presentation. According to E. Skaalvik and S. Skaalvik (2013), people with low self-worth tend to avoid attention in order to not expose weaknesses. When these students try to "hide" in PE class, this is an example of a self-protecting strategy. By not getting involved, these students prevent their failure from contributing negatively to their self-worth. It should be noted that even though the C2 students, as mentioned, did participate in PE class, there was evidence of detachment from the class among all of them. Most of them talked about PE class as if it was not really for them, and that they would be better off without having PE in their schedule. As understandable a mechanism as this is on an individual level, it is a serious dilemma if the school environment causes the students to withdraw when the engagement and intrinsic motivation is, indeed, the objective. Another available self-protecting strategy, which can be used in connection with voluntary leisure activities, is to switch to different programs or activities all together. This option is, generally speaking, not available in a school situation, the setting of focus in the present study. This, again, puts heavy ethical obligations on the creation of environments where the students' self-worth is protected (Skaalvik, 2006). Despite that it looks like the students in C2 do cope in PE class, it was apparent that they sometimes struggled. This seemed to happen in circumstances where they perceive a threat to their feeling of self-worth, such as when Isabel feels that her group in class of slow runners are singled out and where she feels as if no one cares about those students' feelings.

This discussion has so far concentrated on factors involved in the differentiation of outcomes for C2 students and students in the third group. I have also talked about how PE class, as it is currently taught, will likely contribute largely positively to the C1 students' self-image as opposed to the self-image in both the C2 group and students in the third group. I will, in the following, be asking the question of how occasional lack of skills for some of the C1 students seemed to be more devastating than lack of skills generally seemed to be for the C2 students.

The concept of psychological centrality (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013) from the self-evaluation tradition is useful for the attempt in answering this question. This term refers to the

degree of importance that skills or knowledge in a particular area has for an individual.

According to the concept of psychological centrality, it is assumed to be more consequential for a person to fail in an area that is viewed as important for him personally. Being good at sports is clearly important to the “sports-enthusiasts” in the study. Not only is sports activities their main focus as far as overall PA goes, but competitive sports apparently held a large place in their lives. The student’s competitiveness and the value they gave to winning is a part of this picture (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). It follows that when the C1 students lack skills in even just one or two of the sports activities in the PE setting, this can set them up for a situation where their self-image, and possibly even their self-worth, is in jeopardy. The reason for this is, according to the self-evaluation approach, that these students now are in a situation of “failing” in an area which is both psychologically central to them personally and also highly valued in the environment. Yet some other concepts from self-evaluation tradition may come into play to explain the consequences of “failure” for the C1 students, namely social comparison and reference groups (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). The C1 students seem to be engaged in a voluntary, but explicit, comparison with each other. It looks like competition and seeing who is “best,” holds high value for them in PA in general, and also in PE class. In the PE context, they are usually among the best, and find it frustrating that there are students who they see as not trying. In fact, we have seen that one of the “sports” students was the initiator of an organization where the students are divided in groups according to skill level. They want real competition, they like to use their high skills, and they love to do well. All of this contributes positively to their self-image until they find themselves in a situation where the skills are missing. An important and immediate reference group for students in both groups is the whole PE class, but in a sense the “sports” students have narrowed the reference group down to those in PE class that are also “sports-enthusiasts” like themselves. However, the comparison with their “sports friends” does, for some of them, not feel so good anymore.

As I have pointed out in this section, self-image is relevant in this context both because it determines “self-worth” which, in itself, impacts mental health and well-being (Skaalvik, 2006), but also because it impacts behavior (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Research on the topic of self-worth has been based on academic subject and has shown that students’ self-worth impacts their future choices such as chosen educational paths and, later, careers (E. Skaalvik & S. Skaalvik, 2013). Based on this knowledge, one might expect that students’ feelings of self-

worth could also have an impact on a lifestyle choice connected to having a healthy and active lifestyle.

