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Two Studies of Inclusive and Augmented Physical Education

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, John Cox. Although he was unable to see me graduate, he was an inspiration for me to strive for the strength, patience, and resilience he possessed, which ultimately prepared me for this pursuit and many others.

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ABSTRACT

Students with disabilities participate in inclusive education, to some degree. Unfortunately, students with disabilities often feel feelings of marginalization, social isolation, failure, and othering. Students without disabilities graduating high school today are less empathic than students who graduated in the 1970's. This dissertation delves into the empirical literature on how school-age students perceive inclusive physical education, through a systematic literature (Study 1), as well as how a students and adults in a high school perceive and experience an augmented physical education program, through an exploratory case study (Study 2).

In Study 1, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed. Author consensus on the databases, key terms, and inclusion criteria were used to identify relevant literature, which included 26 articles. A content analysis revealed four categories of articles. The categories were: 1. Instrument validation and innovation; 2. Effect of interventions on student attitudes and perspectives; 3. Classmates' perceptions on including peers with disabilities; and 4. Students with disabilities perceptions on being included. Understanding students' perceptions can improve inclusive practices in physical education. A physical education program may be "fully inclusive" physically (i.e., the built school environment) and fundamentally (i.e., pedagogic design), but not in reality. A physical education program that is determined to establish and sustain inclusivity embraces equity and diversity.

In Study 2, data were collected in a high school in Northern New England. Methods used were reflective journal, observations, fieldnotes, interviews, and sociograms. There were three major themes which emerged, along with eight sub-themes. The themes were: 1. Nurturing of a Program (planting the seed; all encompassing; behind the scenes; and branches of Unified), 2. Rooted Behavior and Relationships (spillover; and friendship) and 3. Turning a New Leaf (reflection; and personal growth). Understanding how an augmented physical education program is implemented in a school, how it is received by students, and how it is received by adults in the school, will inform other administration to implement augmented physical education program which is underpinned by inclusive philosophies and enrolls both students with and without disabilities, themselves. This program requires a champion and transactional support between students, administrators, teachers, and specialists for its sustainment. Both student and adults perceive immediate and lasting benefits stemming from participation in Unified programming.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AISDPE ....Attitudes towards inclusion of students with Disabilities in physical education questionnaire

APE .... Adapted Physical Education

ATDQ ....Attitudes Towards Disability Questionnaire

CAIPE-R .... Children's Attitudes Towards Integrated Physical Education-Revised

CASP .... Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

CBIPPD-MPE .... Children's Beliefs and Intentions to Play with Peers with Disabilities in Middle school Physical Education

CIPPD-MPE............................... Children's Intentions to Play with Peers with Disabilities in Middle School Physical Education scale

EPHPP ....Effective Public Health Practice Project

IDHHSI ....Inclusion of Deaf or Hard-of- Hearing Students Inventory

IDEA .... Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP...Individual Education Plan

PE..Physical Education

PRISMA...Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

PSD ....Paralympic School Day

TPG ....Team Primetime Games

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Current estimates show that 95% of students with disabilities participate in some form of inclusive education (Office of Special Education Programs, 2019). Unfortunately, students with disabilities within their physical education (PE) feel marginalized and report feelings of social isolation, failure, and othering (Bredahl, 2013; Farley, 2007; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). Othering refers to the objectification of someone or some group, leading to stigmatization that defines this person or group in a negative fashion (Mills et al., 2010). Students without disabilities graduating high school today are 40% less empathic towards one another than students who have graduated in the 1970's (Konrath et al., 2011). Is there a way to support positive outcomes for students with disabilities educated alongside peers without disabilities and tangentially combat reports of reduced empathy? School administrators, PE, and adapted physical education (APE) teachers anecdotally indicate that the implementation of Unified Physical Education (UPE) can positively impact students and student life in the school. These teachers claim UPE can bring about notable changes in students' behavior (e.g., showing more empathy and patience) to noticeable changes in the school as a whole (e.g., school becoming more of a community).

Within our education system the term 'integration' can describe students with disabilities being placed in general education classrooms (Ford & Davern, 1989; McDonnell & Hardman, 1989; Snell & Eichner, 1989). Physical placement of students

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with disabilities can only be beneficial if the student is supported in the school both socially and with adequate services for them to access the curriculum (Ford & Davern, 1989; Stainback & Stainback, 1990). Mainstreaming students with disabilities is the process of placing students with disabilities who are deemed qualified, into general education classrooms. Mainstreaming has been under scrutiny for not considering the supports needed for students in a general classroom (Grosse, 1991; Lavay & DePaepe, 1987). Reverse mainstreaming on the other hand is the process of placing students without disabilities into a special education setting, so they learn alongside their peers with disabilities. As stated by Block and Krebs (1992), the importance of reverse mainstreaming is threefold: 1) students with disabilities have an opportunity for social interactions with peers without disabilities; 2) students with disabilities are engaged age-appropriate curriculum (Hunt et al., 1986); and 3) students with disabilities are learning in a natural environment (Brown et al., 1983).

Augmented Physical Education Programs

For the purposes of this dissertation, the word *augmented* will be defined as "made more complete" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). UPE which is a Special Olympics invention, provides a PE setting where peers with and without disabilities learn alongside each other. It is structured around the Society for Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America's national standards and grade-level outcomes (Messeerole et al., 2019). According to the UPE resource by Messeerole et al. (2019):

Unified Physical Education provides a unique opportunity for students with and without disabilities to come together through ongoing educational and physical activities. The Unified Physical Education course is structured around the national

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physical education standards and grade-level outcomes, which include gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a health-enhancing level of fitness. Additionally, the class supports the development of leadership skills for all students, and the empowerment of ALL students to foster an inclusive class and school-wide environment. Unified Physical Education courses can be a gateway for further participation in Special Olympics programs and events. Anecdotal evidence supports that participation in Unified Physical Education leads to an increase in student engagement in physical education and the greater school community. In addition, schools that have implemented the Unified Physical Education concepts have indicated that their student body has become more accepting of all students, and more apt to celebrate individual differences. Examples include students with and without disabilities eating lunch together, doing activities together on the weekends, and inspiring social change throughout the school.

Because of the contextual nature of schools and specifically PE, each school looking to develop a UPE program should work closely with local/state Special Olympics staff to help determine how to implement UPE within their school context and PE program for optimal success and sustainability (Messeerole et al., 2019). UPE exists on a spectrum with regard to prescription of the program. UPE may choose to adopt a mentor/mentee dynamic or conduct class with a more traditional (i.e., whole group) dynamic. A school can develop an entirely new course labeled UPE and adopt the curricula provided by the Special Olympics (Messeerole et al., 2019), or adopt a more philosophical underpinning of UPE, and incorporate it into an existing PE course. Ultimately, it is open for schools to

tailor their UPE program to the context of their needs, goals, strengths, or limitations (Messeerole et al., 2019).

In addition to UPE, there are several other inclusive PE pursuits currently in the United States, Paralympic School Day (PSD) is an educational program which was initiated by the International Paralympic Committee (International Paralympic Committee, 2020). PSD aims to create awareness and understanding in schools about persons experiencing disability. PSD curriculum can be implemented during a typical school day. The curriculum, which is designed for students ages 6-15, contains an array of activities that educate students about Paralympic sport, diversity, and disability issues in a safe and fun environment. Similar to UPE, PSD aims to shed light on the mystique that may surround the area of disability for students, through the medium of physical activity, and is implemented within the school. Numerous research studies have been conducted in the area of PSD (e.g., McKay et al., 2015, Panagiotou et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2010), all of which found that a PSD can have a positive impact on students' without disabilities attitudes towards students with disabilities (MaKay et al., 2015; Panagiotou et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2010). Contrasting to UPE, PSD is a singular event in an academic school year, whereas UPE may be embedded as a course within the school and is implemented throughout the duration of the school year.

Another example of an inclusive PE pursuit is Team Primetime Games (TPG), which is an inclusion-model after school sports league for elementary, middle, and high school students (Team Prime Time, 2020). The crux of TPG program is their "Peer:Pair" model which underpins their entire program. The Peer:Pair model pairs peer coaches with peer athletes, using a 1:1 ratio throughout all facets of the program. The program uses

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adapted rules for sports so that the Peer:Pair occupy a single position. TPG mirrors the typical varsity structure, with three distinct seasons that include training, practices, and both home and away games. The mentor/mentee dynamic unites two underserved populations from the same high school: (1) low income peer (the "coaches"); and (2) peer with disabilities (the "athletes"), and nurtures stronger connections between traditionally marginalized students (Straus, 2017). TPG is similar to UPE in that it strives to foster relationships between students experiencing and not experiencing disabilities in a physically active setting (Straus, 2017). TPG contrasts with UPE in that it is not housed within the school or during the school day. Also, the mentor/mentee dynamic (i.e., coach/athlete) supports an asymmetrical power relationship between both peers. This dynamic is not a fixture of UPE but is an option for PE teachers to explore for their programs.

Typically, academic and social performance gains for students educated in general educational settings exceed those gained for students educated in segregated educational settings (Carter, 2011; Goodwin, D. L., & Watkinson, 2000; Stainback, & Jackson, 1992). Being able to empirically show the positive affective impact an inclusive PE program (i.e., UPE) can have within a PE class and within an entire school, as perceived by students and the rest of the school ecology, can be groundbreaking in the field of inclusive PE. This knowledge could inform how PE is implemented in schools across the nation. For example, the nature of UPE's social environment can immerse students in numerous empathic experiences, and these experiences would be valuable in developing a student's inclusive behavior: empathy, respect, patience, along with other social and emotional behaviors. I

surmise that through the perceptions of students and other actors within the school ecology, UPE's impact can be illuminated.

Purpose of Research

Study 1. The purpose of Study 1 was to systematically review the existing literature on the perspectives of students toward inclusion within PE contexts.

Study 2. The purpose of study 2 was to (a) describe the perceptions and experience of students, paraprofessionals, administration, and general/special/PE teachers as an augmented PE program is being implemented, and (b) to determine what influence an augmented PE program may have on themselves and the school (i.e., inclusive behavior: empathy, respect, patience).

Research Questions

Study 1. How do school-aged students perceive inclusion within PE contexts?

Study 2. What are participants' perceptions of and experiences with an augmented PE program from one secondary school in Northern New England? What influence do these participants perceive with respect to the implementation of the program?

Role of Researcher

My positionality, as it relates to my participants, is that I am a thirty-something - year-old white male, from the university. My student participants were in grades 9-12 and between the ages of 14-21, likely viewed me as a teacher, which is why many of them referred to me as "Mr. Patey." I introduced myself to students as a researcher from the University of South Carolina, working with a colleague from the University of New Hampshire. My colleague had an established relationship, spanning a couple of years, with

the PE/UW teacher at the school where I conducted this research. I may have elicited some confusion by identifying as a researcher and being from the south. Several students asked me "Why are you here if you are not from [Northern New England]?" and "Why are you researching?" I answered empathically, stating that I didn't really know what a university researcher did either when I was their age; most students, unless they already know someone in academia, would likely not understand the nature of my work or why I am conducting this research.

Many students seemed very interested where I was from: Newfoundland and Labrador. Many students knew of my home Canadian province from their Science class, where they were learning about fossils of Mistaken Point, Newfoundland and Labrador. Also, my visit to the school was during the time when Newfoundland and Labrador were receiving record snowfall. The discourse I had with students regarding my home helped demystify my presence.

Being a white male may have had an impact on how students interacted with me. Depending on their upbringing and experiences, this may have helped or hindered my research endeavor. Introducing myself as a researcher from the university may have also cast an air of mystery around me, due to students not fully understanding my role, and may have sparked conversations at home which paint me as being an outsider, out of touch, and from the "ivory tower." This may have resulted in students being more reserved, protective, formal and sterile in their interactions with me.

I held power over my student participants, being that I am an adult and resemble a teacher; this may also have impacted the way students interacted with me. During focus groups, students may have chosen not to participate as freely as they would with a more

familiar person. During classes I have observed, students may have acted more unnaturally knowing I am in the gymnasium writing in my little book. Indeed, one student, Jody (pseudonym), inquired about what I was writing in my book and I showed her my book and told her I was writing what I see happening in class. she then asked me if I could stop writing and walk with her (this was during the warm-up where students were walking laps for a few minutes). I accepted his/her invitation.

Where students may have felt subjugated by my presence at their school, my adult participants likely perceived a more balanced researcher-participant hegemony, especially as it was clear my interest was in accessing these individuals' expertise. However, it is possible my status as a doctoral student sometimes shifted this balance. I have interviewed and interacted with adults for whom mention of a PhD (whether in progress or obtained) evokes perceptions of power and authority.

Acknowledgment of these power dynamics support the importance of member checking and triangulation of my data. My adult participants had the opportunity to add/alter/omit anything they said in their interviews to more accurately and authentically convey their voice. As well, multiple data sources were analyzed to support findings.

I strived to engage in my research as both an insider and an outsider throughout the course of this dissertation. Being an insider and outsider can afford both advantages and disadvantages. As an insider, I can build trust and rapport with participants, which can lead to rich data (advantage). However, an insider may also run the risk of developing "over rapport," which occurs when the researcher is too close to his participant group and misses key events or phenomena that are taken for granted (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). As an outsider, I may not be required the same time investment as a researcher; this can lead

to failure to see the nuances from participants beyond their words (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996). My aim was to adopt a marginal position, where I straddled the line between insider and outsider, by maintaining an intellectual distance to most appropriately process, analyze, and report my data/findings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996).

The nature of my dissertation was to convey the perspectives and experiences of my participants. Overall, my subjectivity and positionality encapsulate a powerful force I brought with me to this dissertation. My subjectivity acts as my filter of how I interpret what I see, hear, and feel. Being passionate about PE and specifically about the topics examined in this dissertation, ultimately strengthens my research. While at times I may have "overanalyzed" phenomena. being hypervigilant afforded me the ability to deeply glean from events and notice the nuances of the social interactions and participant responses which live beneath the surface and remain hidden to the casual observer.

CHAPTER 2: STUDY 1

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Introduction

For the purpose of this systematic review, the literature surrounding the perspectives of students toward inclusion within PE contexts will be illuminated. The literature reviewed in this area would contribute to the knowledge base on students' voices within PE and inclusive PE. This systematic literature review aimed to answer the following research question: How do school-aged students perceive inclusion within PE contexts? Inclusion, being defined as – "…not just about learners with special needs. It is an attitude and approach that embraces diversity and learner differences and promotes equal opportunities for all learners" (Alberta Education, 2016, para 1), and as an environment that provides appropriate opportunities for all students to engage in the curriculum (UNESCO, 2015).The methodological approach of this research followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al, 2009). Upon conclusion of records included in this systematic literature review, an evaluation of methodological rigor was conducted on each included, using the recommendations from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2019), and Effective Public Health Practice Project (EPHPP) (Effective Public Health Practice Project, 1998).

Design and Methodology

Eligibility Criteria

For this systematic review, the inclusion criteria were: online full text availability; scholarly peer reviewed article; English language; and between the years 2005-2018, capturing research since the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States, in 2004.

Information Sources

Articles were retrieved through exploring the databases: SPORTDiscus; Academic Search Complete; and Education Source. Limiters (listed above in Eligibility Criteria) were applied upon each database search. This search was completed on February 22, 2018.

Search

There were 5 categories of search terms used. Category 1: Child; Category 2: inclusion; Category 3: disability; Category 4: physical education; and Category 5: perceptions. The specific search terms for each category and their synonyms are listed below. These search terms use the notation "OR" between to search each synonym and used the notation "AND" to connect each category in the search. This process was repeated for each database. See Table 2.1 search categories and search terms.

Table 2.1 *Search categories and search terms*

Category 1: Child	AND	Category 2: Inclusion	AND	Category 3: Disability	AND	Category 4: Physical Education	AND	Category 5: Perceptions
child		inclusion		disability		physical education		perspectives
adolescent		including		deaf		physical and health education		perception
student		embracing		visually impaired		sport		view
Teen		incorporating		autism		sport education		viewpoints
youth		integrating		autistic		health education		standpoints
juvenile		participating		exceptionality		physical activity		opinions
school		mainstream		gifted		wellness education		outlooks
school-aged				down syndrome				stances
youngster				spina bifida				values
preschool				wheelchair				phenomenology
kindergarten				special education				phenomenological
kid				muscular dystrophy				attitudes
kids				amputee				understanding
preadolescent								interpretation

junior high	awareness
high school	aware
senior high	understand
secondary school	position
young people	positions
minors	insights

Backward and Forward Tracking

After the full-text review phase of review, the reference lists of each included article were examined for additional articles that met the inclusion criteria (backward tracking) (Moher et al., 2009). Furthermore, a citation search was executed to identify any articles that cited the included articles (forward tracking) (Moher et al, 2009). The retrieved articles underwent the same selection process (see below) as the other articles.

Study Selection

Articles included followed a systematic approach, using the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). The search terms were placed in each database and the number of records yielded from each search was noted. Limiters were applied to the search and the number of returned records was noted. Then, after removing duplicate titles, a review of the title and abstract of the remaining records was conducted. Titles and abstracts were read to identify obvious irrelevant records and these records were removed. Finally, in-depth full-text reading of the remaining records was implemented and records that did not meet the inclusion criteria were removed.

Data Collection Process, Items, and Additional Analysis

The following information was extracted from each included article: article citation; research design/theory; participants (e.g., sample size, age); research design, participants, research questions; analysis; and results. This information was entered into an excel spreadsheet and used as data for this review. Articles which studied perspectives of school-aged students on inclusion in PE contexts, were included in this review. Records deconstructed by the elements, were further deconstructed where appropriate: participants

– number and demographic information of participants; methodology – independent and dependent variables, instruments used, and validity and reliability; analysis – analysis type, major results, and strengths and weaknesses; and implications – description of implication of research/findings, suggestions of future research, and the authors critique of the citation. This information was then stored in an excel spreadsheet, to be referred to upon synthesizing the knowledge base.

Risk of Bias in Individual Studies

There is no risk of bias in this systematic review. Articles were ascertained in a systematic methodology adhering to PRIMSA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). Transparency has been outlined for replication.

Risk of Bias Across Studies

The databases used in this systematic review were global – this can potentially influence the variability of findings, being that inclusion and PE are framed differently around the globe. The descriptive nature of this area of research can potentially invite a Hawthorne effect (Chiesa & Hobbs, 2008), where participants may embellish answers, to reflect a utopian perspective, in effort to "best" represent themselves, or what they perceive the researcher would like to hear. The first author, who was a doctoral student in PE at the time of this study, conducted an expert audit of the included citations throughout each phase of screening. Additionally, an evaluation of methodological rigor was conducted on all included records, using the recommendations from the CASP (2019) and EPHPP (1998).