6.5 Discussion of Methodology

Inspired by the hermeneutic and phenomenological concepts, as the present study is, knowledge production through qualitative interviews is based on a view that knowledge is produced through dialogue where the context impacts what knowledge gets produced (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is further assumed that people's stories can give the researcher access to meaning in the social world. Finally, the value of knowledge production is closely related to whether or not the knowledge leads to desired action (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Hence, knowledge is pragmatic. Based on this epistemological foundation, it follows a way of looking at objectivity, which is very different than the positivistic view. Objectivity in qualitative research, according to (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), includes *freedom from one-sidedness*, *intersubjectivity* through dialogue, *letting the object talk* by choosing appropriate methods tailored to the particular object in question and "allowing for protests from the objects" (p. 248). Finally, *objectivity*, in a hermeneutic sense, requires that the researcher reflects upon, and shares with the reader, his or her pre-judgments in regards to the topic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

6.5.1 Reflexivity

It is important for the researcher to examine factors about her own person that potentially might impact the results of a research study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This can be referred to as *researcher reflexivity* (Malterud, 2011). According to Malterud (2011), this awareness is of particular importance within qualitative research where the data is being produced through interaction between the researcher and informant(s) within a social-cultural context, as opposed to the examination of "dead things." While the goal should be to minimize such influence, the researcher needs to acknowledge that a total elimination is not achievable. In order for the reader to get a better understanding of how the study results came about, the researcher, therefore, needs to be open and explicit about such influences. This is of importance to both the reliability and validity of the results. My intention in this section as well as throughout this report has been to follow Malterud's recommendations (2011) by being explicit and transparent in regards to all the steps of this research project.

As I set out to collect information about adolescents' experiences with PE class, I brought

into the project some experiences from my own life growing up. In addition, I had current information from family friends who are adolescents as well as from my own children about their feelings about the topic. As much as PA in a public health perspective was the main context for my choice of topic, I clearly was driven by some less than ideal experiences from my own life as well as from similar stories that had been told me from others. While examining my total set of motivations for the topic, I came to realize that I had more than vague ideas about what I expected to find in my study. I expected to find a PE situation similar to my own growing up, where some students felt misplaced and disliked PE class while others loved this class. My pre-conceived notions had subsequently been supported by knowledge I had of previous research on the topic. This awareness led me to work with myself throughout the research process in order to set my preconceptions aside and to be open for, and even search for, results that contradicted my suspicions. Despite my efforts in this regard, I can obviously not rule out any kind of impact that my preconceptions might have had for what I was looking for and for what I subsequently found. However, while some of my predictions came through, there was certainly not a one-to-one relation between what I expected and what I found. This, in itself, is a sign of strength for the study.

I also chose a particular theoretical framework, namely the motivation theory SDT, for my project. By making this decision a priori, I chose to be guided by the theoretical concepts from this theory. This was a conscious decision that I made with the hope that this would lay the foundation for an interesting and more focused discussion. At the same time, I was aware of the risk that the same theoretical concepts could potentially have a certain limiting effect on what I would be able to read out of the data. In the hermeneutic tradition, the same text can potentially provide different answers depending on what questions one asks of the text (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I admittedly had some fairly clear ideas of some questions I planned to ask of the text, but at the same time I worked consciously to “let the object talk” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 248) and see what might emerge.

6.5.2 Reliability

A research project’s level of reliability has to do with whether the results can be reproduced by other researchers at a different point in time (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Considerations of reliability in an interview study, like the present, has its relevance for the interviewing part, for the transcription part, and for the analysis part of the project. However, reliability in relation to

how the interviews are conducted has been given largest attention.

Relevant questions in the case of my interview study will then be as follows: Can I rely on the adolescents' answers to me to be the same as if another researcher had conducted the interviews? Was the interview situation and my way of asking questions well suited for getting answers that represents the adolescents' life-world? To the best of my ability, I made sure the context of the interviews was conducive to those requirements. This included giving them a choice of place as well as setting a safe and relaxed tone for the interviews (see 3. Methodology). I made an effort to be well enough prepared for the interviews so I did not need to be looking much at my interview guide. This made it possible for me to keep eye contact and focus on the adolescent rather than being distracted by reading my notes. I relied heavily on open-ended questions with phrases and words that, I hoped, would connect to their everyday lives. As a result, I felt that the students stayed engaged and on topic, with only a few exceptions. The conversations felt natural in the sense that they evolved mostly by me asking follow-up questions and not by "changing topic" in order to get to the next item on my list. It is my belief that my genuine interest for what they had to tell me, as well as the natural gratitude and compassion I had for all of them, came through to them. In the context of reliability, the importance of these measures is to be found in the fact that the environment, for many, can be important in order to feel comfortable in a potentially stressful interview situation (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). And when an informant feels safe and taken care of, this can, from a phenomenological perspective, be a crucial determinant for what insight we are able to get from the informants "life-world" (Malterud, 2011, p.129).