Results

Figure 2.1 presents the screening process used to identify the final list of articles included in this review. A preliminary database search yielded 1989 citations, with an additional 8 records (being added after conducting a backward and forward tracking). Upon applying limitations within the databases, the search generated 765 records. Afte4r removing 180 duplicates records, 593 records remained. A review of titles and abstracts ensued, which removed 547 records, leaving 46 records. After a full-text read of all 46 records, 19 were removed, due to being irrelevant of the direction of the review, leaving 27 records at the end of this phase. The authors met to discuss these articles and agreed to include 27 records in the review.
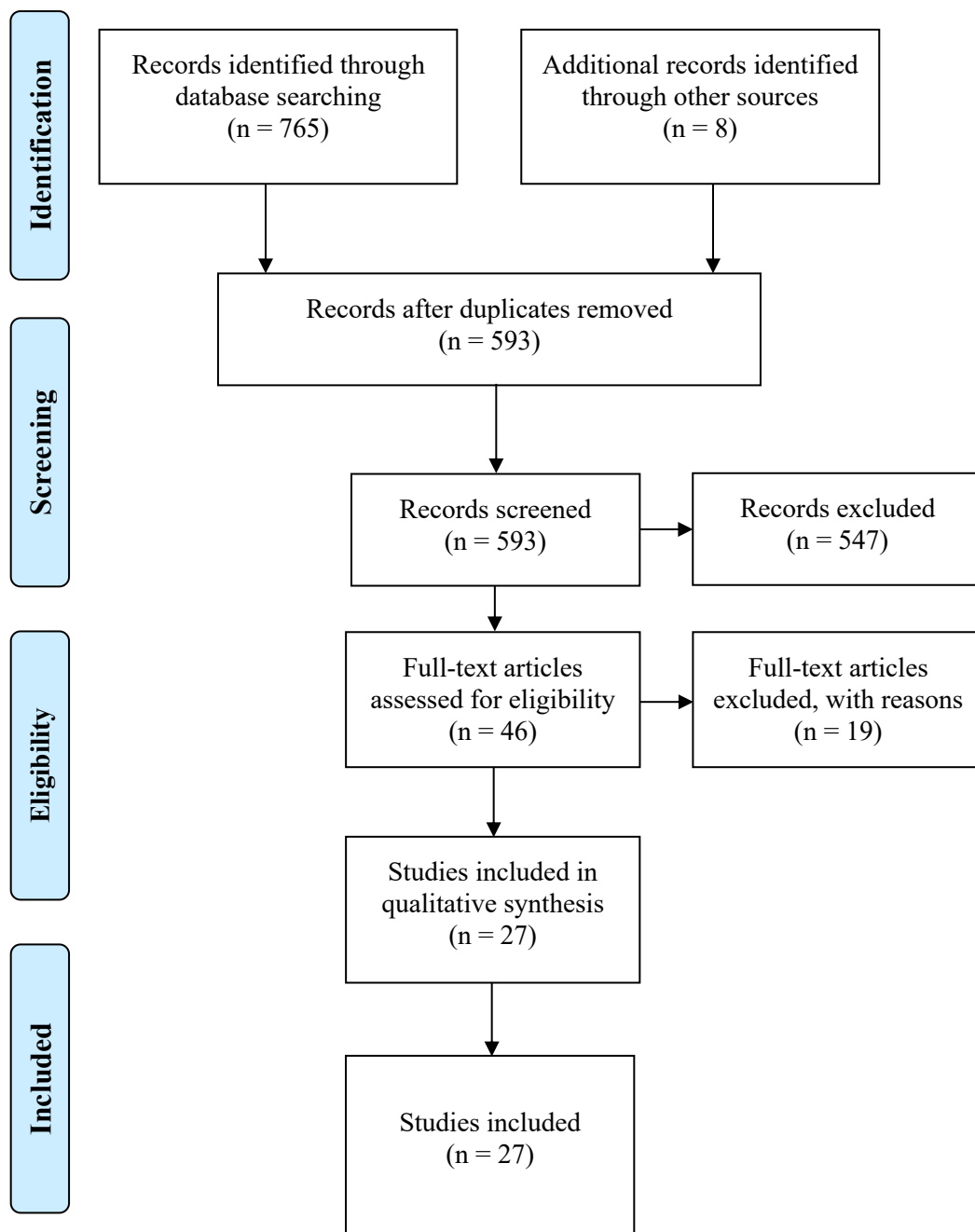
Figure 2.1 Flow of information through the different phases of a systematic review.

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Evaluation of Methodological Rigor

The CASP and EPHPP tools were used for evaluating the methodological rigor of the articles yielded in this systematic review. The CASP is an appraisal tool for qualitative research, there are ten questions with bulleted prompting questions within each question (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2019). Each question requires the response "yes", "no", or "can't tell" with a section to add comments about each answer. The EPHPP is a quality of assessment tool for quantitative research, there are eight sections with several questions within each section (Effective Public Health Practice Project, 1998). Each section requires a rating of "1" (strong), "2" (moderate), or "3" (weak).

There were 13 qualitative articles which were evaluated by the CASP (Berg Svendby, 2016; Farley, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2012; Fitzgerald & Stride, 2012; Grenier, 2006; Grenier et al., 2014; Healy et al., 2013; Herold & Dandolo, 2009; Li et al., 2013; Opie et al., 2017; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010; Tindall, 2013). Detail surrounding data collection was consistently shallow across most article. For example. Fitzgerald (2005), used interviewing as a data collection method, but did not disclose who conducted the interviews. Recruitment of participants were detailed in the vast majority of articles. For example, Spencer-Cavaliere and Watkinson used a purposeful sampling approach with a maximum variation strategy to recruit the participants. Finally, all articles showed alignment in their purpose, and methodology. For example, Li and colleagues, report their research purpose as "qualitatively describe perceptions of caring among 47 overweight or obese students in urban PE programs" (2013, p. 192), their methodology was a descriptive qualitative research design, which is in alignment for exploring perceptions. Results from completing the methodological evaluation for

qualitative articles was overall strong, all articles showed alignment and most articles had adequate detail.

There were 14 quantitative articles which were evaluated by EPHPP (Arampatzi et al., 2011; Bebetsos et al., 2013; Campos et al., 2013; Campos et al., 2014; Hung & Paul, 2014; Hutzler & Levi, 2008; Kodish et al., 2006; Kurková, 2015; Lui et al., 2009; MaKay et al., 2015; Obrusnikova et al., 2011; Obrusnikova et al., 2012; Panagiotou et al., 2008; Vaillo et al., 2016). Several articles lacked detail in areas that would enrich their rigor. For example, Bebetsos and collogues (2013), did not report any relevant confounders which were controlled by their design or analysis. Whether researchers, graduate students, or teachers collected the data were either explicitly reported or not referred to. For example, Campos and colleagues, stated "The CAIPE–R was administered at the beginning of the class by three PE teachers trained by the main research investigator" (2014, p. 901). Finally, data collection methods were detailed in description in most articles. For example, Obrusnikova and colleagues (2011) used the CIPPD-MPE questionnaire and provided a detailed description of the tool. Results from completing the methodological evaluation for quantitative articles was overall moderate to strong, with all articles having sound research design.

Table 2.2 *Results from individual studies included in the review of students' perspectives on inclusion in PE contexts*

	Article Title	Author(s)	Year	Research Design	Country and Participants	Major Results
1.	Social developmental parameters in primary schools: inclusive settings' and gender differences on pupils' aggressive and social insecure behaviour and their attitudes towards disability	Arampatzi, Mouratidou, Evaggelinou, Koidou, & Barkoukis	2011	Questionnaires (e.g., CAIPE-R)	Greece Age 10-12 years N=658 (352 female, 306 male)	Gender is a significant factor for students displaying aggression but not social insecurity and/or adopting positive attitudes towards disability. Inclusive settings are not a sufficient condition for the promotion of typical pupils' social behavior.
2.	Relationship among students' attitudes intentions and behaviors towards the inclusion of peers with disabilities in mainstream physical education	Bebetsos, Derri, Zafeiriadis, & Kyrgirdis	2013	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	Greece Age 10-12 years N=172 (94 female, 8 male)	Attitudes of students' without a disabilities are powerful in predictors of their behavior towards their peers experiencing disabilities, in the PE class.
3.	(Re)Telling lived experiences in different tales: a potential pathway in working towards an inclusive PE	Berg Svendby	2016	Narrative inquiry	Norway Age 10-19 years N=32 (10 students, 16 parents, 6 PE teachers)	Using narratives to study students' stories can be a viable method to unveil emotions grounded in their stories and evoke feelings and deep understandings of the realities of inclusion in PE.
4.	An analysis into the structure, validity and Reliability of the Children's	Campos, Ferreira, & Block	2013	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	Portugal Age 11-16 years	The Portuguese version of the Children's Attitudes Towards Integrated

	Attitudes Towards Integrated Physical Education-Revised (CAIPE-R)				N=683 (316 female, 367 male)	Physical Education-Revised (CAIPE-R) is a valid and reliable instrument to assess attitudes of students without disabilities toward including peers with disabilities in their general PE classes.
5.	Influence of an awareness program on Portuguese Middle and high school students' perceptions of peers with disabilities	Campos, Ferreira, & Block	2014	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	Portugal Age 11-16 years N=509 (235 female, 274 male)	Post the disabilities awareness program, students appeared to have a positive influence on their attitudes toward including peers with disabilities in PE.
6.	The Other Side of the Tracks: Narratives of Inclusion and Exclusion in Physical Education	Farley	2007	Group memory work	Australia Age 16-18 N=6 students	Insights on how students perceive PE based on teachers' pedagogy.
7.	Still feeling like a spare piece of luggage? Embodied experiences of (dis) ability in physical education and school sport	Fitzgerald	2005	Focus groups	England Secondary school age N= 5 students (5 male)	PE seems to celebrate a normal that does not include all ability levels.
8.	'Drawing'on disabled students' experiences of physical education and stakeholder responses	Fitzgerald	2012	Focus groups, Task sheets	England	Students perspectives on inclusion contradicted stakeholders views about inclusion. Stakeholders viewed inclusion as mainstreaming.

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9.	Stories about physical education from young people with disabilities	Fitzgerald & Stride	2012	Narrative inquiry	England Age 12-13 years N= 3 students (1 female, 2 male)	PE celebrate able body students as a normal, and therefore students who fall outside this normal are indirectly excluded.
10.	A Social Constructionist Perspective of Teaching and Learning in Inclusive Physical Education	Grenier	2006	Case study	United States Elementary school age N=16 students	Student interactions and relationships contribute to feelings of acceptance, and marginalization for students experiencing disabilities.
11.	Perceptions of a disability sport unit in general physical education	Grenier, Collins, Wright & Kearns	2014	Case study	United States Elementary school age N=89 (87 students, 1 PE teacher, 1 PE intern	A disability sport program within a PE curriculum, is a feasible strategy to positively shape students' and teachers' perceptions of disability.
12.	'Happy and a bit nervous': the experiences of children with autism in physical education	Healy, Msetfi, & Gallagher	2013	Interviews	Ireland Age 9-13 years N=12 students (1 female, 11 male)	Students experienced individual challenges (e.g., fear, peer interactions/bullying, and exclusion (e.g., self-exclusion). Students enjoyed making new friends.
13.	Including visually impaired students in physical	Herold & Dandolo	2009	Case study	United Kingdom	The role of teacher training and development, learning

education lessons: a case study of teacher and pupil experiences				Age 13 years N= 3 (1 student, 2 adults)	support assistants, resources and limitations of the National Curriculum in PE impact how to approach barriers to improve inclusion of students with visual impairments.
14. Inclusion of students who are deaf or hard of hearing: secondary school hearing students' perspectives	Hung & Paul	2014	Survey (IDHHSI)	United States Age 9-18 years N=241 (128 female, 113 male)	75% with positive attitudes. 10% of them showed strong positive attitude. 24% had negative attitudes. 1.2% exhibited strong negative attitudes.
15. Including children with disability in physical education: general and specific attitudes of high-school students	Hutzler & Levi	2008	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	Israel Secondary school age N=120 students (58 female, 62 male)	Children with previous exposure to children with disability – reduced willingness toward including children with disability in physical education. Participation of children with disability in PE did not have an influence on children's attitudes.
16. Determinants of Physical Activity in an Inclusive Setting	Kodish, Kulinna, Martin, Pangrazi, & Darst	2006	Questionnaire	United States Age 10-13 years N=114	No significant differences between levels of activity in PE classes that had students with autism, and PE classes who did not.

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17. Emotions in the physical activities of Czech students who are deaf or hard of Hearing in general and special education	Kurková	2015	Questionnaire	Czech Republic Secondary school age N= 132	Implementation of an adapted environment in PE, may have a positive effect on the experience of students who are D/deaf/heard of hearing and their hearing classmates.
18. Overweight or obese students' perceptions of caring in urban physical education programs	Li, Rukavina, & Foster	2013	Descriptive qualitative research design	United States Age 11-19 years N=47 students	Creating a caring climate, will invite overweight or obese students to work at their ability level. Providing specific feedback and developmentally appropriate adaptations can help foster a positive learning climate and create a learning environment with positive peer interactions.
19. The influence of Paralympic school day on Children's attitudes towards people with Disabilities	Liu, Kudláček, & Ješina	2009	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	Czech Republic Elementary school age N=36 students	Students' attitudes toward including peers experiencing disability in PE increased after the Paralympic school day intervention. Students attitudes toward changing sports rules for people with a disability decreased.
20. The impact of Paralympic school day on student	McKay, Block, & Park	2015	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	United States Elementary school age	A Paralympic school day program, can be a viable intervention to change and

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attitudes toward inclusion in physical education				N=143 students (71 female, 72 male)	shape student attitudes toward the inclusion of students experiencing disabilities in PE class.
21. Middle school student intentions to play with peers with disabilities in physical education: Using the theory of planned behavior	Obrusnikova, Dillon & Block	2011	Questionnaire (CIPPD-MPE)	United States Age 11-15 years N=250 students (107 female, 143 male)	Students with positive behavioral beliefs, increased confidence in ability to perform the behavior, along with the establishment of a supportive social environment, were all more likely to showcase strong intentions to play with a peer with a disability in their general PE class.
22. Validation of the children's beliefs and intentions to play with peers with disabilities in middle school physical education scale	Obrusnikova, Dillon, Block, & Davis	2012	Questionnaire (CBIPPD-MPE)	United States Middle school age N=903 students (380 female, 428 male)	The Children's Beliefs and Intentions to Play with Peers with Disabilities in Middle school Physical Education (CBIPPD-MPE) is a valid and reliable instrument. Positive behavioral beliefs, supportive social environments, and confidence in their ability were all indicators of a student to have stronger intentions to play with a peer experiencing a

					physical disability in their general PE class.
23. 'You have to be like everyone else': Support for students with vision impairment in mainstream secondary schools	Opie, Deppeler, & Southcott	2017	Phenomenology	Australian Age 17-19 years N=23 (7 students, 16 adults)	Students without aides in the classroom appeared to be academically more successful than those who had them. pupils receiving the most aide support made less progress than similar pupils who received little or no aide support, even after controlling for factors such as prior attainment and special need status. Students expressed concern that aides were not academic enough or expert enough in knowing how best to help someone with vision impairment. Aides may create a barrier to communication between the teacher and the student, and with their classmates.
24. Attitudes of 5th And 6th Grade Greek Students Toward The Inclusion Of Children With Disabilities In Physical Education Classes After A Paralympic Education Program	Panagiotou, Evaggelinou, Doulkeridou, Mouratidou, & Koidou	2008	Questionnaire (CAIPE-R)	Greece Age 11-12 years N=178 students (92 female, 86 male)	Major differences between control and experimental groups, with experimental group having increased attitude levels. There was no gender differences.

25. Inclusion understood from the perspectives of children with disability	Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson	2010	Qualitative	Canadian students Age 8-12 years N=11 (2 female, 9 male)	Actions of others (peers and teachers) were the prominent features identified by children that contributed to feeling included.
26. Creating disability awareness through sport: exploring the Participation, attitudes and perceptions of post-primary female Students in Ireland	Tindall	2013	Focus groups	Ireland Age 14-15 years N=55 students (55 female)	Creating opportunities for students to experience disability sport, found to evoke empathy. Findings support this means as an effective disability awareness avenue for students.
27. Attitudes towards inclusion of students with Disabilities in physical education questionnaire (AISDPE): a two-component scale in Spanish	Vaillo, Hutzler, Iniguez-Santiago, and Moreno-Murcia	2016	Questionnaire (AISDPE)	Spain Age 12-17 years N=976 students (491 female, 485 male)	The Attitudes towards inclusion of students with Disabilities in physical education questionnaire (AISDPE) is a valid and reliable instrument and may be used for surveying attitudes of students within the Spanish school system.

This systematic review of literature of students' perceptions on inclusive environments in PE yielded four overarching categories of articles: 1. Instrument validation and innovation; 2. Effect of interventions on student attitudes and perspectives; 3. Classmates' perceptions on including peers with disabilities; and 4. Students with disabilities perceptions on being included.

Instrument Validation and Innovation

Articles which delved into validating instruments to measure attitudes and perspectives of students on inclusion in PE (Campos et al., 2013; Obrusnikova et al., 2011; Obrusnikova et al., 2012; Vaillo et al., 2016). Within these instrument validation studies, different heuristics were featured including: *Children's Attitudes Towards Integrated Physical Education-Revised* (CAIPE-R) is a questionnaire comprising of 4 main sections (1) a written vignette of a hypothetical student with a disability, (2) questions of experiences with individuals with disabilities, (3) statements about including a student with a disability in general PE, and (4) a series of optional statements about modifying rules of sports in general PE; A*titudes towards Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Physical Education questionnaire* (AISDPE) is a modified version of the Attitudes Towards Disability Questionnaire (ATDQ) – there are two major differences between the AISDPE and the ATDQ: (1) a more general description of disability attribution, and (2) additional items, sub grouped into (a) cognitive perception of children with a disability, (b) behavioral readiness to interact with children with disabilities, and (c) emotional reactions; *Children's Intentions to Play with Peers with Disabilities in Middle School Physical Education scale* (CIPPD-MPE), comprised of a written vignette, and 57 Likert scale items, with a definition of the target behavior for each item; *Children's Beliefs and Intentions to Play with Peers*

with Disabilities in Middle school Physical Education (CBIPPD-MPE), which is comprised of a written vignette, and 57 Likert scale items – there is a definition of the target behavior for each item; and *Inclusion of Deaf or Hard-of- Hearing Students Inventory* (IDHHSI), a 36 item questionnaire with four sub scales, including (a) Inclusion, (b) Contact, (c) Closeness, and (c) Class Norms.

Outside of these questionnaires, there were other attempts to measure students' perceptions of inclusion in PE through narrative and illustrative representations (Berg Svendby, 2016; Farley, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2012). These techniques are viable methods to ascertain students' perspectives and may be more impactful than conventional questionnaires because of the depth the student may go in representing his/her perspective. These methods can unveil the emotional component attached to the student's perspective, which a questionnaire may not be able to capture. All studies of this nature saw a positive growth in perspectives and attitudes in students toward inclusion (Campos et al., 2014; Grenier et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2010; McKay et al., 2015; Tindall, 2013).

Effect of an Intervention on Student Perspectives and Attitudes

These studies aimed to see the impact of an intervention on students' perceptions of inclusion. These studies defined inclusion as including students experiencing disabilities, and therefore the intervention was centered on disability awareness through disability sport integrated into the PE curriculum or a Paralympic school event (Campos et al., 2014; Grenier et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2015; Panagiotou et al., 2008 Tindall, 2013). All interventions reported a positive influence on students' without disabilities perceptions and attitudes toward including students experiencing disability in general PE. For example, as found by Campos et al. (2014) through use of the CAIPE-R,

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students without disabilities had previous experience interacting with disability and this increased their perceptions toward including peers with disabilities in PE class. This positive influence was attributed to evoking empathy from the students toward their peers with disabilities, through exposure to sport and physical activities within disability contexts.

Classmates' perceptions on including peers with disabilities

While the perceptions of teachers with regard to inclusion in PE has been studied widely (e.g., Curtner-Smith, 1996; Rukavina, Langdon et al., 2019), the other key player – *the student* – is important to consider, as well. Several researchers have illuminated the perspectives of students including students with disabilities (Hutzler & Levi, 2008; Hung & Paul, 2014; Arampatzi et al., 2011; Bebetsos et al., 2013; Obrusnikova et al., 2011). For example, Hung and Paul (2014), through the use of the Inclusion of Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing Students Inventory, found female students' scores were slightly higher than male students, also students in inclusive classes displayed higher positive attitudes than students in general classes, absent of any students with disabilities. Findings showed early interaction and exposure to individuals experiencing disability is a powerful indicator of that student being more inclined to include a peer experiencing disability in the PE program. There were conflicting reports citing that gender either was or was not a factor contributing to the willingness to include peers with disabilities.