As much as it is important for the researcher to do what can be done to make the interviewee feel comfortable and engaged in the conversation on equal terms, it would be an illusion to believe, in most cases at least, that this is fully achievable (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Especially in the case of interviewing children and youths, one needs to recognize the challenge due to the inherent uneven power balance in such situations. According to Kvale & Brinkman, "the goal is not for power to be eliminated as an element in the interview situation, but rather that the researcher reflects on the role that power plays" (p. 53). The importance of such reflection on power has to do with power imbalance and its implications on two levels: an ethical and an epistemological level. The ethical implications, as I mentioned above, call for special considerations in a case, like the present one, where the informants are children or youths. An

ethical dilemma that often occurs, regardless of the informants' age, is one between the researcher's desire for information and the respect for the informants' personal boundaries, as described by Jette Fog, (cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The topic of the present study was not one where I expected very sensitive information to be shared by the students, but the potential for this to occur was certainly there. Some of the students talked about situations where they felt embarrassed and overlooked by others, and although I asked questions purposely to invite such information to come out, my questions were open enough to give the students control over how far they were willing to go. I did never, during all the eight interviews, feel that the students were anywhere close to overstepping their boundaries. For more about the ethical aspects, I refer to ethics section of the methodology chapter (see 4.9 Ethical Aspects of this Research).

The epistemological implications of power imbalance are related to the role of power in the production of knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The very nature of the qualitative research is "a professional conversation with an obvious power-imbalance between the researcher and the person who is being interviewed" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 52). In the case of the present study, I recognize the inevitability of the power imbalance between myself and the adolescents at the same time as I took measures to reduce the impact of this imbalance. As mentioned above, I did make an effort to create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, and I was also conscientious of the language and tone that I used. Regarding this matter, I had some help by the fact that the language of the conversation is my second language. Although I speak English quite fluently, I sincerely meant it when I told the adolescents that I sometimes search for words or express myself in a way that can be difficult to understand. As much as this was important information to give them in order to avoid misunderstandings, it was also my hope and intention that I, by making this explicit, would be viewed a little less as an authority for them. Before every interview, I also pointed out that I appreciated any and all they wanted to share with me, but conveyed that there were no right or wrong answers to my questions. I made a conscious effort to be supportive, but without expressing strong approval or disapproval for what they told me. In other words, I tried to create an atmosphere where they felt that anything was okay to tell me. The importance of taking these measures are described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009).

My impression from my conversations with the adolescents was that I was fairly successful

in creating the kind of atmosphere described. At the same time, there is no reason to undermine how the interview situation might have made the adolescents feel somewhat out of their comfort zone. Nevertheless, most of them appeared interested and engaged in a way that is hard to imagine from someone who feels very tense. I would have been happy to see my informants comfortable enough to object if they disagreed with the premise of my questions. Such objections are seen as contributing to a research study's objectivity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). While this did not really seem to be the case for any of them, I did, on one occasion, have one of them prompt me to be more specific in my way of phrasing my question in order for her to be able to answer. This was a situation where I asked if she liked to be physically active, and where she replied in a somewhat confrontational manner that her answer would depend on what I meant by the term "physically active." It seemed to me as if she thought I implied a certain definition of PA that she didn't share. It also sounded like as if she heard me implying that one either likes PA or one doesn't. Although this was not intentional on my part, the fact that she felt free to object was positive. I see it as a sign of strength for the study that the interview environment allowed for a student to question the premise in my question. This incidence also illustrates one of the strengths of using interviews as opposed to questionnaires for data collection as an interview format makes it possible for the informants to such objections (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

6.5.3 Validity

The question to ask in order to consider the validity of a research project is if the chosen method of data collection is suited for studying the phenomena in question (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Different ways of looking at validity reflects different schools of thought within philosophy, with very different answers to the underlying question: What is truth? According to the hermeneutic approach, the most important criterion for validity has to do with the level of consistency and logic within the knowledge statements (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), the so-called *coherence criterion*. Within pragmatism, the emphasis has been on the consequences that the knowledge statement leads to. Both of the above traditions stand in contrast to the positivistic way of looking at "truth" in research, namely one in which the validity is determined by the degree of congruency with an objective reality. It follows a view in qualitative research like the present, where validity is assessed in a very different way compared with a positivistic one.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) refers to Chronback who points out that validation is not solely something that can be proved or disproved, but that it is a process where increasingly more valid interpretations of observations are made. The process, as it is seen in the postmodern era, is one in which validation happens, categorically speaking, in three ways: 1) By examining the sources of possible invalidity, 2) by looking at how the knowledge contributes to a meaningful and constructive debate, and finally, 3) by whether or not the research leads to practical desired results for people and society. The first category about the sources of invalidity is closely related to the quality of the researcher's craft during the research process, and there are two aspects of this. In relation to the first aspect, I have to ask myself to what degree I succeeded in keeping my preconceptions aside during the process, and in what areas my pre-understandings can be assumed to have influenced the results to any degree. I refer to the sub-heading on reflexivity on this aspect (see 6.5.1 Reflexivity). Furthermore, I asked myself if I had been explicit in my report about what questions I had asked to the text. On this point, I have been clear about my priori plan to use the SDT framework and also about how this has influenced what specific aspects of the adolescents' experiences I was looking for. This means that there probably are several other angles of which I could have taken toward the text that would have given me different answers (to different questions). I did, however, make a conscious effort to read through all the transcripts with an open mind for what else the text might tell me beyond what SDT led me to see. In fact, this openness toward the text led me to some findings unrelated to the chosen theory. These findings prompted me to bring in an additional theoretical framework for use in a meaningful discussion of those findings. One change of plans regarding methods was made prior to starting the data collection in this study. While I originally had planned to collect background information about the schools' framework for PA and PE, as well as descriptions of the school and PE setting through direct observation, this was changed and was, instead, included in the interviews with the students. A possible advantage of this, as it turned out, was that I was able to get these descriptions through the students' own words. This way, I learned more about their thoughts on those issues. An example of this is when one student described what the gymnasium looks like. She told me that the floors had lines that didn't make any sense to her.

In addition to the craftsmanship aspect of the validation process, Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) also talk about *communicative validity and pragmatic validity*, as mentioned above.

Communicative validity is based on a belief that the goal for research is to facilitate constructive discussions about the findings. Such discussions can be between the researcher and either of the informants, the general audience, or other researchers. In my case, I did a small degree of *audience validation* with my trusted assistant who helped me with the transcription of the interviews. I did, to a larger degree, engage in *researcher validation* as I have had numerous discussions about the findings with my research advisor. Hence, my interpretation of the interviews has been validated through a constructive dialogue with him. Finally, pragmatic validity relates to whether what I found will show to have potential to make positive changes. This kind of assessment can obviously not be done until after a project has been made known in a broader scale and the recommendations based on the results have been implemented. The present study has obviously not undergone such a test, but one can only hope that the results can be useful in some capacity at some point.

6.5.4 Potential for generalizing

Whether the results of a research study can be generalized to other individuals and populations, as well as to different situations, has been a question of debate and concern. The post-modern position on this question can be said to be somewhere between the positivistic one and the humanistic one and can be summarized through an emphasis on the diversity of knowledge and dependence on context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). From a post-modern viewpoint, the question about ability to generalize should be replaced by a question about whether the produced knowledge can be transferred to other relevant situations. An analytical generalizing is needed which entails a comprehensive analysis of whether the gained knowledge will likely contribute to predict what might happen in a different situation at a different time. For this reason, the researcher needs to provide explicit arguments and evidence for this to be the case.

It is not expected that results from qualitative research can be generalized to the broader population in the same way that a cross-sectional study can (Malterud, 2011). However, for both qualitative and quantitative research, there will always be limits to the power of which a study's results can be generalized. The researcher's criteria for how the sample is formed are important in this context.

Starting with the choice of eight informants for this study, I have already stated in the methodology section that this was partly determined by the scope of the project. However, it

was a guiding principle for me that I had enough informants for making a meaningful data analysis possible. My own judgment after conducting the eight interviews was that this objective was achieved. I was very fortunate to have informants who were willing to and able to share with me in a way that provided me with sufficient data for such meaningful analysis. I will leave it up to the readers of this report to decide if he or she agrees with this judgment. In order to create an adequate sample, conducive to the largest possible power to generalize the results (Malterud, 2011), I chose to conduct the study using informants who attend public schools exclusively. As much as there will be variations between public schools in different areas, states and countries in regards to PE and health education, I expect the similarities to be larger than the differences. Another measure I took to create an adequate sample was my use of a questionnaire in the selection process. By selecting a student sample with a large variance regarding gender as well as their relationship with PA and PE, it is my opinion that this contributed to the study results having a stronger relevance to other similar contexts.