Students perceptions on being included

Findings from the studies in this category varied, but all revolved around a similar ideal. Students with disabilities perceived socially safe environments, through relationships of peers and teachers. Physical barriers to full inclusion were discussed as well, but the

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social barriers were perceived as being strong hindrances to inclusion in PE. Findings also suggest that current general PE favors a certain population, and in/directly marginalizes other populations; in this context students report preferring to exclude themselves from activities instead of participating and potentially being marginalized (Berg Svendby, 2016; Farley, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2012; Fitzgerald & Stride, 2012; Grenier, 2006; Healy et al., 2013; Kodish et al., 2006; Kurková, 2015; Li et al., 2013; Opie et al., 2017; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010). For example, Berg Svendby (2016), through a narrative inquiry methodological approach, retold stories from two young people with disabilities about their PE experiences, and posited that this is a powerful approach to gain knowledge regarding inclusion in PE.

Little research has focused on inclusion through a diversity context. Inclusion has been used synonymously with 'including the student with a disability' and not acknowledging other diversities a student may bring into the gymnasium (e.g., body shapes/sizes, cultural/religious restrictions), nor the intersectionality of these diversities. Li et al. (2013) reported that a socially safe environment was important to students with disabilities when participating in PE. The perceptions of students on inclusive environments was rich with regard to (1) students without disabilities on including students with disabilities, and (2) students' with disabilities experiences in PE. Findings from the reviewed articles suggest that there is a social-ecological element to inclusion, meaning the physical and social surroundings influence the inclusiveness into which the students are immersed. Students' peers and teachers were agents in students' feelings of inclusion and exclusion, primarily through positive and negative interactions and experiences, which can

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fluctuate day-to-day, depending on their perceived relevance within the social environment (i.e., sense of belonging).

What is unknown is: (a) the role of the school ecology (i.e., students, teachers, administrators, support staff) as they experience an augmented PE program, and (b) students' perspectives on inclusive environments, particularly as framed by a diversity lens encompassing all students, not just including students with disabilities. In order to address these two gaps in the research, it is important to (a) qualitatively describe and highlight the perceptions and experiences of multiple groups within the school ecology regarding non-traditional PE programs, and (b) home in on the perspectives of all students (with and without disabilities) who experience the PE program first-hand.

"Nothing about us, without us!" (Charlton, 2000) is the underlying philosophy of this research venture, and justification for focusing on the students' perspectives on the UPE program. A benefit from this research is that results from this research will highlight students' voice regarding their experiences in an inclusive PE program. There is underrepresentation of students' perspectives in this area in empirical research. Many students, including students with disabilities experience marginalization and isolating experiences in PE (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015).

Discussion

The importance students place on their social inclusion in conjunction with their physical inclusion is paramount. Findings from this review are consistent with Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), whose findings highlighted how students with impairments experienced their PE programs. Their participants reported that they have experienced "good days" and "bad days." Positive experiences (i.e., good days) were identified when

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"sense of belonging" (i.e., feelings of perceived supportive interactions with teachers and peers within their PE program), "skillful participation" (i.e., taking part in PE programs with intrinsic motivation and the heightened sense of self-efficacy), and "sharing in the benefits" (i.e., achieving educational outcomes together with peers in PE programs) were presented. Negative experiences (i.e., bad days) were identified when "social isolation" (i.e., being rejected, neglected, or marginalized by peers within their PE programs, "questioned competence" (i.e., the state occurring when peers were questioning their abilities in PE due to the preconceived notion of their disability, and "restricted participation" (i.e., the circumstances where reduced opportunities were provided to those students due to a lack of teacher support, infrequent interactions with peers, and/or restrictions from the built environments of schools) were observed.

A diversity lens can see disability, whereas a disability lens may not see diversity. Delving into students' perspectives on inclusion whilst wearing a disability lens may hinder capturing students' perspectives on inclusion of themselves, and of students with various body sizes and shapes, students who follow specific cultural/religious restrictions, students from unique cultural backgrounds such as Indigenous students from rural/remote communities. These findings are pertinent for the establishment and sustainability of inclusive PE, for each of the key players – teachers, administrators, parents, and students. The prevalence of students perceiving good days can increase (Cothran & Ennis, 1999; Farley, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2005; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Spencer-Cavaliere & Watkinson, 2010).

Conclusion

Perspectives of students with disabilities regarding inclusion in PE has not been fully explored and is needed on a grander scale. This will allow for comparing and contrasting with other regions and variables which may contribute to shaping or shifting students' perspectives. A PE program may be "fully inclusive" physically (i.e., the built school environment) and fundamentally (i.e., pedagogic design), but not actually be fully inclusive in reality. A PE program that is determined to establish and sustain inclusivity, must embrace the most equitable stance of viewing inclusion, which is through a diversity lens. The social ecology for one student may differ heavily to another. The vast majority of literature in this review views inclusion with a disability lens, not a diversity lens.

Evidence presented in this review reveals several gaps in this area of research. Researchers primarily study inclusion with a disability lens – unveiling the gap of studying inclusion with a diversity lens; social-ecology has been named as an important aspect of inclusion – strategies and perceptions of social inclusion should be further explored; using an intervention to help shape students attitudes toward inclusion in PE – studying retention of changed attitudes, should be studied to ensure the impact; and students vary in their perspectives of inclusion in PE – insinuating there may be a contextual variable associated with inclusion in PE, these variables should be explored. This gap in research while using a diversity approach of inclusion in PE context, rather than only disability.

Limitations

The knowledge base in this area is very shallow. Much of the literature is published by the same handful of authors (forty-nine authors across twenty-seven articles, ten of which are on multiple publications in this review), this may lead to an over saturation of

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an authors' lens on the subject, and not fully represent the research area. Small sample sizes – Many records had a small number of participants, this makes it difficult to apply findings to other populations, limiting the impact of the results, because the results are based on few individuals, it may not represent a larger group.

THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE SCHOOL ECOLOGY

DURING THE IMPLEMENTION OF AN AUGMENTED PHYSICAL

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduction

Every human has the right to live freely with equity and dignity (United Nations, 1948). Within equitable and dignified environments, the role of inclusion must be consulted. The school is a critical venue where students can be immersed into an inclusive culture. Currently, PE is widely separated into general PE programs and APE programs across the United States. This segregation does not support equity and dignity for all students. The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions and experience of students, paraprofessionals, administrators, a cafeteria aide, a caregiver, general classroom teachers, special education teachers, and a PE teacher during the implementation of an augmented PE program, to determine what influence an augmented PE program may have on themselves and the school. In this study, the augmented PE program is a program named Unified Wellness (UW) created and shaped over the past decade, by one PE teacher, in one secondary school in Northern New England.

Conceptual/Theoretical Perspectives

I wanted to capture the voice of my participants; therefore, I upheld an interpretive perspective whilst designing the methodology and interpreting data (Dilthey, 1961;

Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Rorty, 1979). I believe the interpretivist approach garnered the perspectives and experiences of my participants in the most appropriate manner. At the outset, I established the intellectual goal of *understanding the meaning* of the phenomenon – to describe how several actors within a High School perceive and experience UW.

Grix articulated ontology as being "…about what we may know…" (2002, p. 177). My ontological assumptions align with subjectivism. My position is that social reality is housed within the individual acknowledging multiple interpretations of reality, deemed by the individual through their experiences, culture, values, perceptions, and identities. I believe, it is possible for a singular event to yield multiple realities and truths. For example, one person's perception of a cultural practice may differ from someone else's perception of the same practice. Both perceptions are interpretations of the same event that reflect each individual's lens (a culmination of their lived experiences and values, among other factors that affect how they perceive) – and they are both correct, in their own reality. What is true to one, may not be true to another, meaning there is not one universal interpretation, nor one universal truth. I see social reality and truth through the eyes of an interpretivist. With regard to my research topic, I endeavored to accurately represent and describe my participants' perspectives and contextualize my findings.

While attending Star High School, I felt as a part of the PE program. I would shadow Ms. Gable throughout the day, and students viewed me as a teacher-like individual, with even students, on occasion asking me if they can go to the bathroom. Two students specifically, were interested with where I am from and had questions for me most days in this area. At the end of my last day of my first visit, the whole UW class came to me when I was preparing to leave to say "goodbye" wish me safe travels. When I came back for my

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second visit, students remembered me and excitedly stated several 'facts' about me that they remembered (i.e., where I am from, the university I am from, my pet).

Research Questions

Specific research questions which drove my research are:

- RQ$_1$: What are the perceptions of and experiences with an augmented physical education program from one secondary school in Northern New England?

- RQ$_2$: What is the perceived degree of influence of an augmented physical education program on one secondary school in Northern New England?

Design and Methodology

This research is based on an exploratory case study design (Yin, 2018), which gives prominence to interviewing as a primary technique for data collection. According to Yin, an exploratory case study is "a case study whose purpose is to identify the research questions or procedures to be used in a subsequent research study, which might or might not be a case study" (2018, p. 287) The goal of this methodology is to explore how/what phenomena are occurring. I have bound my study in perceptions of several actors within one secondary school in Northern New England. The exploratory nature of this case study research positioned participants to interpret and articulate their perceptions and experiences in an authentic context of UW (Yin, 2018). An exploratory case study design helped me to explore UW comprehensively and thoroughly, in an effort to fully understand and to encourage dialogues for further investigations (Lichtman, 2010; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The perceptions and experiences of the school ecology with regard to the implementation of an augmented PE program (UW) is absent in the empirical knowledge base. My unit of

analysis is the experiences and perceptions of several actors within the school during the implementation of UW.

Site Selection, Criteria, and Justification

The site is a secondary school in Northern New England, which I will refer to as Star High School (pseudonym). A colleague regaled me of anecdotes from Star High School PE teacher and their UW program, then connected me with the PE teacher. I collected my data at this site because it satisfies my selection criteria: (1) has an established augmented PE program; and (2) is a secondary school. I received a letter of approval and support to conduct research at this site from the school's principal and the UW teacher. I received approval from The Institutional Review Board from the University of New Hampshire and University of South Carolina for the study (see Table 3.1 for school demographic details).

There are 1461 students currently enrolled in this school, of which, there is not much diversity with regard to race/ethnicity, the student body is largely White, Non-Hispanic (82%) (see Table 3.1 for full school demographic details). Posted in the hallways was the mission statement, core values, beliefs, academic, and social and civic statements for Star High School. I will summarize and paraphrase these points in effort to maintain the anonymity of the school. Mission Statement: committed to the development of lifelong learners, wants students to reach their full potential, and upholds a student-centered education approach. Core Values: authenticity, respect, resilience, perseverance. Beliefs: supports the students right for a safe and respectful learning environment and experience. Academic Statement: supports personal growth and academic success, collaboration, problem solving, innovation, and authentic learning tasks. Social and Civic Statement: take

responsibility for your own actions, respect and accept diversity, positivity contributes to the school climate.

The school delivers two sections of UW classes per semester, and there are four semesters in an academic year. The course goals of UW are to "increase in physical fitness and sport-specific skills; foster new friendships and social inclusion amongst classmates; reinforce positive habits and reasoning to make better health and lifestyle choices; and deepen understanding of fitness activities" (Unified Wellness Syllabus, 2019).

According to the course description of UW:

This course will provide students with a comprehensive Wellness Education program. Mentees [students with disabilities] will work toward achieving lifelong personal wellness habits by fitness training and learning positive health skills daily. Mentors [students without disabilities] will be provided opportunities to develop mentoring skills by practicing various techniques helping classmates in the development of habits of healthy living. Attendance at either a Regional or State Olympics program as a participant or volunteer is required. Mentees in Unified Wellness will receive credit for Physical Education and Health; mentors in Unified Wellness will receive an elective credit for Physical Education activities (Unified Wellness Syllabus, 2019).

The UW curriculum resembles a general PE and health curriculum. Examples of units covered throughout each iteration of UW are team sports, lifetime activities, cooperative games, goal setting, healthy relationships, and personal care (Unified Wellness Syllabus, 2019). In addition to most syllabi developed in secondary school, UW syllabus

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requires a student and their parent/guardians' signature to confirm that all parties read the document.

Table 3.1 *School Demographic*

Race & Ethnicity	Portion of Student Body (%)
Indian/Alaskan Native	0.12%
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.74%
Hispanic	3.85%
Black, Non-Hispanic	1.66%
White, Non-Hispanic	81.9%
Multi-Race	4.68%

Note. 1461 Total Students Enrolled

This study took place across both UW classes. Classes meet two or three times a week depending on the block schedule rotation. UW class is scheduled during the last period of the day, 1:10pm-2:30pm, Monday to Friday. Both UW classes enroll students with and without disabilities and use the terminology mentors and mentees. Students without disabilities are listed as "mentors" or peer supports to students with disabilities, who are referred to as "mentees". In each class there are 10 "mentors" and 15 "mentees". 15 of the "mentees" attend each UW class. Ms. Gable (pseudonym), the UW teacher, mentioned emphatically, that the labels, "mentors" and "mentees" are only for paperwork, and no one is actually formally paired with anyone, nor is anyone referred to in-class as a mentor or a mentee. The mentees are in grades 9 to 12 and range in age from 14 to 21 years old, Star High School allows certain students to attend until their 21st birthday. The mentors are in grades 10-12 and range in age from 15 to 18 years old. Mentees have identified disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Anxiety, Cerebral Palsy Ataxic, Down Syndrome, Speech Language Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Seizure Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (see Appendix A for student diagnoses

and context information). Also, across all mentors and mentees only one student did not have an individual education plan (IEP) or 504 plan. All students had the capacity to respond to commands and participate in the class. All students were also able to engage in conversation and comprehend questions posed to them as well as the responses provided by peers and teachers. Paraprofessionals accompany some students depending on the students' needs.

Students with disabilities work toward achieving lifelong personal wellness habits by fitness training and learning positive health skills daily. Students without disabilities practice developing mentoring skills by helping classmates in the development of habits of healthy living through modeling, verbal cueing and active engagement in the UW class. Ms. Gable recently, created training sessions for students without disabilities need to attend if they want to enroll in UW. This series of training sessions led by the Ms. Gable and address several topics such as expectations, appropriate behaviors in UW, and examples of social, verbal and visual cues to facilitate communication (see Appendix B for UW syllabus and mentor expectations).

Participant Selection, Criteria, and Justification

I employed a maximum variation and convenience sampling method of selecting participants. Maximum variation sampling refers to the method of selecting participants across an array of variation (Glesne, 2016). Convenience sampling is the method of selecting participants based on the convenience of the research (Glesne, 2016). My participants were 14 students, 1 PE/UW teacher, 4 general teacher, 1 special education teachers, 3 paraprofessionals, 1 cafeteria aide, 1 caregiver, 1 director of athletics and PE, and 1 principal (see Table 3.2 and 3.3 for details of participants). All students with and

without disabilities who were currently enrolled in UW were eligible to participate in the study. Adults were eligible to participate if they were currently employed full time at the school and had been employed at the school for at least the past 2 years.

Table 3.2 *Description of Adult Participants (n = 13)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Teaching/ Working	Education	Position
Alex	F	20+	Certification in Special Education	Special Education teacher, Case manager
Bev	F	2	BSc*, MEd***	Case manager, Unified Science teacher, Unified Animal Science teacher, Math teacher
Charlotte	F	7	Cosmetology Diploma	Paraprofessional, Unified coach
David	M	10+	BSc*, MEd***	Director of Athletics and PE, Father of past UW Mentee
Emily	F	7	MEd***	Art teacher
Fran	F	13	High School Diploma	Paraprofessional
Ms. Gable	F	34	BSc*	PE teacher, UW teacher, Unified coach
Hayes	F	8	BSc*	Caregiver, Past UW Mentor
Isaac	M	30	BA**, MSc****	Principal
Jenna	F	12	BA**	Math teacher
Ken	M	18	MEd***	Paraprofessional
Lesley	F	18	BA**	Math teacher
Tony	M	7	High School Diploma	Cafeteria aid, Past UW Mentee

*BSc: Bachelor of Science
**BA: Bachelor of Arts

Table 3.3 *Description of Student Participants (n = 14)*

Pseudonym	Gender	Diagnosis/Context	Mentor* or Mentee**
Annie	F	N/A	Mentor
Bill	F	Learning Disability	Mentor
Charlie	M	Traumatic Brain Injury, Speech & Language Impairment	Mentee
Dylan	M	Cerebral Palsy Ataxic, Autism Spectrum Disorder	Mentee
Eric	F	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Mentor
Fleur	F	Intellectual Disability, Speech & Language Impairment	Mentee
Greg	M	Intellectual Disability	Mentee
Henry	M	N/A	Mentor
Isla	M	Down Syndrome, Low IQ	Mentee
Jessy	M	Intellectual Disability	Mentee
Kyle	M	Depression	Mentor
Jody	F	N/A	Mentor
Mike	M	Intellectual Disability	Mentee
Nick	M	Seizure Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Mentee

*Mentor: Student without disabilities

**Mentee: Student with disabilities

Methods

I used several methods to collect data, including a researcher's daily journal, classroom observations, fieldnotes, interviews, and sociograms All of these data sources were analyzed and collectively triangulated to inform my findings (Glesne, 2016). Only participants who have consented to research were included in any research activities (see Appendix C for Informed Consent Forms). Figure 3.1 (Data Collection Design Matrix) presents a breakdown of the intersections of research questions and data sources.

Daily Journal

I recorded my thoughts and feelings on the research process each day using a reflective journal. Largely, I would reflect on how students responded to my presence and interactions with anyone during my visit. In my journal entries I only included individuals who had consented to participate in my research. All reflections were recorded in a notebook, primarily using bullet points to organize my thoughts.

Observations

UW classes met two or three times a week depending on the block schedule rotation. I conducted participant observations across the all 3 weeks of data collection, for a total of 12 UW classes (see Appendix G for data collection schedule). The purpose of these observations was to glean the essence of student socialization, affect, and class ethos. Observations helped inform prompts and questions for the semi-structured one-on-one and focus group interview questions (see below; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Participant observations followed Schatzman and Strauss' (1973) system of

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organizing notes in research. Their system is comprised of three categories of organizing notes. First are observational notes, which are highly detailed notes of the events and experiences witnessed, with little interpretation. These notes are the "Who, What, When, Where and How of human activity" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, pp. 100). Second are theoretical notes, which attempt to apply meaning to a single or a series of observational note(s) (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Third are methodological notes, which reflect the methodological process, such as time engaged in research activities, reminders, prompting questions, and data collection protocols (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Participant observations were recorded in a notebook. I only included individuals who provided informed consent in my recorded observations.

Fieldnotes

I took fieldnotes during and after interviews (see below). Fieldnotes included my initial analysis of emergent phenomena, the contexts of focus groups and one-on-one interviews, and preliminary observations about interviewees' responses, including their emotional state, body language, and other nonverbal cues (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Fieldnotes were recorded in a notebook and restricted to those individuals who provided informed consent to participate in my research.

Interviewing

I conducted both focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews. I adopted an ethnographic interviewing technique, which allowed for the exploration of the meaning that my participants ascribed to their actions and happenings in their cultural worlds (Roulston, 2010). I maintained empathic neutrality throughout the duration of all interviews (e.g., showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and

responsiveness to participants through body language and responses) (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Patton, 2015; Pedersen, 2008). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015).