The most significant weakness of this study relates to the process of recruiting of informants. The original plan was to recruit interviewees from a school where the attendance area was characterized by a wide diversity in regards to demographic variables. I had hoped to recruit interviewees from a large spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds, and the reason for this was to secure the broadest possible relevance of the study results to other schools and geographical areas. Unfortunately, I was not able to make this strategic school selection based on demographic variables, and, instead, I ended up using the “snowball method” (see 4.5 Recruiting of Seventh Graders) within my own social sphere. Because of this, my sample quite homogeneously reflects middle class social strata. As a result, the power to transfer the results to other social strata/schools and areas was weakened.

7. Conclusion

The premise of this study was the well-established significance of a physically active lifestyle for health (DHHS, 2016c) as well as the assumption that PE in schools impacts peoples' lifestyle choices regarding PA. I have based this study on a view, supported by research, that PA in a public health perspective should promote the importance of moderate levels of naturally integrated PA conducive to health and well-being in the population at large (DHHS, 2016c; Adair et al., 2014; Booth et al., 2012; Koster et al., 2012). The purpose of the study was to examine adolescents' experiences in PE class. Through discussion of the findings, I sought to determine if there is reason to believe that PE has a health promoting function. Seventh grade students were chosen as informants based the significant decline in PA levels, starting around the age of 13 (CDC, 2016d; Ntoumanis, 2005).

The study found that the students' experiences in PE class varied along the lines of whether or not they were involved in organized sports in their free time. With minor exceptions, I found that those students (C1 students) who have skills in team sports had good or very good experiences in PE class, while those who lack such skills (C2 students) were neutral toward, disliked or strongly disliked PE class. It was apparent that there is a strong emphasis on team sports in PE class. None of the students found that the health perspective was emphasized in the teaching of PE, despite the school districts' overall PE objectives of having a student population that makes lifelong choices for healthy lifestyles.

By looking at the results through the lenses of self-determination theory (SDT), the results showed that the students who lack skills in team sports experienced minimal overall support for competence in PE class. The sports-skilled students experienced competence, but not as a result of competence support from the teachers. None of the students in my sample experienced relatedness with the teachers, but most students experienced some relatedness with other students. There was little evidence for autonomy support for any of the sample's students in PE class. I found that whether the students had integrated and sustainable motivation for PE in its current form seemed to depend heavily on whether the student belonged to the sport-skilled or "non"–sport-skilled group. The sport-skilled students already had intrinsic or otherwise integrated motivation for PE due to their interest in the particular PE activities. The non–sport-skilled students, on the other hand, were extrinsically motivated for PE class, but with a low degree of integration of the motivation. This did, however, not seem to reflect these students'

motivation for PA in general. It further seemed as if students in an alleged third group may even be a-motivated for PE. According to SDT, a need-supporting environment is required for a more integrated and sustained motivation for PE class. Hence, the likelihood that a-motivated students and extrinsically motivated students will move toward a more integrated and sustainable form of motivation for PE class is slim. As for the PE motivated “sports-enthusiasts,” the lack of support for autonomy in PE class may compromise experienced intrinsic motivation even for them in the long run. Making changes to aspects of the PE framework and environment to make it conducive to a higher degree of needs support for all of the students could have potential for students to have a more integrated form of motivation for PE class. As a consequence, the possibility of having students who, to a larger degree, will stay motivated for leading active lives might be enhanced.

I also found in the study that many of the students seemed to experience situations in PE class where their feelings of self-worth were threatened. This may have been particularly the case for the alleged third group of students that some of the students referred to during the interviews. There is little research on the impact of students’ self-image and feeling of self-worth in relation to the PE setting. However, research on the topic done in academic subjects suggests that low area-specific self-image among students can impact their future life choices of education and careers (Skaalvik, 2006). More research is needed to establish the consequences of low area-specific self-image in PE class, and potential consequences for the students’ later choices connected to PA and healthy lifestyles. Assuming that such a causal relation between area-specific self-image and, later, lifestyle choices exists, this study would give reason to infer that PE class, the way it is currently taught, contributes to students making choices for inactive lifestyles.