There were 4 focus group interview sessions, consisting of 3 to 4 students per session, roughly half of each focus was consisting of students with disabilities. Focus group interviews included a mix of students with and without disabilities. I aimed to understand students' perceptions and experiences with regard to UW (See Appendix D focus group interview guide protocol). Participants who had parental consent and had assented or had consent for themselves, if over the age of 18 years old were recruited for focus group sessions. Fourteen students consented, and 13 students participated in focus group interviewing. Before each focus group interview, all students were reminded that taking part in focus group interviews was completely voluntary, and that if a student agreed to participate but later decided they do not want to participate, they were free to make that choice before, during, or even after the focus group interview has concluded. I informed students that if a student decided to withdraw, I would then not use that student's responses and destroy any data from that student. I did not have any student participants withdraw, although I did have one student participant who consented but was then absent for focus group and sociograms.

Focus group interviews were approximately 15-25 minutes in length. Paraprofessionals were welcome to join their students in the focus group, although no paraprofessionals decided to accompany their students. Focus group interviews took place in a conference room off of the main gymnasium during Advisory/Flex block. Advisory/Flex block is a 40-minute period during the day where students can sign up

for extra learning activities. Ms. Gable and I scheduled students for PE during the Advisory/Flex block and conducted the focus group for the first part of this period (see Appendix G for data collection schedule). I assigned each student a pseudonym and used this in place of actual names to report my findings.

I conducted a total of 13 one-on-one semi-structured interviews, which included the PE/UW teacher (1), general classroom teachers (4), special education teacher (1), paraprofessionals (3), cafeteria aide (1), caregiver (1), director of athletics and PE (1), and the principal (1). The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights of their experiences and their perceptions of UW (see Appendix E, Adult Interview Guide, for an example one-on-one interview protocol).To recruit teachers as interview participants, I obtained a list of prospective teacher interviewees from Ms. Gable. Of interest were teachers who either currently teach or had previously taught UW at the school. Ms. Gable contacted each teacher, on my behalf, asking if they would be willing to participate an interview, and we scheduled interview times that were convenient for them. In addition to teachers, I also contacted and scheduled interviews with other personnel within the school. All participants completed informed consent forms prior to the interview. The interviews took place in a quiet and convenient location which was either the conference room next to the gymnasium or the participant's office (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Before each interview, participants were reminded that taking part in the interview was completely voluntary, and that if a they agreed to participate but later decided they did not want to participate, they were free to make that choice before, during, or even after conclusion of the interview. I told interviewees that if they decided to withdraw, I would then not use their responses and would destroy their

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interview data. I did not have any participants withdraw. Interviews were approximately 30-90 minutes in length. I assigned each participant a pseudonym and used this in place of actual names to report my findings.

Sociograms

Sociograms can illustrate the social networks among students (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) (see Appendix F – Sociogram). This data collection method was carried out during week two of data collection, which coincided with their last week of their term in UW, at which point students had gained ample experiences to get to know one another and interact together in a variety of ways during UW. Participants who had parental consent and had assented or had consent for themselves, if over the age of 18 years old, participated in completing a sociogram. Students were asked to complete sociograms during the last 15 minutes of one UW class. Participation in sociograms was completely voluntary. Paraprofessionals and peer supports aided any student who required help completing his/her sociogram.

The instructions I gave to students were to identify their friend group in the school. Students were asked to fill out a blank version of the sociogram sheet (see Appendix F - Sociogram). I first demonstrated how to complete the sociogram to all students, by filling out a blank copy about myself in front of the students. After the demonstration, I asked students to complete the sociogram before the end of class. I was available for questions if any student had a question or issue. I collected all of the completed sociograms and conferenced with Ms. Gable to identify overarching categories of the students recorded on the sociograms. Categories included: (1) Student participates in UW; (2) Student does not participate in UW, (3) Student with

disabilities; and (4) Student without disabilities. I removed all names and replaced each with the appropriate aforementioned categories. I recorded student relationships as one-way or two-way. A one-way (directional) relationship occurs when one student includes another student in his/her sociogram but the other student does not include the first student in his/her sociogram. A two-way (nondirectional) relationship occurs when both students include each other in their sociograms (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). I recorded all sociograms into an Excel spreadsheet for data analysis.

		Data Sources					
		Students With and Without Disabilities			Classroom Teacher, Physical Education Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Paraprofessionals, Administration		Researcher
Research Questions	(1) **Study 2.** What are participants' perceptions of and experiences with an augmented PE program from one secondary school in Northern New England? (2) What influence do these participants perceive with respect to the implementation of the program**?**	Focus Group Interviews (4)	Sociograms	Observations / Field notes	One-on-one Semi-structured Interviews (13)	Field notes	Reflective Journal

Figure 3.1 Data Collection Design Matrix

Data Analysis

A thematic data analysis technique was employed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A data analysis spiral was used to identify, analyze, and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The five steps of the data analysis process are: (1) managing and organizing the data, (2) reading and memoing emergent ideas, (3) describing and classifying codes into themes through rounds of coding: in vivo coding – participant voice; descriptive coding – topic of a passage, (4) developing and accessing interpretations, and (5) representing and visualizing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). Figure 3.2 presents a visual depiction of the data analysis spiral.

Following the initial organization of data (i.e., assigning appropriate file names and locations, anonymizing participants' identifiers), multiple and thorough readings of interview transcriptions were completed. I noted any relevant ideas during this initial phase of data analysis. I completed two rounds of coding in vivo and descriptive coding across all interview transcriptions. In vivo coding can also be referred as verbatim coding or inductive coding (Saldaña, 2015). Specifically, in vivo codes consist of a word or short phrase from the participant voice found in the qualitative data record (Saldaña, 2015). Descriptive coding can be referred to as hashtag coding (Saldaña, 2015). Specifically, descriptive coding is a short phrase, developed by the coder, which describes the passage of participant voice (Saldaña, 2015). Initial codes were assigned through the repeated processes of readings and rounds of coding. Codes were then expanded on by categorizing, subcategorizing, collapsing and separating codes. Codes were continually modified and revised to ensure that there was no overlap or redundancies. Finally, codes were grouped

into themes. Each theme or key concept was organized under the research question it applies to and represents the voices of my participants.

Data Collection

1. Manging & Organizing the Data

2. Reading & Memoing Emergent Ideas

3. Describing & Classifying Codes into Themes

4. Developing & Accessing Interpretations

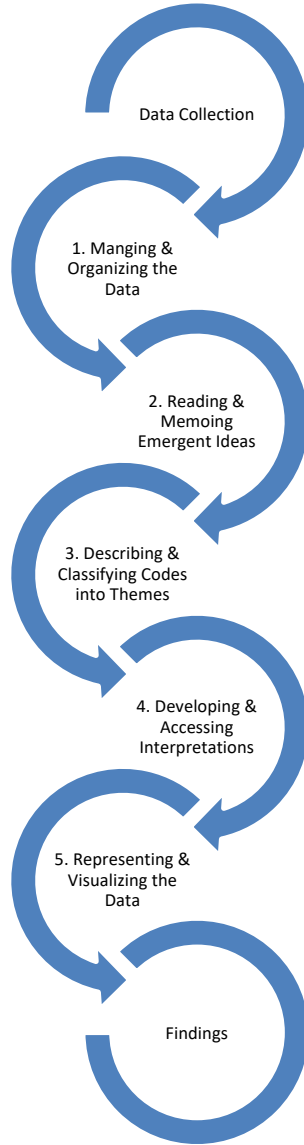5. Representing & Visualizing the Data

Findings

Figure 3.2 Visual Depiction of Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Trustworthiness

To increase the trustworthiness of my findings, transferability, reflexivity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and coherence were considered as quality criteria (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). To ensure reflexivity (i.e., researcher's own critical reflections on experiences, assumptions, and reactions throughout the research process), a reflective journal was kept and referred to throughout the research process. To promote credibility (i.e., the strength of research findings), data triangulations (i.e., using multiple data sources) Data triangulation was achieved through collection and analysis of several data sources to support findings. Member checking were performed in the transcription and category phases (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). On June 15th I sent categories and possible early emerging themes to participants. They have two weeks to respond, and if I hear from them, I will address any additional analytical points they contributed and/or share any contested analytical points in my findings and discussion.

. To ensure resonance (i.e., impact of the study on readers), participants' quotes were presented verbatim in the results. To make a significant contribution (i.e., contributions to a deeper understanding and generation of insights to the field of study), research questions were developed to understand the perceptions and experiences of students and other actors within the school of an augmented PE program. To maintain ethics (i.e., values and moral principles in research process), participants were made aware of all stages and procedures of the research process. I maintained an open and respectful line of communication between the participants and the site. Ethics clearance was obtained prior to commencement of this research. Coherence (i.e., following a consistent, clear, and concise research paradigm) was established by carefully attending the underpinning

philosophies and processes of an exploratory case study research design (Yin, 2018). This process was reviewed by experts (i.e., my doctoral committee members).

In addition, member checking was carried out, only for adult participants, because I did not collect contact information for student participants. Member checking is the process where participants were given the opportunity to review the transcription of their interview to check the accuracy and to provide feedback, make changes, corrections, and/or clarifications (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). Adult participants member checked at the transcription phase and at the category phase.

Findings & Discussion

There were three major themes which emerged from my data analysis, along with eight sub-themes. The themes were: (1) Nurturing of a Program – planting the seed; all encompassing; behind the scenes; and branches of Unified, (2) Rooted Behavior and Relationships – spillover; and friendship, and (3) Turning a New Leaf – reflection; and personal growth. The first theme, described how an augmented PE program was birthed, supported, and sustained over time. The second theme described participants' perceptions regarding social experiences rooted directly or indirectly in UW. The final theme is centered around participants' reflections of their experience in UW and any subsequent personal growth.

Theme I: Nurturing of a Program

Participants unpacked UW and Unified programing in Star High School. They described the origin and inspiration for the initial Unified pursuit, its evolution, why and where it has blossomed, and how it is sustained.

Planting the Seed. Like most programs within a school, UW began out of necessity or interest among the students or teachers. Ms. Gable started (planted) UW after witnessing a singular event. According to Ms. Gable:

> Umm, ten years ago there was, I had a student named [Jon]. Freshman in my PE-1 class, awkward, no one wanted to be his partner umm, and then I had a transfer student [Tim], who was a senior… never took PE so he was in the freshman class and he was a senior, so one day I just said [Tim], please be [Jon]'s partner for just one day. And he did and umm, a couple days later I looked into the cafeteria and umm, apparently [Tim] asked [Jon] to sit with him at lunch. And it was like he won the lottery. So, then I was sitting there, you know, why can't we do this all the time?

After this event, Ms. Gable ran with this idea and approached her department head, David, for support, all the while realizing that this pursuit would fill a much-needed gap, being that the APE position was cut prior to her employment:

> So, I just went to my athletic director…whose daughter was I think in sixth grade at the time, who has, who's on the spectrum and I said why can't we have a class, and he's like "go for it." And I did notice at [Star High School] there was no adapted PE, no, budget cuts, they cut their adapted, before I got there, they cut the adapted PE position. (Ms. Gable)

The name of the course "Unified Wellness" was coined by David. As mentioned by Ms. Gable, "He said there was a term through Special Olympics called Unified, he wasn't exactly sure what it was, but it was, it sounded like something that we wanted to do, and there ya go."

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The name "Unified Wellness" is similar to the Special Olympics' program, UPE. When asked if Special Olympics or the UPE acted as inspiration for creating UW in any way, Ms. Gable responded "Nope, I didn't, it's not like it was a trade-mark name or anything. Well it actually is but not for what we were doing because it's not their program. They do have a program but it's not what we do." This program was developed by Ms. Gable drawing on her decades of experience teaching PE.

The first few iterations of UW had a selective enrollment, whereby Ms. Gable would select and approach mature students to be mentors (students without disabilities) to enroll in UW, these students were usually selected from various varsity sports. Ms. Gable's justification for this selective formula of recruiting was that having exemplar athletes in UW would help all students receive the curriculum. Ms. Gable does not handpick mentors anymore:

> I handpicked, I do like it when you have in PE and [Unified] Wellness when there's an athlete. It helps me you know just to set the example. Umm you know just like in an art class they try to pick some of the art students, Unified Art and drama the drama students it just helps with the curriculum, but it's not imperative that you have that.

Ms. Gable's approach to teaching UW did not stray far from her approach to teaching GPE. She drew upon her decades of experiences from teaching High School GPE and applied it to her teaching UW. Along with a few key ideas, which according to Ms. Gable, is important to uphold. First, being equitable and equal – Ms. Gable states that there is "no recipe" for what she is doing, but expands that equity and equality has to be at the forefront of a successful program, wherein students with and without disabilities are in the

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same learning environment. Ms. Gable illustrates this by reflecting on a Unified Basketball game where the coach was interacting with one of the players:

> It's a matter of just treating everyone the same regardless of disability or not you know that's my thing. There's no recipe to it…. My outside basketball coach, [Rex], who's a former mentor, who's brother has special needs…. One of the parents pulls me over one day, and goes, "does he know that they have special needs?" And I'm like "why are you asking?" And she goes "he's yelling and treating them like everybody else" And I'm like "jobs done!" …. And so, they were sitting there going, "wow alright." But that's what it is, everyone's on an even keel.

Second, not labeling students – it is important to be educated on students' IEP, but not allow that to define them. This idea is important for two reasons. Frist, a diagnosis should not impact/limit your expectations of the student. When asked about expectations of students in UW, Ms. Gable mentioned, "Expectation, no. I have the same expectations for both groups [GPE and UW]." Ms. Gable expanded on her expectations with here mentors in UW, stating "Expectations, as far as classroom expectations all that's the same. Umm, sometimes [I'm] more strict with my Unified mentors as far as how they behave but other than that there is no difference." Ms. Gable, does consult their IEP and seek to gain knowledge on students and uphold her due diligence, but states that "I do look at the IEP's but I don't look at the specific." Second, it is important to model to students and teachers that IEPs do not impact/limit expectations of the student. Ms. Gable reflects on a conversation with mentors regarding their inquires of certain mentee's diagnosis, "Right, and that's what I don't want, you know, cause a few [mentors] have asked "well what do they have?" And I go "does it matter?" and that's my only answer." This attitude can help

shape mentors' foundations of interacting with peers with disabilities. Ms. Gable does encourage students to ask questions, but not to define their peer by their disability. For example, Ms. Gable notes:

> And I don't know if I'm doing that right, wrong, or different it works for us and you know, and I learn different things along the way, and I try things, but I don't know. I just, it's a disability it's not the person so I don't want to single out, now I do tell the kids there are certain things about certain disabilities…. I don't say what pica is, I say you might see [Jill] eating something, three quarters of her shirt by the end of the school day and the kids ask and I want them to be comfortable enough to ask and that's why I say to them talk to the paras, they know the kids better than I do.

During my stay at Star high School, I socialized with Ms. Gable before, during and after UW classes. I witnessed Ms. Gable in administrative and teaching roles, with regard to UW. I note that Ms. Gable is a "comic, officer, and advocate" meaning her approach to teaching UW was jovial and humorous in concert with being strict with her students when it is needed (Field Note), Ms. Gable would often take the time during attendance to have friendly joking discourse between each student. Then behind the scenes she is advocating for the Unified program and her students, Ms. Gable reached out to the local university basketball team and arranged a practice with them and Star High School's Unified basketball team (Field Note).

After several iterations of UW, and the blossoming of different branches of Unified throughout of the school, Ms. Gable developed goals for Unified as a whole, which is to have an established Unified program (UW and Unified Sport) at all levels of schooling,

"My goal is before I retire [is to have] K through 12 Unified, that's my goal." Ms. Gable also shared her overarching goal as a PE teacher, which encompasses UW and her GPE classes:

> My goal, and I tell the kids from day one, my goal as a PE teacher is somewhere along the line when you're at [Star] High School, you're gonna find something physical, you're gonna wanna continue, that's it…. They have to find something that they will buy into. You know and if it's general fitness or it, it's an activity, anything, just the movement is important.

All Encompassing. Ultimately**,** students are the population directly receiving UW and Unified programming in the school. When prompted to describe UW, most students echoed Ms. Gable's intended approach, stating that GPE and UW were "the same." In a focus group interview, Jody stated that UW and GPE "It's exactly the same…. Except for more encouragement from other people. So, we're encouraging people more in this class." Henry and Jessy both add that UW is "Just about having fun." Other students across all focus group interviews used words such as "comfortable," "inviting," "accepting," and safe to describe UW. Greg, a mentee, described UW as "Positivity…. Fun and it's educational." Two students found it difficult to find a word to describe UW. Mike stated "Oh, that's hard for me so, that's not easy to describe." While Kyle continued from Mike's thought saying:

> I mean, he's kinda right, it's kind of un-describable, it's just unlike anything I've ever been a part of before. In just more ways than I can describe. It's like watching and interacting with all the different kids and the teachers, just like, I'm trying to find the words to describe it. It's just like amazing. Like, it makes me excited to

come to school so I can just interact with them and help them learn and grow, like that.

Hayes, who is a graduate from Star High School and participated in UW and Unified sport across all four years, also articulated that UW is similar to GPE. Hayes, professed that she highly valued UW and viewed it as a place where diverse friends can come together:

Which is basically gym. I took Unified gym all four years. We were pretty much in the same class every time. Yeah, I definitely made it a point to take it every year even though, the extra credits didn't matter. I always made sure I could fit it into my schedule because it was really important to like me and all the kids, I became really close with we all are friends, it's kind of where we all come together and share our differences.

Ms. Gable assures that her UW students have a similar PE experience to her GPE students. For example, while observing UW, class took place in the workout room, Ms. Gable ran through safety rules and cues for certain exercises. Ms. Gable explained to me these rules and cues are the same rules and cues for her GPE class (Field Note).

While discussing words to describe UW, Hayes and Tony added to the list of words generated by students, saying *humility*, *friendship*, *inclusion*, and *caring* all summarize UW:

Hayes: It's inclusive, it's caring, it's humility, it's everything, it's friendship, you know.

Tony: Yes, it is.

Hayes: Differences don't matter. Like they really don't. it's really awesome.

As seen above, students were naturally drawn to elements of equity and equality when describing UW to me. Students referred to their peers as "friends" and used language such as "inviting," "safe," and "caring" to describe UW. Students regaled, that UW was the same as GPE, except for that UW students were more encouraging to each other.

Teacher's and administrators' description of UW did not stray far from how students chose to describe it. David, the Director of Athletics and PE and father of a past mentee who participated in UW and Unified sport while attending Star High School, describes UW as "All encompassing all inclusive, welcoming… is pretty much everybody on the special ed side welcomes everybody, on the mentor quote/unquote typical student side." In concert with other participants, Bev explained how UW is an outlet for students with disabilities to have a "typical high school experience" to their peers without disabilities:

Sure, I would say, this is how I described it to my husband. It's a program for umm, developmentally or intellectually disabled students and I was like it really allows them to kind of have a typical high school experience. They can play sport, they can, you know there's dances, and there's classes and things like that, that typically might be overwhelming for them, but it's presented in such a way that they are able to be a typical high school student. And they are, we open it up to peers who are typically developing and just focus on how we, we use the social interactions and so because that's important, that's a life skill. That is the important part of it, is that we are using those social interactions and that you know just as a way to get all the

kids involved and you know let them have that high school experience that they deserve to have too.

David echoed Bev's sentiment, regarding "typical high school experience" by reflecting on the whole school experience of students without disabilities, and contrasts that with what Unified can offer to a student. David states:

Yeah, I think the same thing it would be, if you had the classes you would have a component of the Unified and it's a value but that's not a whole school experience that your typical kid has. A typical kid has a typical class and then they have athletics or drama, or they have other things that they can get involved with you know…. We have one of our Unified athletes on our leadership council he comes in and he addresses stuff, you know he's very much accepted in there.

UW content mirrors GPE in a lot of ways. As noted earlier by Ms. Gable, her approach to UW mirrors her approach to teaching GPE. Specific, curricular units covered in UW can be seen in the UW syllabus (See Appendix B). Content has been reported by students as being volleyball, kickball, soccer, dance, disability sports, and other games. I witnessed large group games, dance, drum fit, and hygiene activities (Field Note). Data were collected during COVID-19, so Ms. Gable decided it was pertinent to have a couple of classes covering proper handwashing and hygiene (Field Note). Ms. Gable reveals that she covers content from the areas of health, community building, and social and emotional well-being, illustrating the scope of UW. For example, Ms. Gable noted:

Umm…we do some of the traditional like, Special Olympics does a huge bowling tournament. But we do bowling, I do mini units. Most of my stuff is project venture and social emotional learning activities. Umm…community building, team

building as far as classroom community. So as just getting to know each other well. Ah, it's not necessarily a unit, like I don't do volleyball, but we will do team sports, we'll do individual sports, but we just do bits and pieces here and there. Most of it is the social emotional piece…. I have a set [inaudible] I kinda go by traditional health curriculum but the contents much different. You know ummm…personal care, I mean I'm still going over how to wash your hands properly. And why do you sneeze in your sleeve and not your hand.

Behind the Scenes. Logistically, Unified was somewhat unstructured in the school. Ms. Gable stated that in addition to her title of PE teacher, she also decided to "…dub myself the Unified Liaison" because of her additional Unified duties, which stretch beyond her job description. Ms. Gable describes her duties:

Umm, for lack of better terms, I oversee the Unified Wellness, but I oversee the Unified group, club, the activities we do the fundraisers we do. If one or the other Unified classes needs funds for equipment with our funding, I'll buy that.

Isaac mentioned that a part of Ms. Gable's teaching load is UW, which has proportionally grown over time, and now currently is 1/3rd of her overall teaching load. This has sparked the development and promotion of other Unified classes in the school. Isaac touches on the financial support provided to Unified classes and how this "moral decision" contributes to equity and equality for students of Star High School.

Yup so you know when we are, so when you look at [Ms. Gable] you know she was originally a health and PE teacher before us so for us to say ok [Ms. Gable] 1/3rd of your teaching load is to be Unified PE and we do, so we did it and we do so get mentors and that we're saying you know, we value the program and we're

going to allow that to run and that expands out into Unified Animal Science, Art. We try to have classes that provide these students with access to experiences they don't usually have. And like when I talk about a little earlier it is a financial decision we make, but it is a moral decision as well in terms of equity they need equal access to the best of their ability to the things this school has to offer. (Isaac)

Ms. Gable acts as a sounding board for other teachers wanting to start a Unified course themselves. Even establishing a meeting prior commencement of the school year to assure alignment (e.g., ratio of mentees:mentors) and content overlap in Unified courses to best serve the students:

Sometimes, sometimes, I mean sometimes you know some of the teachers and it's different in an academic class they are structured much differently than PE…. But umm, we all sat down one Summer and went over what we want to see in our mentors to make it more blanket[ed]. We sat down and talked about what we want to see in our paras…. We've also gotten together to go over what units are being taught, so that we can have overlap, so they are retaining more. A lot of times you know if I do first aid the other classes, we'll do home aid skills to complement each other. So that the kids, the retention is much better with the repetition. We communicate but there are some differences. (Ms. Gable)

I teach Unified Art which is, its own, its own beast. It's about 2/3rd mentees so kids with special needs and then 1/3rd of it is mentors. We're going to try and switch those numbers around a little bit. Umm and then I also get the pleasure of having it during our lunch period. So, then I get almost every single para-educator in there at some point because they are rotating out to take their lunches. (Emily)

The concept of "constant communication" was mentioned by Ms. Gable in reference to, maintaining a constant line of communication between herself and students, parents and her administrators. This line of communication helped inform Ms. Gable on what parents want for their children, as well as keep students accountable for their actions.

> Constant communication with everybody…. You know the thing with [Eric], you know as soon as he came in I said something to him and he was terrified to come in the class and talk…. I'll tell ya I communicate with some parents more than I want. My parents and I communicate a lot. Everyone has my phone number and they have to…. And there is communication with the parents you know, and I listen to the parents. What do the parents want for their children.

During the school day where a Unified team was taking a bus to a game, Ms. Gable was constantly being texted and called by parents for various reasons. Ms. Gable told me this was a normal occurrence on days where the team travels locally and proceeded to take time to reply and answer each parent as messages and calls came in throughout the day (Field Note).

Ms. Gable's additional duties are largely not funded, although teaching UW, as mentioned earlier, is a part of her salary because UW and all other Unified courses offered in the school are all established courses with teaching assignments. All Unified courses being taught in Star High School add up for one teaching unit. Which is an important move in getting teachers to buy-in to Unified. Isaac mentioned that establishing Unified as it is in the school is an important decision showing Unified programs have administrative support and are valued:

So, right that sends the message that we appreciate you doing that, but we do not have a stake in that this is what that sends…. You know in terms of the teaching piece, if you say to the teacher that ok you can do this, but it is outside of your regular teaching load that means it does not, it is not important to the school or administration. This is your teaching, this part of your teaching assignment, we are assigning it to you…. So, when you think about it depending on the other classes, we run a year, you know 2 Unified Wellness classes, PE classes [sic], Animal Science and Art it is usually a minimum of 5 which are actually being run a semester. That at our school is 1 teaching position. That is the equivalent of one teaching position.

Ms. Gable also poignantly stated that her pursuit of creating and building UW and the subsequent Unified program, actually saw her, indirectly, taking a large pay cut. Because of her involvement in coaching varsity sports and being able to receive coaching stipends. Ms. Gable then posed the question, referring to her hypothetical successor, that she does not know who will elect to follow in this path:

I gave up ten thousand dollars in salary to do Unified. Cause I was a three sport coach, a varsity coach. So, I gave up ten thousand dollars for this. I don't think many other people are going to do that because that affects my retirement because your retirement goes on your highest paid years. So, I don't know who's going to do that.

When pushed to explain why she elected herself to go down the path of less money to grow Unified beyond UW, and into Unified varsity sports, Ms. Gable showcased her list of priorities by responding:

It's just the love of Unified, that's what it is…. You can always find other coaches but you can't always find, for me a Unified coach in my opinion, I mean varsity is varsity but Unified varsity, we talked about that, there's a different mentality that you have to have…. So, if I wasn't there things would have been different. And [David] understands how I feel about it and he feels the same way.

Branches of Unified. UW was established 10 years ago and began as a single course in the school, and over the decade has grown and spawned into several other programs and courses within the school. The growth of UW, itself, has occurred over time, starting as one UW class offered each semester, to increasing the enrollment cap, due to high demand, to eventually offering two full slots of UW each semester (Field Note). High demand for Unified, seemed to be common across all Unified classes. Emily, a Unified Art teacher, remarked that every semester her classes are full, and she has to actually turn students away who want to enroll:

I know with my classes that are umm Unified they are always booked, and I always have kids coming in and saying "can I add in?" I'd like to help can…. We it's we are always turning kids away left and right because it is just so big. And we have a large special ed program, so we always tend to have a large number of kids in each one of those classes. (Emily)

Emily proceeded to offer insight on how she prepares for teaching Unified Art. Emily embraced Unified when she was hired at Star High School, by electing to teach a Unified Art course. Emily would spend time in the Summer to plan content for her Unified Art class, usually planning several lesson plans for each lesson, because of the unknown of whether the lesson would be too below or too above students' ability level:

The Unified program was established when I got here, and I was asked if I would teach it. And from where I was coming from, we didn't have a Unified Art program we just had gen ed classes. So, to have a separate section was wonderful…. Yeah, like I typically plan about three lessons per period for Unified Art because they can go though it very quickly. And some of those cognitive skills are a little bit harder for some of our kids with special needs…. So that for me I spend a good portion of my Summer planning and coming up with lessons…. I have to be very planned with what I'm doing. Which has made me better in my other classes. (Emily)

Unified Art is not the only branch of Unified. In a dialogue between a mentor and mentee during a focus group interview, Annie and Dylan listed several Unified programs, outside of UW that they were aware of in the school. Dylan articulated, "We don't just do sports you know, we do other things like classes, like clubs, we do Unified Science, we do Unified Animal Science, we have different varieties of Unified program not just athletic." Annie added that "A lot of my classes are Unified." In addition to all of these Unified classes, there is still growth happening. While I sat down with Isaac, he told me of a conversation he just had about developing a Unified Culinary class and stressed the life skills from a culinary class could be beneficial for students:

It's incredible I had a teacher come to me today, and she went to culinary school and she is now getting alternative certification in special education and she's like we gotta think about Unified Culinary…. It's funny that conversation was this morning. And I was yes, we should, you should talk to [Beth] and get in on my calendar. That would be amazing because her goal is to give them meaningful job

skills so that so that when they go into the work world, they can have meaningful job. (Isaac)

Several students spoke fondly of Unified Sports Day, calling it a "huge event" in the school where other schools from the surrounding area come to Star High School and participate in different sports and activities they do in Unified programs. As mentioned by Dylan:

> We also have Unified Sports Day. Which is we have a huge event in our school…. [Ms. Gable] has all the schools come around and we do a routine which we do first, we do, I think volleyball, kickball, outside we do [inaudible] I think we do there was another thing where there was this dancing game.

Ms. Gable used this day to invite and expose the middle schools, which feed into Star High School to the content, curriculum, and dynamic of the Unified programs. As mentioned, this aligns with Ms. Gable's attempt to infiltrate the middle school with Unified programming. Unified Sports Day seems to be the initial steps to ease into the introduction of Unified to the middle school.

> Yeah, and so I would like the middle school to change that atmosphere. Umm… I just don't have the time. I did a Unified Sports Day, our kids put on a day for the middle school kids last year and we will do that every year, umm, where I have students with disabilities in middle school coming up just to see what Unified is all about. We play games they do tours of all of our classes, face painting, I have a woman who is wonderful she comes and does a Zumba class. Anyway, it's just a fun day for everyone so they know what is coming. I also do Unified bowling, I do middle school, high school and beyond. (Ms. Gable)

Unified sport was a natural branch from UW. Unified sport is a sport team which carries the same dynamic as UW – students with and without disabilities on the same team. Ms. Gable explained that she currently had enough interest in Unified Basketball, that she was able to have two teams; one team was the 'competitive team' and the other was the 'developmental team' (Field Note). The competitive team would compete in a tournament with other competitive Unified teams, whereas the developmental team would primarily play for experience and fun. These sport outlets contributed to students' overall experience in high school, as well as their health and physical fitness. Some students have participated in several Unified sports, for example, Eric, a mentor, stated that he participates in multiple Unified sports "…And I'm doing basketball as well." Ms. Gable mentioned that sometimes "The highlight is when they are on the bus on the way home and they have a police escort and fire escort and they fire engines are honking their horns the kids are screaming, that's fun." Several students noted fond memories of Unified sport. For example, Dylan described winning a Unified Volleyball championship banner, which is hung up in the gymnasium:

> Like my experience I do Unified Basketball, Volleyball and Soccer. And I have cerebral palsy so it's harder for me to move around and be more physical…. Like you get to see a huge parade just for that…. Unified Volleyball championship, at the end it's a cool feature we actually had police and firetrucks escort near the bus as like, if you win the tournament that's what you get. You also get a banner, which I got to admit that was the best feeling ever, getting a banner. (Dylan)

Hayes reminisced on her experience of Unified Volleyball while she attended Star High School. She described her experience as rewarding and different from her varsity volleyball experience, in that there are modified rules and the spirit of inclusion in Unified sports

perpetuated by Ms. Gable, in Star High School, compared to other schools who focused more on winning:

> Unified Volleyball team, I was on that for three years, I also play volleyball and umm it's such a rewarding. It's so different, different and the same from actual volleyball but the concept of it is different cause like in volleyball you get three hits you hit the ball over the net and it's not about getting it back over right away it's about involving as many people on your side and you use all three hits and you really try to include everyone in the process and I think [Star High School] takes a lot of pride in there were a lot of schools that we played that didn't really do that.... [Star High School] stands out especially in this program because even [Ms. Gable] she always enforced that; she would get mad at us if we kind of would just whack it over. So yeah and [Ms. Gable] is a great, my gosh, I don't know where this school would be without her.... Yeah, umm I mean both of them do have strategy. [Ms. Gable] is really good about this umm, Unified we don't put our best players out there she kinda studies all of us in practice and she sees who works well with who so she always puts them next to each other. So that's how we win because we're huge on teamwork and if it works it's really awesome. (Hayes)

Students involved in Unified sport get a holistic experience of being an athlete. Getting the experience of competitive play and physical activity is apparent, but so is the social component of being involved in a sport. Participants spoke to the "bonds" between teammates because of the common ground of sharing sport and play. According to Charlotte:

Right, they talk about the game, I mean we have bonds outside of school that continue on years after they graduate so…. I feel like with the athletics it just gives us another element of ways for them to be able to really connect with one another. A lot of our kids are kind of segregated in their own classrooms but once you get into the unified classroom that's where kids can really start mixing. So, I mean kids might feel comfortable enough to say like, hey, to whoever in the hallway but once you are in the classroom setting together, I think that's when they really are able to form those friendships and like bond and what not.

Additionally, most participants echo this sentiment, and refer to what they have observed from the students they work with. The growth in confidence and sense of pride was mentioned by a Unified athlete:

Pride that they seem to have in the Unified sports that they've been involved with and I've seen…. I would see growth happen with them in the gym class, not about what sports they were willing to try, how involved they were willing to dig into the sport, ahh, or just how they were able to talk with their peers when or relate to their peers in ways that I hadn't seen before. I'm not sure whether it was the Unified sports or the Unified wellness class that probably working in tandem of course with the ones that do get involved with the sports. (Ken)

The sports the catalyst, it's the you know, the social emotional that the kids are getting that they normally wouldn't get in traditional school I don't think…. Oh, he still talks about it. And he's asking me to start a Unified Volleyball program with Special Olympics. We used to have one years and years ago. (Ms. Gable)

Another branch stemming from UW, which is necessary for all other Unified programs, is fundraising efforts. There is an annual 5K run, where the money raised is put into a fund for all Unified programs. Bill expressed the theme of the 5K run this past year, "Like earlier in October, November we had a Unified 5K…. You could run, walk, I think the slogan was "push or get pushed" you know. It just goes beyond what you get in the classroom or gym." There are many benefits of participating in fundraising activities, ownership of something being one. As articulated by David:

> In terms of it benefitting all students, I think fundraising is one way you know, hey we've gotta all buckle down and do this for the kids that are a little less fortunate in some ways. Umm, student growth again…. The Unified kids have confidence they walk around the cafeteria with confidence, they talk to people they talk to adults they talk to peers.

Funding for various Unified programs in the school is generated through fundraising. For example, the entirety of the semi-formal is funded by this means. The Unified semi-formal was birthed from the want of mentors who have attended most of their schooling with certain mentees, wanted to attend a prom-like event with them. The reality is that many mentees do not attend prom because they do not graduate on time, Star High School allow students to continue to be enrolled until their 21st birthday (Field Note). Students look forward to the semi-formal every year, largely because it is not just an event students show up to, but rather because it is an event students help conceive and create. Students have a sense of ownership and voice in the semi-formal. Unified Club is a new branch to Star High School this past year, as noted by Tony, "We created something new this year, new this year, we created something called the Unified Club." I witnessed, first-

hand this ownership and dedication while attending a Unified Club meeting, where members of the Unified Club (largely comprised of mentees and mentors enrolled in UW) were systematically painting, drawing, cutting, and constructing decorations and favors they picked and purchased for the semi-formal based on the theme they voted on, on a previous date (Field Note). For example, Ms. Gable and Dylan describe a student's excitement and the semi-formal's importance in the lives of students' socialization and life beyond high school:

> The dance is the highlight and the thing I like about the dance is that we invite two or three other area schools. With those area school this is our students' social network once they leave. You got kids from all those school, community partners that for me they start to get a familiar face. I have probably fifteen alumni who come between all the schools. And now it's their social network. Umm, on my Special Olympics basketball teams I have one boy who wants to come because he came when he was at Unified Sport Day and we have alumni, it's just kinda overlap which is, it's a social network for the kids. And it's a highlight, because they take the ownership, they're organizing it, they pick the menu, they pick all that stuff. (Ms. Gable)

> The semi-formal, which we, all of our school and other schools would go over, we schedule a theme and everything for a semi-formal, there would be a limo, there would be catering. So, if you are like are maybe normal student and you can't go to proms or things like that, this would be your chance and you would be with so many different people and disabilities. And it's really entertaining for the other disabilities people. (Dylan)

As seen above, the nurturing of Unified in Star High School is championed by Ms. Gable but not only her. The students also nurture Unified by actively participating and feeding back to the champion protentional branches they see as needed and worthwhile growing within Unified (e.g., the semi-formal and Unified club).

Literature indicates that the role of ableism exists in schools, where certain bodies and abilities are valued more than others (Hehri, 2002; Storey, 2007; Penketh, 2017). Bev touched on this concept, framing the "typical high school experience" as being an able-bodied high school experience. The commitment to equity would approximate the "typical" privileged experience so that all students regardless of ability have access to activities and connection with others. Programs akin to Unified may help to address able-bodied norms and pursue equity in our schools.

Literature surrounding how school programs, akin to UW are organized and function within a school setting, seems to be under researched. Research carried out in this area is primarily delving into perceptions and concerns of pre-service teachers, in-service teacher principals, and parents of inclusive learning environments (e.g., Brotherson et al., 2001; Mangope et al., 2013; McLeskey et al., 2001). Best practices of developing and sustaining a successful program akin to UW has not been explored. Isaac, the principal of Star High School described the importance of perpetuating the message of valuing Unified to his students and staff. Isaac made sure that all Unified classes are established courses in the course calendar and were a part of a teachers teaching load.

Theme II: Rooted Behaviors and Relationships

Participants reported behavior which is rooted and supported in UW and Unified programs infiltrating other areas of the school and community by students. Friendship was

explored by participants. Students primarily described interactions with peers, whereas adults described the concept of lasting friendships which began in UW.

Spillover. The mood of UW was described in a variety of ways across participants, but all descriptions shared common threads of acceptance, safety and encouragement, with some participants referring to the general mood of the class to other participants referring to the interactions among students. All student participants reported that they enjoyed and looked forward to UW, and several even described it as being the highlight of their day. As noted by Fleur, "I look forward to Unified classes." Kyle, added the dimension of a therapeutic, stress relief:

> It's a real care-free space. And it's just the perfect way to end the school day. If you're stressing about deadlines or something like that and you just go into that class and it's just like, it's all gone…. I can just come in and we just start by walking around and I'll just like look around and like see how happy all the kids are to be like listening to music or just like talking to people, it just like puts stuff into perspective. So that definitely helps me out a lot.

These sentiments were further echoed by Bill, who commented on your social atmosphere is at least comprised by the people you surround yourself with:

> Feel like umm, the atmosphere that you feel is partially based on like the friend group that you're a part of…. Well it's definitely like ah, a highlight of my day that if I have a really difficult block I can come here and I know it's going to be relaxed, I'm gonna have fun. A way to reduce stress from your normal every day. It's a good way to end your day. (Bill)

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Fleur reported the mood of UW as being a place where "We all work as a team." This is consistent with Ms. Gables approach to UW focusing on community building. For example, Greg described UW as being "Easy going." Henry described the overall mood of a typical day in UW as, "Everyone's usually positive and nice to each other, they always ask how their day is going." This is similar to Jody's description of a typical day, but she also adds that that everyone is respectful, and also refers to everyone as being friends, "Very respectful, we try to be respectful of everyone. If there is a conflict which rarely happens, we always try to like figure it out. There's not much tension in the class everyone is friends with everyone." Kyle described UW as being a "loving atmosphere" referring to how he and others interact with one another and the overall feeling he has in UW, "Umm, I definitely feel like, so to rephrase what I said before, it's a lot more of a loving atmosphere." Tony and Hayes, are both graduates of UW and Star High School, and when asked to recollect on the overall mood of UW, Tony responded, "It was a really friendly environment" and Hayes added, "Friendly vibe." Years after these two graduated, UW students are still speaking highly of the social atmosphere of the program. As noted in my field notes, and several reflective journal entries, each UW class I attended did have a "jovial heartwarming tone" (Field Note). Usually sometime at the beginning of class you would hear Isla greeted her classmates by saying "hey buttercup" or "hey genius" (Field Note).