It was clear in this study that all of the C2 students, who did not enjoy the current PE content, still enjoyed other types of PA in their free time. The rather narrow focus on team sports in PE seemed to divide the student group according to skill level in a very obvious way. By changing the PE content to types of PA that has less power for such division of the student population, some of the issues relating to self-image and self-worth could have been avoided. Such a change away from a long and strong tradition for team sports to be dominant in the school PE would seem to likely meet resistance. However, an effort toward such a change would arguable be worth it if more students would enter PE class without expecting to “fail” and,

thereby, having their self-worth threatened. Such a situation is hardly conducive to one of the school's main PE objectives, which is for the students to "understand that physical activity provides an opportunity for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction" (MMSD, 2008, p. 4).

Although studies on children's and adolescents' experiences in PE class, in general, are scarce, especially in the U.S., their findings, for the most part, parallel those from the current study. Few studies, however, have used qualitative methods. The current study does provide some insight into how adolescents experience PE class. There is reason to believe that the results from this study will have relevance for PE settings throughout this country (U.S.A.), as well as in similar societies in other parts of the world. However, the largest weakness of this study is that I was not able to get a broader sample variation based on demographics. Hence, the students in the current sample all had similar socioeconomic backgrounds and all, or nearly all, belonged to the same ethnic group: Caucasian. More research that includes a broader spectrum of demographics is needed in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of adolescents' experiences in PE and the consequences for future lifestyles conducive to health.

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Appendix A

INFORMATION LETTER TO FAMILIES OF 7TH GRADERS

Hello parents, guardians and students:

My name is Sigrid, and I am writing to you because I am about to start a research project for my final master's thesis in public health at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences in Norway. My work will be supervised by my two professor advisors.

The topic of my qualitative research project is adolescents' experiences with physical activity as it relates to the school setting. My plan is to interview 7th grade students about their experiences (not their knowledge) in this regard. I anticipate that the session will take about 15-30 minutes depending on how much the particular child shares with me.

I want you to know that an adolescent who volunteer to participate has the right to withdraw at any time. The adolescent will not be asked about the reason why he or she chooses to withdraw, and withdrawing will not result in any consequences for her or him. Please keep in mind that someone who volunteers for an interview will not necessarily be interviewed as I may get more volunteers than I need for the project.

Adolescents who volunteer will remain anonymous in the research paper as well as in any possible conversations I may have with my advisors or others involved. The interviews will be tape recorded, and the recordings will be safely handled and destroyed after the project is finished. The broadest intended use of the recordings is the immediate use by the researcher (and possible researcher's assistants) for reviewing for the purpose of transcription/verbal description.

I will do my best to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere during the interviews in which the format is "loose" and conversational.

Thanks to all of you in advance for making it possible for me to conduct this research and for taking the time to:

- 1) Answer the questionnaire (student)
- 2) Sign the parent consent form (parent/guardian)
- 3) Sign the student assent form (student)

Finally, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me:

sigridkhansen@gmail.com

cell phone: (608) 255-0731

Sincerely,

Sigrid K. Hansen

Appendix B

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO 7th GRADERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

- 1) Contact information for my two professor advisers:

Knut Loendal

Knut.Londal@hioa.no

Camilla Martha Ihlebaek

camilla.ihlebak@nmbu.no

- 2) This master's thesis project will end 05-29-17, and this is the latest date when the interview recordings will be destroyed.
- 3) I will again emphasize what I wrote in my information letter: A child who volunteers for this project does so voluntarily, and she or he has the right to withdraw at any time. The child will not be asked about the reason why he or she chooses to withdraw, and withdrawing will not result in any consequences for him or her.

Appendix C

PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION (CONSENT) FORM

I _____ (full name in print) give my permission for my son/daughter to be interviewed in conjunction with the research project outlined in the information letter attached. I have read and understood this letter and found the amount of information to be sufficient to give my consent - or I have collected additional information about the project that I felt I needed to give my consent.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Parent/guardian of 7th grader)

Appendix D

STUDENT (MINOR) ASSENT FORM

I _____ (full name in print) am willing to be interviewed in conjunction with the research project outlined in the attached information letter. I have read and understood this letter and found the amount of information to be sufficient to give my assent (consent) - or I have collected additional information about the project that I felt I needed to give my assent for participation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ (7th grade student)

Appendix E

Questionnaire (students)

First/last name: _____

Answer questions as they relate to you. Check the box(es) most applicable to you.

1. Your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. How well do you like to be **physically active** (any type of physical activity at school or outside of school)? (Select only one)

- I strongly dislike being physically active.
- I do not really like being physically active.
- Being physically active is just okay.
- I like being physically active.
- I really like being physically active.

3. How well do you like **physical education class**? (Select only one)

- I strongly dislike being in physical education class.
- I do not really like being in physical education class.
- Being in physical education class is just okay.
- I like being in physical education class.
- I really like being in physical education class.

4. Are you willing to be interviewed about your experience with physical activity at school?

- Yes
- No

THANK YOU!

Appendix F

ACTUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- ❖ What have you done as far as physical activity during the school day today?
 - Would you say this is a typical day as far as physical activity?
 - Can you talk some more about.....
 - Could you describe more in detail what happened when.....
 - How did you experience/feel in that situation?
 - How do you think others experience/feel in those kinds of situations?

- ❖ Do you feel that you get to take part in making decisions about
 - What you do in PE class?
 - How things are done in PE class?
 - The intensity and duration of your activities in PE class?

- ❖ Do you experience encouragement/positive feedback and support from your teacher/peers?

- ❖ Do you feel that you master the different things you are set to do in PE class?

- ❖ If you could make decisions in your school, would you have changed anything as far as
 - The number/duration of recesses?
 - How much you could move around during the day- including during academic class periods?
 - The number of PE classes per week/ the content of PE classes?

Appendix G

RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH TOPIC

- What is their general experience with PA?
- Do they have preferences for type of PA?
- What is their experience of PA in the school setting?
- What is their experience of PE?
- What is their experience of:
 1. Relatedness support
 2. Competence support
 3. Autonomy support

from both teachers and peers in relation to PA?

Appendix H

NSD attachment.pdf is on the following page.

Camilla Ihlebæk
Institutt for landskapsplanlegging Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet

1430 ÅS

Vår dato: 11.05.2016

Vår ref: 48401 / 3 / BGH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 18.04.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

48401	<i>Experiences of adolescents with school-related physical activity: A qualitative study</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Camilla Ihlebæk
Student	Sigrid Kolsto Hansen

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 29.05.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Belinda Gloppen Helle

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Kontaktperson: Belinda Gloppen Helle tlf: 55 58 28 74

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Sigrid Kolsto Hansen sigridkhansen@gmail.com



INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

Utvalget (skolelever) informeres skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse.

Informasjonsskrivet er greit utformet, men følgende må tilføyes:

- Veileders kontaktinformasjon
- Prosjektslutt (29.05.17)

DATAINNSAMLING I SKOLE

Mens skole er en obligatorisk arena for barn, foreldrene og ansatte, skal deltagelse i forskning være frivillig.

Forespørselen må derfor alltid rettes på en slik måte at de forespurte ikke opplever press om å delta, gjerne ved å understreke at det ikke vil påvirke forholdet til skole hvorvidt de ønsker å være med i studien eller ikke.

Videre bør det planlegges et alternativt opplegg for de som ikke deltar. Dette er særlig relevant ved utfylling av spørreskjema i skoletiden.

I følge informasjonsskrivet skal det gjennomføres observasjon i klasserommet. Dersom det skal registreres personopplysninger under observasjon i klasserommet skal det gis informasjon og innhentes samtykke fra dem som observeres.

BARN I FORSKNING

Merk at når barn skal delta aktivt er deltagelsen alltid frivillig for barnet selv om de foresatte samtykker. Barnet bør få alderstilpasset informasjon om prosjektet. Dere må sørge for at de forstår at deltakelse er frivillig og at de kan trekke seg når som helst dersom de ønsker det.

INFORMASJONSSIKKERHET

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at dere behandler alle data og personopplysninger i tråd med Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet sine retningslinjer for innsamling og videre behandling av forskningsdata og personopplysninger.

PROSJEKTSLUTT OG ANONYMISERING

I meldeskjemaet og informasjonsskrivet har dere informert om at forventet prosjektslutt er 29.05.2017. Ifølge meldeskjemaet skal dere da anonymisere innsamlede opplysninger. Anonymisering innebærer at dere bearbeider datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjør dere ved å slette direkte personopplysninger, slette eller omskrive indirekte personopplysninger og slette digitale lydopptak.



Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelig universitet
Noregs miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003
NO-1432 Ås
Norway