Students were excited to share how they felt participating in UW, primarily through describing their interactions with their peers. Jessy described his interactions with peers in UW as "They are always nice to me." Fleur, succinctly stated, "I love them" referring to the other students sitting around the table in our focus group session. Henry described

himself as being more reserved in the hallways and in other academic classes, but more social in UW: "Yep, I didn't really talk to many people in the hallways or like in classes. But in this class, I like talking to everyone." For example, Bill regaled about the entering UW, referring to it as a judgement free place, and being able to socialize with anyone:

I'd describe the way we get along, it's like you walk in and you just know everybody to begin with. Like you talk to [Dylan], you talk to [Charlie], you talk to [Annie], you talk to everybody because we're there every other day the whole year and everybody is nice and it's not like you are going to be judged for anything. You just walk in and have fun, have fun for eighty minutes and then you go home. It's just kind of a good atmosphere to be in.

The mood of Star High School was reported very broadly by adult participants, and in more nuanced ways by student participants. Adult participants described the mood as being "inclusive" and claimed that if someone was acting adversely to inclusion norms, that they would quickly realign because of social pressures from other students and adults in the school who have adopted inclusive philosophies. For example, Jenna and David remark:

Yeah, and I think it does in general as the whole atmosphere here is inclusive, but I think if they were not to be inclusive. Say if that boy asked to play and they would have said no, I think the people around them would have given those boys [obscenity]. (Jenna)

There's been times that I've had kids in here and we talk about what they said, what they did, how they behaved, how they labelled someone. And, then you, kind of

bring them and have them sitting down in the gym and have a little more discussion with them when Unified classes are going on. (David)

Students seemed to have an insider knowledge on the mood of Star High School. Students described a typical high school social environment with the existence of cliques and some social issues. It is conceivable that students would report differently from adults, being that the social circles between the two groups differed. For example, Eric describes the mood as neutral, "For me it's more of like neutral atmosphere" and Annie remarked "Like I feel wherever you go someone is going to be judging." While some students reported feelings of loss and judgement, most participants were happy and stress that that overall the mood of Star High School was welcoming and safe. For example, Kyle and Mike both state:

Well I definitely feel like the atmosphere is different, but just in a different way, it's not really like, like the school part of it isn't really a harsh atmosphere…. Like everyone for the most part gets along with each other, unless it's over like some stupid stuff, like. (Kyle)

Yeah, it's fine for me it's a good environment. It's not like back home where it was like crazy it's like ballistic every single second of the day…. This is more quiet and mellow. And maybe I have a few arguments here and there but that's over stupid stuff all the time everybody does that every once in a while. But you know this is a more better, safe environment, it's like oh, I feel fine. I'm not going to have anxiety attacks or anything I'm gonna feel fine. (Mike)

Participants perceive that there is a "spillover" from the mood of UW into the mood the Star High School as a whole and into the community. Participants claim that the

dynamic of UW opens doors and empowers students, and that they carry this dynamic beyond the UW program and into other facets and locations of their life. For example, Hayes and Tony, who met in UW, would meet at lunch and eat together:

> Hayes: They were great, we would see each other out in the hall we would be like, "hey, what's up?" … if we saw each other at lunch we would go over to each other and it would be like "what's up, how's your day?"

> Tony: Yeah, we would meet at lunch.

Alex added her own first-hand experience related to students with and without disabilities interacting outside of the high school, in public places in the community:

> They're going to a school where they're together with everyone and it just shows everywhere. It shows, when I go to Planet Fitness, I see students who were in our program who go to our school or who have aged out of school…. It's more than just in this school at this moment. It's when they leave here and interact in the community on a typical day, when they are older and not in high school. When they are older and still an important part of our community. That's the spillover. That's the kind of thing that I feel is the richness of it all. It's a wave that just continues to wash upon them. If they didn't have that experience and they had never interacted with one another and the community in these ways all along, it may not be the case…. It really boils down to the fact that, as I have said before, it's just the culture that's in the school. We all know. You can see it when you walk around the hallways and you're with one of our students and everyone recognizes them and says hi to them and calls them by name and high fives them. You know that you

are at a school that has a Unified atmosphere. And because of that spillover you can tell that you have such a strong foundation.

Both, Ms. Gable and Isaac separately expressed to me a story of a student with a disability who sang the national anthem with a peer without a disability at a sporting event (Field Note). Days later I was shown an email from a person in the community who attended the sport event stating how moved he was seeing the two students sing the anthem, and he had to reach out to the school to inform them how he felt (Field Note). According to several participants, there is a portion of students without disabilities graduating from Star High School and pursuing a career in the special education field, volunteering, and even starting programs of their own which are akin to UW and other Unified programs (Field Note).

Other participants echoed these sentiments by remarking on the idea that students indirectly adopt inclusive behavior, merely because Unified is such a large fixture in the school. Students could be positively influenced by engaging/enrolling in Unified programs throughout the school, but also from the pride and normalization of UW's values.

But I just think the whole knowledge of knowing that the school has such a massive strong Unified program I feel like everyone kind of adapts to the atmosphere. And I think it just makes the school a friendly place. Because you know everyone's included, we make everything work for everyone. (Hayes)

And we thank goodness have been able to grow this program outside of PE it started with phys. ed but we now have a Unified Art program, a Unified Theatre program,

a Unified Science class, umm, it's just grown as more and more kids want to spend more and more time with these students. (Lesley)

When asked if Ms. Gable teaches how to be friends and how to include each other, all students unanimously agreed across all focus groups interviews, stating that it "just happens," meaning that the inclusive behavior adopted and perpetuated by students in UW is not directly a part of the curriculum, but rather indirectly taught, through the dynamic which underpins UW. For example, when prompted students remarked:

Eric: It's not forced upon us it really just happens.

Greg: Yeah, it just happens randomly it's not like, yeah, it's just random, like it just happened out of nowhere.

Fleur: She never says that.

Greg: No

Eric: She'll never force you to talk to certain people, you just know that you should or go up to people and start a conversation with them, spend time with them. Just kinda rotate and people learn how to do that, it was never like taught or we were never told to do that at all.

Hayes echoed this remark form current students by stating that "She (Ms. Gable) wouldn't like specifically teach them but she would give us activities, or the experience just teaches it just speaks for itself you know."

Friendship. The word "friendship" was salient across both participant groups. Students, referred to their peers in UW as being their friends, and adults regaled about the

knowledge of lasting friendships which began in UW and has since continued years since graduation.

Student participants reported their peers as being "friends" rather than just classmates. For example, Charlie, stated that since he has been involved in UW he has "Well I have, so I stated out, I started making friends." In addition, Fleur echoed Charlie's sentiment by stating that in UW she enjoys "Meeting new people…making new friends." Greg made a profound remark regarding not being able to see his "friends" in UW "Because I don't see a lot of my friends cause I'm in special classes." Other students cite that students enrolled in UW choose to be there and are not just enrolled because of a credit. For example, Kyle noted:

> Outside of this class like, I'm friends with like, like I have a lot of friends but it's just like a hey, how's it going, like, it's not like we wouldn't be friends if it wasn't for this school, like if we weren't in this school and like we had to like interact with each other we probably wouldn't be friends. But just we are with each other every single day, so we kinda have to be forced to get along. But like in the class, like in PE it's like it's one hundred percent by like choice to be friends with them. But just like with everyone and it's just a lot more of like a loving environment, I guess.

While attending Star High School, I noted peers' interactions were seemingly always friendly (Field Note). For example, during a fitness lesson in UW where the gymnasium was partitioned off into several fitness stations and the class was divided into groups. Isla, a student with down syndrome was at a push up station, but was

struggling, then naturally (not prompted by Ms. Gable) two mentors invited Isla to do wall push ups with them instead of traditional push ups (Field Note).

Students identified their friend groups, which offered insights into how they perceive their peers in UW. Consulting the sociograms completed by student participants (see Figure 3.3 Social Network of Unified Wellness Class), there are far more two-way (nondirectional) relationships, than one-way (directional) relationships among students. This means that when a student listed a classmate on their sociogram, that classmate also listed the first student on his/hers own sociogram. These results indicate a strong social network exists between peers in UW, although, for many students, this social network from UW is strengthened through their participation in other Unified programs. After attending several Unified Basketball practices, I observed several students naturally drawn to each other before, during, and after the session. For example, Jessy and Fleur would grab a ball and shot hoops together, with other players joining them (Field Note).
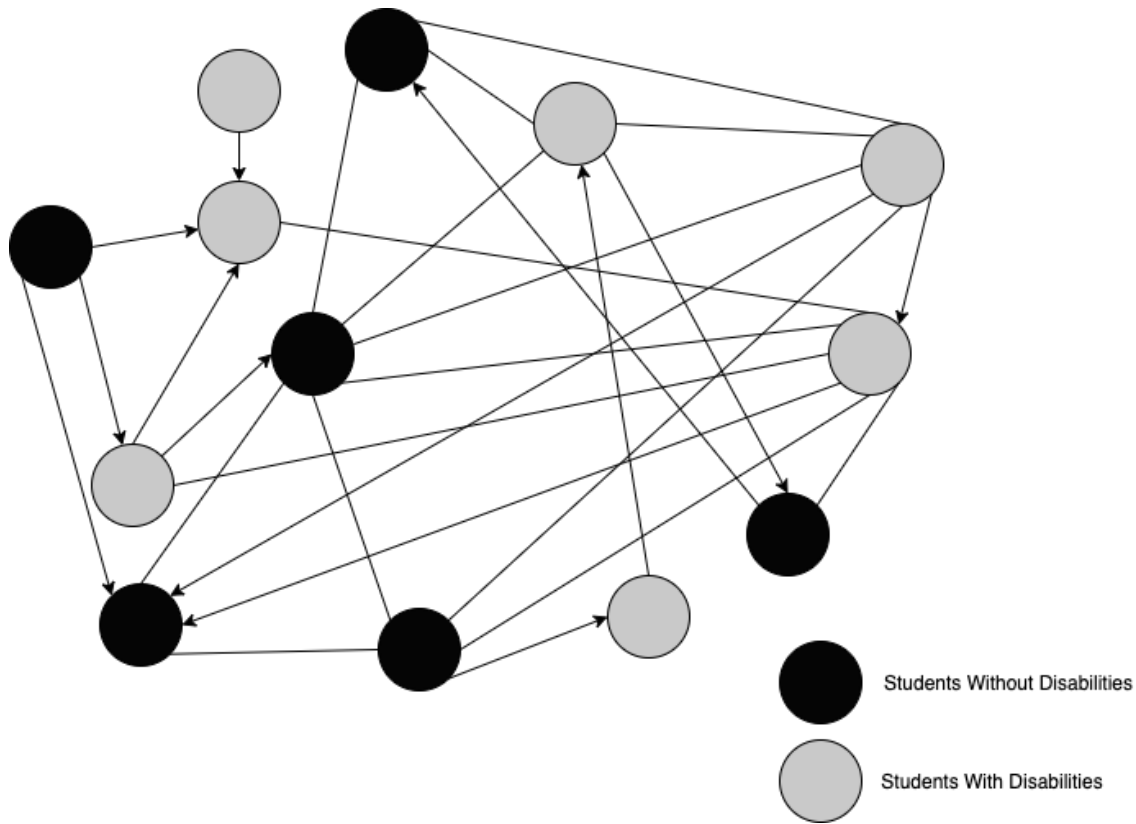
Figure 3.3 Social Network of Unified Wellness Class

Note. One-way (directional) relationship, (depicted with an arrowhead) occurs when one student included another student into their sociogram but was not on theirs, and a two-way (nondirectional) relationship (depicted without an arrowhead) occurs when both students included each other in their sociogram (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Isaac offered the thought of "entry points" where mentees and mentors may build relationships in UW, and then outside of UW, the mentee may be more inclined to approach a group of students if their mentor is in the group as well, thus expanding their social circle, "And some of the entry points sometimes is mentors are with their friends and the students come up and you know that widens that social circle."

Adults leaned into the idea of lasting friendships, because of their knowledge of students who have graduated from Star High School and who have maintained friendships and relationships with their peers they met in UW. Two adult participants, one who was a mentee, and the other was a mentor in UW, have continued a relationship post-graduation. Tony and Hayes, who met in UW, now work together one-on-one. Tony is a cafeteria aide at Star High School and Hayes is his caregiver. As described by David:

> [Hayes] in her professional role is working with [Tony]. And we've seen a lot of those connections continue ah, in terms of these students who were mentors and you talked about are these real relationships that developed umm, maintain these relationships made with these students and their families after they graduate so you see them out in the community doing social things, like concerts…. It depends on the student both the mentor and the mentees but the stronger that is I think that you see that ongoing relationship after high school. And that ongoing relationship after high school is really good for the community to see because not only does it justify the program and the school, but it says to the community here's how these people should be treated outside of school as well. So, I think that pretty powerful. (David)

Hayes, being a product of maintaining relationships post-graduation states that, "We end up working really well together and everyone meshes really well, and you make really good friends, lifelong friends." These "real friendships" have been witnessed by multiple adults in the school. For example, Charlotte and Fran note current students and student who graduated years ago, still "hang out" with peers they met in UW, and in some cases, come back to attend Unified functions hosted by Star High School:

Charlotte: Real friendships, so we have students who still hangout, they hangout outside of school, afterschool, go to the movies, go get ice cream just do anything, normal high school activity outside of school.

Fran: And some of these have graduated like years ago and the kids (mentees) are still here.

Charlotte: Definitely, they come back to the high school, they come for Unified games, we have dances every year they come to that.

Ms. Gable sums up Unified and student friendships quite eloquently. Ms. Gable states "Well how do some of these kids ever get to know [their] friends they have now? If we didn't have Unified, they wouldn't. And it is friendships." This statement was commonly shared among adult participants who described UW as being an outlet for students with and without disabilities to interact and have experiences together. For example, Ms. Gable tells about a student without disabilities in the 7th grade who participates in several Unified programs in the school, and professes that she wants to work with people with disabilities, "There are a few kids, like [Clair] who's in my PE one class, this is something that she will, I mean she's known since seventh grade that she wants to work with students with special needs." Several participants echoed this idea of Unified being an outlet for students of diverse abilities to interact, ad added that perhaps the reason students are "reluctant to talk to them (students with disabilities)" is because they do not know how and may be uncomfortable. For example, Charlotte stated:

And just really understand, because I think sometimes when kids are reluctant to talk to them (students with disabilities) it's because they don't know how to or they might be a little apprehensive because they might be scared, you know, so these

Unified classes and umm the athletics it really allows them the opportunity [for students] to ask questions and open up for them to be able to like build on that. I find a lot of kids are like super sweet and they like want to be friends with these kids…. They just don't know how, and this is like the way for them.

Literature indicates that friendships between students with and without disabilities can develop in an inclusive PE setting (Seymore et al., 2009). Seymore and colleges (2009) found that students focused on characteristics and attributes of what their best friend would possess, for example, such as reported by students without disabilities: nice, caring, and funny. Students with autism spectrum disorder experience PE, found that positive peer interactions were important when developing relationships (Healy et al, 2014). Additionally, their interactions were reported to reside in in PE but also in more neutral areas of the school (e.g., recess and lunchtime) (Seymore et al, 2009). Literature in the area of surveying students' attitudes toward inclusion in PE after a Paralympic school day event reported a positive increase in attitude (Liu et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2015; Panagiotou et al., 2008). As reported by Spencer-Cavaliere and Watkinson (2010), students with disabilities reported that having friends significantly contributed to the feeling of being included because friends were more likely to encourage and invite to play. Student participants in this current study report building friendships in UW and how their interactions transcend the gymnasium and into other areas of the school. Adult participants in this current study highlight cases where students with and without disabilities, who meet in UW continue their relationship far beyond high school and UW class. Also, students without disabilities having increased attitudes on inclusion, through a singular event, may

be cultivated and sustained if they were continually participating in events like Paralympic school day (e.g., UW, Unified sport, and Unified classes).

Theme III: Turning a New Leaf

Students reflected on their first day of UW, many sharing the same anxiety of the unknown. Both groups of participants comment on how Unified has influenced them over time participating directly or indirectly. Participants reported personal growth, in varying levels, since becoming involved in UW and Unified programs.

Reflection. Students took turns recollecting of their first day in UW. Most student mentors recalled a degree of anxiety with their first day, stating that they had not participated in anything like UW before, and did not know how to engage. For example, Bill and Kyle remembered being outside their comfort zone on their first couple of classes of UW:

Well when you first begin unified coming from where I came from, I haven't really done this before so a couple of classes where like, I don't really know people in here, I don't really know how to engage with people. I just kinda had to learn as I go, it was a little bit of an obstacle to overcome but it's fine now. (Bill)

Well I mean when I first started, I wasn't exactly sure how I was supposed to like actually interact with them cause I'd never, there was like no introduction there was no like training for it, I was just like thrown in on the first day of school. I mean of course I chose to be there but like I just decided to. Umm and at first it was a little bit like, It wasn't really awkward but I just didn't know how to interact with them but as time went on like I got more and more friendly with them…. Like if I see

them outside of class, I'll like talk to them and have a conversation with them. (Kyle)

Kyle continued and described his first actual interaction with a student with a disability in UW and disclosed that he was at a loss of what to do and say. But now after a full semester of UW and other Unified activities, he feels more confidant to socialize and work alongside his peers with disabilities:

> Yeah, no like on the first, I remember the first day the first interaction I had with any of the students was actually [Terry] (a mentee with ASD). Because I have a birthmark on my right arm, and he sat next to me and he just started like poking at it and pinching it and he was like "what is this?" And I was like "oh, that's a birthmark" and then all the students were like [Terry] you can't do that. So, like I didn't know how to react to that, that was my first ever like interaction. But like since then I've learned to like be able to be like more vocal with them (students with disabilities). (Kyle)

This sentiment by Kyle is expanded on through my observations while attending Star High School. As I noted, Kyle conducts himself very confidently and as a leader in UW class, and would not be characterized as nervous, shy, or awkward. During my visit, UW was going into the final few weeks of the term, so there was virtually a full term of peer interactions and personal growth (Field Note). For example, Ms. Gable was briefly called out of the gymnasium during UW. Kyle took the initiative to transition the whole class into dynamic stretching, where he grouped and lined up students, explained and demonstrated the stretch to the class and as the class was doing the stretch Kyle was fully engaged offering error detection for all students during the movement (Field Note).

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In contrast, most student mentees reflected on their first day of UW in the area of meeting new people and socializing. For example, Dylan stated, "Yeah, and over time I've learned more about every student in this area, like everyone is different in their own way. I've started to understand that it made me be more social around people." When I asked Henry about two students with disabilities who, I have observed, as being close with him before UW class begins and usually in close proximity with him throughout the class (Field Note), he responded, "Yeah, [Luke] and [Greg] usually are with me… when I first came to class, they were both the first ones to talk to me. So, I mean I really like talking to them, walking around with them."

Personal Growth. Students described themselves before they were involved in UW. Most students, both mentee and mentor, described a turning point that they have encountered in their life, which has contributed positively in their life, and they attribute the catalyst of their event stemming from their participation in UW. Greg announced, in a metaphor, that before UW he was a "lone wolf" he describes that in middle school and before it was difficult for him to make friends, but since becoming involved in UW, "Yeah, I was kind of a lone wolf…. I was nice it was just hard." While observing UW classes, Greg, approached me and asked me several questions about why I was there and about basketball (Field Note). After noting his confidence and willingness to approach and begin a conversation with me, Ms. Gable was impressed and said, "he has come a long way" (Field Note). In our interview I asked Ms. Gable to further expand on my engagement with Greg, which continued each UW class, Ms. Gable responded, "Which amazes me because [Greg] would only reiterate what someone says instead of having his own thought…. That's

amazing, because you didn't get to see him before where he would not speak. That's pretty cool."

Tony uses a power wheelchair and stated that his experience coming to Star High School and seeing all the Unified programs available, made him want to have new experiences. Tony mentioned that he feels more freedom in high school because of choices available to him; he was able to have ownership of his education.

Tony: And, and so as I came here it's like oh, I want to try that. It's interesting, sounds interesting.

Hayes: So, you became more outgoing right? You wanted to try new things?

Tony: Yeah, I liked trying new classes.

Tony: …I am actually liking it.

Hayes: Yeah, you said that it was such a big relief for you because middle school was so boring and so like, this, this and this, go. But now when we were in high school it was much…

Tony: More freedom…. Yeah, at middle school it was like, do this or do that.

Hayes had participated in UW and Unified Volleyball all throughout high school. While reflecting on her competitive past, Hayes remarked that she shifted her perception from a place of selfishness to a place of selflessness. Hayes attributed this transition to her involvement Unified, and believed that this shift has helped her into other areas of her life:

I was really competitive and I still kept that but Unified gave me more like, it teaches you more about being selfless because it was definitely like me, me, me in middle school, like I did all the plays and I was kind of the leads in all of them and

it was really, yeah I definitely shifted my perception of the world. I know that sounds kind of cliché, but things definitely were different in a really good way and I feel like I developed really important life skills that I can carry in other platforms and other. (Hayes)

Other students also reported personal growth after being involved with UW. Several mentors attribute their more "patience" and "accepting" demeanor to participation in UW, which exposed them to peers with diverse abilities. Mentors claimed that the dynamic of UW helped "broaden their perspective" and learn about "other people" referring to people who are not like themselves or people they usually socialize with. For example, Bill and Annie state:

Before unified I was kinda like closed off…. But now I understand where more people are coming from, how they're affected in their daily lives and how you deal with it and how it just kind of more educates me further. It gives me a broader perspective. (Bill)

I wasn't like as educated about other people. But I didn't interact with but now since I've been in a bunch of unified classes I know more about different types of people and how…. I came to like accept people for their differences and not judge everyone I see cause, I did that. (Annie)

In addition, a dialogue captured in a focus group interview between students unveiled that their interests and inquires that they share in UW have transcended into their socialization outside of UW, where they now inquire and listen more to their friends outside of UW more now:

Jody: Umm, definitely more patience and I don't know just doing this class makes me happy. Seeing them happy makes me happy…. More accepting definitely…. Not so judgmental if that makes sense, like you're just accepting of everyone, less harsh.

Henry: A hundred percent more accepting…. Made me want to talk to more people.

Jody: Yeah, like say "hi" to them.

Henry: Hear about other people and how their day is going.

Jody: Yeah, actually cause I always, always ask them "how was your day?" "What's like a highlight?" and now I ask my friends "how was your day?"

Jessy: Same thing.

Henry: Ask them their plans for the weekend cause they do stuff too all the time. Sometimes they have really busy schedules too. I like to hear it I like to hear all the different stuff that I could do.

One student mentioned how UW has had a profound impact on his life's trajectory. Kyle unpacked a traumatic event in his life, which sent him into a downward spiral of negative thoughts that seemed to be his default. Kyle described himself as being a "closed book" prior to UW. As articulated by Kyle:

Well, before I started [UW], I was like, I don't know what the term for it is, I was like medically or clinically depressed. I had a lot of issues that I was working on mentally from like past experiences things that I had to go through…. I've always been like a caring person but I didn't show it as much, I wasn't as expressive and I was basically like a closed book the first seventeen and a half years of my life, But

the [UW] class really like helped me like learn how to like open up and like love life I guess.

Kyle acknowledged that he does feel that he has had some adversities in his life, but not near as adverse as some people's adversities, which can lead to toxic decisions. After participating in UW, he claimed it reframed his perspective and aided him to rise from his rut:

> Well, I mean like going back to how I was before, like, I feel like I've had a rough life but not as rough as some people. I've never been like homeless or anything like that, I have like divorced parents. I had like the death of one of my stepbrothers, so I've had a lot of like built up trauma and stuff like that. And it almost went to like substance abuse at times and like when I started in this class, I just realized how stupid all that was as like a coping mechanism, so it helped me stop and like get over it.

Kyle finished by retelling a moment where he realized his turning point. Kyle was with one of his friends who was well acquainted with the Kyle from before and through his friend's reaction, Kyle knew he had changed to a better version of himself. As articulated by Kyle:

> And I actually hung out with one of my friends that I use to hang out with them a lot last year like every single day…. I hung out with him last weekend and I was just like talking to him about it and he could tell like how much I changed from last year until now and he was like, he was like, really happy for me and he could like see the difference in how I was then and how I was now in terms of just like how I carry myself.

Kyle's story did catch me off guard, being that I had observed him in UW as being one of the leaders and cultural architects of the class (Field Note). His story of his time before UW was in direct contrast to what I had observed. I inquired with Ms. Gable regarding Kyle, and her response was:

> You know like and I told you the second day after class he went up to guidance and said he now has a purpose. You know and that was his only words. You know and he's had, he's had a rough go of it, you know, he's got some depression and anxiety issues and umm…but this has helped him with all that. It's kind of cool, he was getting into some trouble. (Ms. Gable)

As captured above, participants' voices are entrenched in both humility and pride. Humility in their participating in Unified programing and a sense of pride in themselves, their growth, their school, and their relationships. For example, Greg identifying as a "lone wolf" prior to participating in UW, and now astoundingly more social. Also, Dylan referring "multiple times with an air of pride" (Field Note) of their championship Unified Volleyball banner hung up in the gymnasium.

Adult participants also reported personal growth. Some adults stated that they have developed more "patience" as an educator. For example, Ms. Gable stated how she has grown to have more patience and be more prepared as an educator:

> Yeah, appreciate other people's differences. I think for me to umm… I've learned a lot from not just the students but the para's, some of the parents, I have learned patience that I never knew existed from our parents. That's one thing you know, I'm not a patient person, I'm high strung you know and that's one thing I have learned…. So, I think for me patience umm… being more prepared for ah, change.

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I think that's the biggest thing for me. Trying to be prepared for change…. I mean, I think for me my patience. Umm…my patience level, I still need to sit down, and I need to focus sometimes too because the tangents that come out in class. I mean you saw it, I put out fifty fires in a day sometimes.

All adult participants regaled of their sense of pride in Star High School because of the deep-seeded and still blossoming Unified programs. For example, Alex stated:

So, I can tell you as an employee of this district, my awareness of and my participation in going to games and just the everything in general, has given me a sense of pride in this school…. The greatest is the support that we give our students who have exceptionalities and I am so proud to live, work and be a part of this community. It's just such a wonderful and beautiful thing to be a part of and to see. Know that it's not just now that these students are benefiting from this is so wonderful. Living in this community and seeing the impact that the Unified program has on the post-secondary lives of these students is just phenomenal! Knowing that if they go to college or any other post-secondary experiences, it's not going to be their first experience interacting with large numbers of people. I'm proud to be a part of it. I find myself to be a very fortunate person because I feel like I'm benefitting from my experience teaching in this district.

Literature indicates that students with physical disabilities report good days and bad days in the PE (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). These good days were unpacked to include feelings of sense of belonging, skillful participation, and sharing in the benefits, whereas bad days embodied feelings of social isolation, questioned competence, and restricted participation (Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000). Although Goodwin and Watkinson (2000)

focused on students with physical disabilities, similar sentiments were shared by student participants in this current study. For example, one student (Greg) described himself as a "lone wolf" prior to becoming involved in Unified. Greg was referring to the social isolation he felt while in his middle school, and contrasted it to present day, where he is happier and more social. This was confirmed by Ms. Gable, reminiscing on how shy and reserved Greg was when he first entered the program.

According to the literature, conferencing with parents/guardians can offer a holistic view and unveil nuances on their students and help design settings for the student to best access the curriculum (Block et al., 2016). In addition, other potential collaborative team members may involve school administrators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals (Block et al., 2016; Kasser & Lytle, 2013). Ms. Gable noted that she maintains an open line of communication with parents and administration as a strategy for maintaining success for Unified.

Conclusion

An ongoing sentiment across interviews with both students and adults was the unifying idea that Ms. Gable was the champion of the Unified programs in Star High School. As seen throughout each of the aforementioned themes and sub-themes, Ms. Gable has been shown to be pivotal in the conception, nurturing, and sustainment of UW and the backbone of programs branching form UW. For example, David, Lesley, and Isaac state:

> I think we are one of the, I think we may have been the 1st group in the state to start this stuff. And when I say we, I mean [Ms. Gable] spearheaded…. I think you need someone like [Ms. Gable], she is the key and the next person who follows her that

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would be a huge piece of the interview about Unified, Special Needs, champion kids, how do you get what your kids need. (David)

Umm, I think it's been a wonderful thing I love that we have become kind of the poster school for a lot of other schools and it a hundred percent goes back to [Ms. Gable].... It's very, it's, I can't say enough. I used to say it's very unique, but we are not unique anymore because she has made sure that other schools so that we have competition and we have places to go to play. And but when we first started this it was hard to find even teams to play against. (Lesley)

You talk about that peer-to-peer [support]. That comes from [Ms. Gable]. Yeah and the athletic leadership council work with the Unified program, so between [David] who is the athletic leader director, the head of PE and that whole group is tight knit and [Ms. Gable] takes care of that. (Isaac)

Although others perceived Ms. Gable as the program champion, Ms. Gable would always divert to including other actors in the school who were all vital in the success of Unified, such as administration and department support for her to even attempt to pursue this venture (Field Note). David also touched on this, acknowledging:

They don't have a champion for it like we do with [Ms. Gable]. [Ms. Gable] is technically not a special needs teacher she's a regular ed PE teacher who just grasped it.... I mean that's huge, you've gotta have a champion and the guy that just walked in [Isaac] has been supportive of this and the principal before him has been supportive of this and it's, you know it takes a village.

The purpose of this research was to describe the perceptions and experience of several actors in the school (i.e., students, paraprofessionals, administration, cafeteria aide, caregiver, general classroom teachers, special education teachers, and PE teacher). Participants addressed the research questions "What are the perceptions of and experiences with an augmented physical education program from one secondary school in Northern New England?" and "What is the perceived degree of influence of an augmented physical education program on one secondary school in Northern New England?"

A program such as UW is complex, with a lot of moving parts, with its very foundation being built out of necessity to best serve an underserved group of students. Developing a program which is "all encompassing" and built on equity and equality. The sacrifices and supports needed in the early iterations were necessary for its sustainment. Naturally, branches began to sprout from the initial endeavor, as other pockets of the school began to yearn for a similar dynamic. Participants perceived that there was an element of "spillover" (Alex) occurring, where values and norms cultivated in UW would transcend to other pockets within the school and community. The term 'friendship' was inherently revisited by participants throughout each theme. Participants made new friends through UW, some of which may be lasting "lifelong friends" (Hayes), as reported happening to previous students of UW. Mentors recollected their first couple of classes of UW, reporting a sense of anxiety and a feeling of being outside their comfort zone. These feelings dissipated as the weeks led on. All participants reported varying levels of personal growth, some more profound than others.

Finally, it can be understood, based on this study, that the development of an augmented PE program, which enrolls students with and without disabilities in the same

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learning environment, is not a step-by-step process. This study offers *insights* into how several actors in the school perceive and experience UW, unearths *realities* of carrying out such an endeavor, and lends *guidance* for similar endeavors.

CHAPTER 4:

DISCUSSION

The two studies in this dissertation contributed to the understanding of the perspectives and experiences of people in inclusive environments in PE and an augmented PE program enrolling both students with and without disabilities. Study 1 identified two gaps in the research, through systematically reviewing the knowledge base: (1) the role of the school ecology as they experience an augmented PE program enrolling both students with and without disabilities, and (2) students' perspectives on inclusive environments in PE, particularly as framed by a diversity lens encompassing all students, not limited to perceptions of including students with disabilities. Study 2 aimed to lessen these two gaps by describing the perceptions and experience of students and adults (i.e., paraprofessionals, administrators, cafeteria aide, caregiver, general classroom teachers, special education teachers, and PE teacher) involved in an augmented PE program, which enrolls students with and without disabilities. Study 2 was an effort to determine what influence an augmented PE program may have on these individuals and the school (i.e., inclusive behavior: empathy, respect, patience).

Studies 1 and 2 highlight the significance of social inclusion. Findings are consistent with those reported by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000), which highlighted how students with physical disabilities experience their PE programs, reporting "good days" and "bad days." Positive experiences were identified when there was a sense of belonging,

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skillful participation and sharing in the benefits. Negative experiences were identified when there was social isolation, questioned competence, and restricted participation.

Literature indicates that friendships and relationship building between students with and without disabilities is conceivable in an inclusive PE setting (Seymore et al., 2009). Additionally, Healy and colleagues (2014) reported students with autism spectrum disorder attributed developing relationships among peers to positive peer interactions. Findings from Study 2 contribute to this literature by illustrating that friendships between students with and without disabilities are founded in UW and can continue beyond graduation. Additionally, after experiencing a PSD event, students' attitudes toward inclusion in PE increased (Liu et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2015; Panagiotou et al., 2008). Although PSD is more of an event which has simulations of having a disability, education on different Paralympic sports, led by Para athlete guests, all underpinned by discussions of acceptance and ableism. UW fostering natural interactions with same age pers with and without disabilities which may lead to long-term friendships. UW lasts a full semester, which may foster a more profound increase in positive attitudes about inclusion among students without disabilities.

Conferencing with parents/guardians, school administrators, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals is important to best serve students (Block et al., 2016; Kasser & Lytle, 2013). Findings from Study 2 support this idea, specifically as demonstrated by Ms. Gable's effort to maintain an open line of communication with parents and administration, which emerged as a strategy for maintaining the success of Unified.

Inductive Emergence of a New Model

This emergent model diverts from a medical model of disability and celebrates a social model of disability. Specifically, this model recognizes individuals with disabilities are not limited by their disability, but rather that society restricts an individual with disabilities from fully participating in activities. This is in contrast to a medical model of disability where the restriction of the individual to fully participate in activities falls onto their disability (Haegele & Hodge, 2016).

The conceptual model of an inclusive environment's spillover to the whole school was inductively derived from the findings of this research and depicts a systematic cascade of inclusive behavior within a school (see Figure 4.1 Conceptual Model of an Inclusive Environment Spillover to the Whole School). The outer most circle captures the whole school environment, and everything outside this circle is the community. The whole school environment includes, but is not limited to, all classes, clubs, common areas, sports, and offices. The inner circle captures the program within the school with an inclusive environment present. The inclusive environment could be, but again may not limited to, a program akin to UW. The four actors in this model are the four pillars of the school: students, specialists, teachers, and administrators. These actors participate in or interact with the inclusive environment within the school, as well as the rest of the school environment. The champion is a person, or group of people, who is/are passionate in spearheading the inception and sustainment of the program within the school, which is underpinned by an inclusive environment. Upon exit from the program, the program would be hampered by the void they leave losing leadership, direction, and sustainability. This person, or group of people, may need to work outside their job description and go above

and beyond for a period of time, keeping the success of the program as a priority. The champion interacts with their program, the school environment, and the community. The role of this champion would be to create an environment where students with and without disabilities can access the curriculum and learn alongside each other in an equitable way. Also, the champion would need to guide, model, and support all who participate in and interact with the inclusive environment.

At the top of the model is the factors which create a champion and parents. Both of these circles house the factors that influence the champion to do, and continue to do, what they are doing. Why is the champion doing what they are doing? Was there a singular event that shifted their perception to yearn to be a champion in this area? Or was championing in this area always a part of their values and/or professional/personal pursuits? In the same vein, parental discourse (such as the aforementioned cross-country story outlined by Ms. Hays) can inform and support decisions made by the champion, regarding the program. The solid arrows signify the champion impacting students, specialists, teachers, and administrators. Note that the solid arrow to the students is larger, because the champion has a more direct avenue to impact students being that they are participating in the program. The specialists, teachers and administrators would be more indirectly influenced by the champion because they would play peripheral roles in the program. The dotted arrows represent a positive feedback loop. The four pillars of the school feedback to the champion either directly or indirectly through their influence within the school and beyond. Each actor carries the values honed and normalized from engaging in an inclusive environment into his/her own proximity in other pockets of the program, school, and community. The champion witnesses the impact of his/her work through feedback from the other actors and

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reinforces his/her effort. Thus, the cycle repeats, with more knowledge informing and supporting the champion's decisions.
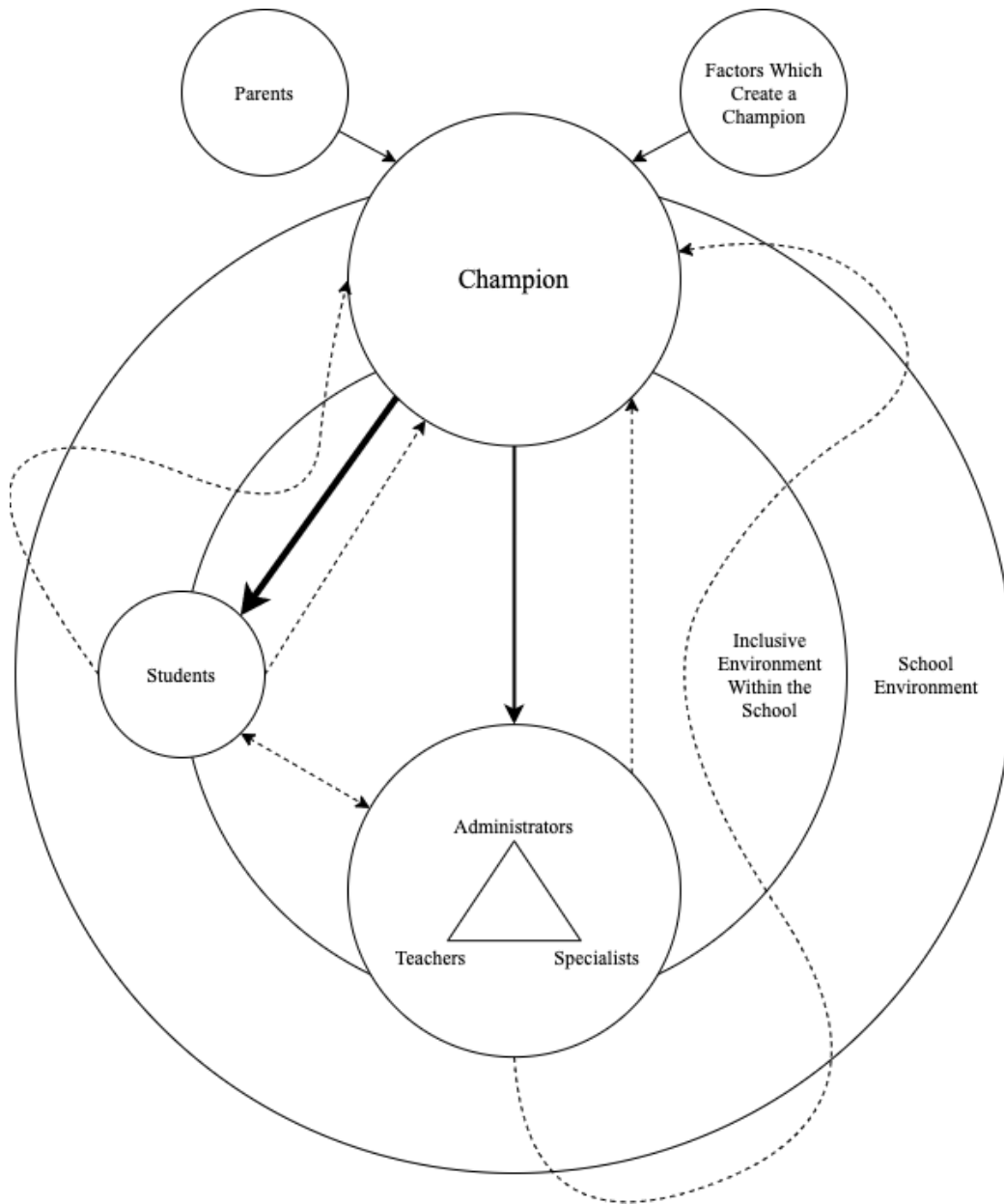

Figure 4.1 Conceptual Model of an Inclusive Environment's Spillover to the Whole School

Translating our Findings Through a New Model

At the top of the model, the two circles labeled Parents and Factors, point to the large circle (i.e., Champion). This illustrates the influential role of parents and other factors in creating the champion. Findings suggest that there are attributes possessed by Ms. Gable, which lead her pursue UW and Unified programs because of her "…love of Unified…." Her experiences and history have culminated into her valuing her students' access to the curriculum and their connections with peers. Communication with parents was noted by Ms. Gable as being important to informing decisions she makes for UW and Unified programs. In future studies, the influence of parents and other factors on the emergence and sustainability of a program champion warrants more in-depth exploration.

The inner circle represents UW and all other Unified programs in Star High School. Within this circle is the circle with a triangle inside of it which represents all the transactional influence of administrators, teachers, and specialists who engage in and celebrate inclusive practices of UW and Unified programs. These three actors in the school receive UW and Unified programs on the periphery, either as passive facilitators (e.g., paraprofessionals standing back as their student socializes with peers and participates in UW) or as leaders (e.g., coaching a Unified sport, teaching a Unified Art class). Students without disabilities contribute to the positive experiences in UW, as well as promotion of UW through word of mouth to their social circles, in addition they act as models for prospective UW students in the middle school to recruit. These activities and assemblies can sustain and promote the Unified program.

Seeing teachers buying into Unified reinforces the administration's support of Unified programs. As noted in the findings and discussion section of Study 2,

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administrators seem to be an integral player in the development and sustainment of UW, their support and values flow through the rest of the faculty and students. To my knowledge, there is no research into the role of the administrator in the development and sustainment of programs akin to UW. Although administrators, teachers, and specialists indirectly receive UW and Unified programs, the champion directly influences these actors. For example, Ms. Gable being contacted for direction and leadership from other teachers aiming to develop a Unified class, justifies Ms. Gables efforts to grow Unified. The outer circle represents the rest of Star High School outside of UW and Unified programs. Outside of this circle represents the community and home environments.

The dotted arrows meandering into and out of the inclusive environment, the school environment, and the community and home environment represents the influence actors have in other areas of the school and their lives. As reported by students, administrators, teachers, and specialists in Study 2, the values and norms which are supported and practiced within the inclusive environment within Star High School do not 'turn on' as you enter UW and Unified programs, and then 'turn off' when you leave. Rather, these values and norms transcend into other areas of their lives, and ultimately reach back to Ms. Gable.

Implications

Understanding how school age students perceive inclusion in PE can inform and improve contemporary inclusive practices in PE. Although studying perceptions of adults on their PE experience, can be informative, it may contradict current trends in the field of PE, depending on the length of time removed from their PE. It was by design to capture only the voices of school-age students in this systematic review. Thus, shedding light on trends and gaps in the research, through the voices of students receiving PE.

Gaining insight into the perceptions and experiences of several actors in the school of a non-traditional, augmented PE program can aide policy makers' decisions to fund similar programs, and can inspire or justify a school, organization, or facility to develop and offer such programming to best serve marginalized populations. The conceptual model which was developed inductively from this study's findings, could help frame future research in this area. This research can stoke the conversation about meaningful participation in school for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

This dissertation represents an effort to understand how people perceive and experience inclusive and non-traditional PE program through a systematic review and a case study of an augmented PE program that enrolls students with and without disabilities. Reflecting on students with disabilities and the realities they are faced with not being guaranteed an equitable PE experience paves the way for programs akin to UW to develop and blossom to remedy this injustice. Results from Study 1 highlighted that there is a social-ecological component to inclusion, which was further confirmed through participants' perspectives captured in Study 2, as participants perpetually referred to the social environment surrounding UW and Unified programming in their school. Study 2 also highlighted the key role of a 'quarterback' to champion the establishment and sustainment of an augmented PE program to assure its success and longevity.

Student participants reported making new friends through UW, some of which may be lasting "lifelong friends" (Hayes). Mentors recollected on their first couple of classes of UW, reporting a sense of anxiety and a feeling of being outside their comfort zone, but these feelings dissipated as the weeks led on. All participants reported varying levels of personal growth, some more profound than others.This exploration of a school's take of an augmented PE program, which enrolls students with and without disabilities in the same learning environment, is not a recipe or a 'paint by numbers' process to create and carry

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forth a program akin to UW. Rather, this study offers *insights* into how several actors in the school perceive and experience *realities* of conducting such an endeavor.

Future Research

Replication of Study 2, in various other contexts (regions, program, and level of school) should be considered, for cross-cultural comparisons. Future studies should be conducted to include capturing the voices of parents with regard to a program akin to UW. Additionally, delving back into the site with a larger exploratory case study, or even an ethnography, where more student and adult participants are recruited, is warranted. A lengthy visit to this site would best capture a comprehensive image of the school culture, UW culture, community culture, and any potential impact Unified may have on these spaces. Further, it would be interesting to study the perceptions and experiences of students in middle school and follow their transition into Star High School and Unified. Another avenue for extending this research would be to access the curriculum and student learning in UW to understand if UW is a viable archetype for a PE program with regard to affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. Finally, the conceptual model which was developed inductively from findings in this research could be used to frame future research, such as how do 'factors which create a champion' and 'parents' influence someone to be the champion of a program akin to UW in a school.

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APPENDIX A:

STUDENT DIAGNOSIS & CONTEXT INFORMATION

Table A.1 *Student diagnosis & context information*

Diagnosis/Context	Characteristics
Cerebral Palsy Ataxic	• Issues with balance and coordination. • May be unsteady when they walk. • May have a hard time with quick movements or movements that need a lot of control.
Autism Spectrum Disorder	• A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction • Usually evident before age 3 • May adversely affect a student's educational performance.
Down Syndrome	• Intellectual disability. • Short stature with short legs and arms in relation to torso. • Poor muscle tone • Flattened facial profile and nose, small head, ears, and mouth. • Eyes slanted upward and outward • Mild to moderate obesity Underdeveloped respiratory and cardiovascular systems • Poor balance • Poor vision and hearing loss
Intellectual Disability	• Conceptual skills include language, reading and writing, money concepts, and self-direction. • Social skills include interpersonal skills, responsibility, self- • esteem, naïveté, obeying of rules and laws, and avoidance of victimization. • Practical skills include activities of daily living, occupational skills, and maintenance of safe environments.

Seizure Disorder	• May result in a loss of consciousness and jerking movements • May produce a sudden change in muscle tone, with risk of falling.
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	• A persistent pattern of inattention or hyperactivity. • Impulse behaviors that are more inappropriate, excessive, frequent, and severe than are observed in children of comparable development.
Speech & Language Disorder	• Problems clearly saying sounds while speaking • Hoarse/raspy voice • Repetition of sounds while speaking • Problems understanding, talking, reading, and writing
Low IQ	• Full scale IQ score of 70 or below • Understanding and remembering information • May engage in socially inappropriate behaviors • Low stamina for concentration
Learning Disability	• A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
Traumatic Brain Injury	• An injury to the brain that might produce a diminished or altered state of consciousness and result in impairment of physical, cognitive, social, behavioral, and emotional functioning.
Depression	• Low motivation for daily tasks and fluctuating moods. • Can impact their physical health.

Note. (Winnick, J., & Porretta, 2016; World Health Organization, 2020)

UNIFIED WELLNESS SYLLABUS & MENTOR EXPECTATIONS

Year 2019-20   **Teacher: [Ms. Gable]**   **Email: [Omitted]**

Course Goals:
- Increase in physical fitness ad sport-specific skills
- Foster new friendships and social inclusion amongst classmates
- Reinforce positive habits and reasoning to make better health & lifestyle choices
- Advance social and leadership qualities
- Deepen understanding of fitness activities

Course Description:
This course will provide students with a comprehensive Wellness Education program. Mentees will work toward achieving lifelong personal wellness habits by fitness training and learing positive health skills daily. Mentors will be provided opportunities to development of habits of healthy living. Attendance at either a Regional or State Special Olympics program as a participant of volunteet is required. Mentees in Unified Wellness will receive credit for Physical Education and Health; mentors in Unified Wellness will receive an elective credit for Physical Education.

Timeline:

Units coverer throughout the semester/year

Health:	Physical Education:
Creating community	Physical fitness
Goal setting	Team sports
Healthy relationships	Individual sports
Conflict resolution	Lifetime activities
Stress management	Project adventure activities
Injury prevention	Cooperative learning games
Personal care	
Nutrition	
Substance abuse prevention	

Evaluation:
Grades in this course will be determined as follows: Students will be graded on a daily basis from 0 to 10 points. Grading will take into account participation, effort, and attitude. Students are expected to participate in class every day. Additional test, quizzes, and projects may be given as well.

Instructional techniques:
Performance based, discussion, group work, self-assessment

Classroom policies/procedures/expectations: Skills test; pre & post fitness testing and/or knowledge of subject matter assessments may be given at the conclusion of each unit as well as final assessments for the semester.

PREPAREDNESS AND ATTIRE: Students are encouraged to bring a change of clothes for class. Each student will be given ample time to change at the beginning and end of each class All students mst have sneakers to participate or zero points will be awarded for the day.

Cell Phones/Electronics: NO cell phones/electronic are permitted during class. Unauthorized use of electronic devices will result in a zero for the day. Students are expected to participate in class every day.

PARTICIPATION: Daily participation in class is extremely important. Each student will be evaluated on his/her attitude, effort, cooperation, and class participation. Students are expected to participate in class every day.

MISSED CLASSES AND NON_PARTICIPATION:
If a student is absent from class or is unable to participate due to temporary medical condition, they are able to make up 5 missed classes. See instructor for ways to make up missed classes.

SAFETY: No jewelry is to be worn during class participation. This includes all piercing, earring, watches, necklaces, chains, rings, etc.

VALUABLES: Students must provide their own combination locks. Lock combinations should be given to your instructor in the event the combination is forgotten. Do not bring a key lock to use. **The school/teachers will not be responsible for items missing**. Lock up all your belongings during class or bring all you belongings with you to class.

CHANGING TIME: Students will be given up to 8 minutes before/after class for changing time. At the end of the class students must wait in the locker room for the dismissal bell. Students are not to be in the hallway before the dismissal bell.

I have read the course syllabus for unified wellness.

_____   _____   _____   _____

Student's Name	Print Student's Name	Block	Date

_____	_____	_____
Parent's Name	Print Parent's Name	Date

Unified Mentors

Mentors will directly support students with various learning and health disabilities in a variety of classroom settings. They will assist with students in both a one-on-one and group settings in order to develop and maintain relationships with all students. The mentor will utilize positive social relationships with all students. The mentor will utilize positive social relationships to aid students in tasks and assignments assigned by the classroom teacher. The mentor should be to be open minded, self-motivated, able to work with various students, follow directions, and have the patience to handle unexpected situations.

Mentor Expectations

No personal cell phone use in class

Your participation is vital to the success of the class

You are a role model and everything you do in and out class is observed by all students

Following all classroom directions

Remember you are a student in class, if you have questions as to what your boundaries are please ask the teacher

Being direct in not being rude. Be "black and white" in conversations to students

Your input is extremely important and may times the most valuable to out students

Remember your words matter!

Every student at [Star High School] has their own learning style, respect that and let the students work at their own pace. Do not do too much to other students

There will be times when you will have questions outside of class, ie: do you give your phone number or twitter account out. Talk to the teacher.

INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program

CONSENT FORM
(JANUARY 2020)

My name is Matthew Patey and I am a graduate student at the University of South Carolina. This research project will be conducted alongside UNH Professor Michelle Grenier. The title of the study is "An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program" and Dr. Grenier, Dr. Brian, and myself would like to invite your child to participate in this study.

This consent form describes the research study and helps you to decide if you want your child to participate. For this research we plan for me (Matthew Patey) to attend several the Unified PE classes over the course of two weeks observing and noting student interactions. Also, in this research project we will ask students to complete a sociogram – where students will depict their friend group in school. Students will also be asked to complete an exit slip comprised of three questions regarding how included and engaged they felt during the PE lesson. In addition, we also want to conduct focus group interviews about student perceptions and experiences in Unified PE.

All research activities will be administered in the gymnasium during Advisory/Flex PE class, and all interviews will be between 10 and 20 minutes. 24 students will be asked to be a part of a focus group, interview questions will revolve around my observations of the Unified PE class and your child's thoughts and feelings regarding Unified PE.

The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal and may include students feeling uncomfortable completing the sociogram which depicts their social group, and discomfort answering questions in the focus group interview. If at any time your child does not want to continue with any research activities, they have the option to stop, and they can choose to continue with the daily activities in the Unified PE class. Although your child is not anticipated to receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, it is hoped that this research advances inclusive physical education programs similar to the one at [Star] High School.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and will not have any impact on your child's grade or class evaluation. Your child may choose not to take part at all. Even if your child agrees to participate, your child will not be required to answer any question he/she does not feel comfortable answering. If your child decides not to participate, your

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child will not be penalized. They will simply be able to continue with the warmup activity taking place in the gymnasium. If you agree to let your child participate in this study and you then change your mind, your student may stop participating at any time. Any data collected as part of your child's participation will remain part of the study records. If your child decides to stop participating at any time, your child will not be penalized.

I plan to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your child's participation in this research. Although I plan to maintain the privacy of responses, other focus group participants may repeat responses outside the focus group setting. Participants will be assigned an ID# and all data associated with them will be de-identified, with only the research personnel (Matthew Patey, Michelle Grenier, and Ali Brian) will have access. Data will be uploaded to UNH Box, in a shared folder which only research personnel (Matthew Patey, Michelle Grenier, and Ali Brian) will have access. Data will be de-identified. In addition, when presenting the results, the school will be described as a "public high school in Northern New England". It is anticipated that the research will be presented at a national or international level. Upon analyzing the data, all original documents will be de-identified and stored securely. The identity of participants, as well as the school, will be protected when presenting data in research presentations.

You should understand, however, there are rare instances when I am required to share personally identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and/or regulatory and oversight government agencies may access research data. You also should understand that I am required by law to report certain information to government and/or law enforcement officials (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases). I will keep data including the observational notes on a password protected computer; only the research team that includes myself, Dr. Grenier, and Dr. Brian will have access to the data.

If you have any questions pertaining to the research you can contact Dr. Michelle Grenier at (603) 862-1835, Dr. Ali Brian at 803-777-3101, or me, Matthew Patey at (702) 720-9154, or email at mpatey@email.sc.edu
If you have questions about your child's rights as a research subject you can contact Melissa McGee in UNH Research Integrity Services, 603/862-2005 or melissa.mcgee@unh.edu to discuss them.
Yes, I, _____consent/agree that my child, _____ participates in this research project.
No, I, _____do not consent/agree that my child participates in this research project.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program

My name is Matthew Patey and I am a graduate student at the University of South Carolina. This research project will be conducted alongside UNH Professor Dr. Michelle Grenier. The title of this project is "An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program" and Dr. Grenier, Dr. Brian, and myself would like to invite you to participate in this project.

This consent form describes the research project and helps you to decide if you want to participate. For this research we plan for me (Matthew Patey) to attend several the Unified Physical Education classes over the course of two weeks watching and noting student interactions. Also, in this research project we will ask students to complete a sociogram – where students will depict their friend group in school. Students will also be asked to complete an exit slip one day after class, this exit slip will have three questions about how included and engaged they felt during the Unified Physical Education lesson. Also, we also want to conduct focus group interviews about student views and experiences in Unified Physical Education.

All research activities will be administered in the gymnasium during Advisory/Flex PE class, and all interviews will be between 10 and 20 minutes. About 20 students will be asked to be a part of a focus group, we will be looking for your thoughts and feelings regarding Unified Physical Education.

The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal and may include students feeling uncomfortable completing the sociogram which depicts their social group, completing the exit slip, and discomfort answering questions in the focus group interview. If at any time you do not want to continue with any research activities, you will always the option to stop, and you can choose to continue with the daily activities in the Unified Physical Education class. Although there are not any anticipated direct benefits from participating in this study, it is hoped that this research advances inclusive physical education programs similar to the one at [Star] High School.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and will not have any impact on you grade or class evaluation. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized. You will simply be able to continue with the warmup activity taking place in the gymnasium. If you agree to participate in this study and you then change your mind, you may stop participating at any time. Any data collected as part of your participation will remain part of the study records.

I plan to maintain the privacy of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. Although I plan to maintain the privacy of responses, other focus group participants may repeat responses outside the focus group setting. Participants will be assigned an ID# and all data associated with them will be de-identified, with only the research personnel (Matthew Patey, Michelle Grenier, and Ali Brian) will have access. Data will be uploaded to UNH Box, in a shared folder which only research personnel (Matthew Patey, Michelle Grenier, and Ali Brian) will have access. When presenting the results, the school will be described as a "public high school in Northern New England". It is expected that the research will be presented at a national or international level. Upon studying the data, all original documents will be de-identified and stored securely. The

identity of participants, as well as the school, will be protected when presenting data in research presentations.

You should understand, however, there are rare instances when I am required to share personally identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, officials at the University of New Hampshire may need to access the research data. You also should understand that I am required by law to report certain information to government and/or law enforcement officials (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases).

If you have any questions concerning the research you can contact Dr. Michelle Grenier at (603) 862-1835, Dr. Ali Brian at 803-777-3101, or me, Matthew Patey at (702) 720-9154, or email at mpatey@email.sc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you can contact Melissa McGee in UNH Research Integrity Services, 603/862-2005 or melissa.mcgee@unh.edu to discuss them.

Yes, I, _____consent/agree to participate in this research project.

No, I, _____do not consent/agree to participate in this research project.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Dear Physical Education Teacher,

My name is Matthew Patey and I am a graduate student at the University of South Carolina. I am currently working on a doctoral degree in physical education. I am conducting a research study that seeks to uncover the perspectives and lived experiences of students, teachers, and paraprofessionals of [Star] High School's Unified PE program. I will be working with Dr. Michelle Grenier, from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of New Hampshire, and Dr. Ali Brian, from the University of South Carolina. I am writing to invite you to participate in this study. During the research, I plan to observe both of your Unified Physical Education Classes and collect daily notes, identify social networks among students, capture the extent to which teachers perform the behaviours and establish an environment where students' feelings of being included within their physical education classes, focus group interviews with students with and without disabilities, and interviews.

Myself and Dr. Grenier would like to conduct an interview with you to discuss your thoughts on Unified Physical Education. These interviews will be conducted by Matthew Patey and Dr. Michelle Grenier in a quiet and convenient location such as the library or your office. The interview will last between 20-30 minutes and I will ask you the following questions (see attached document). Interviews will be audio recorded on my voice recorder. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate, there will be no consequences. If you agree to participate in this study and you then change your mind, you may stop participating at any time. Any data collected as part of your participation will remain part of the study records.

Although you are not anticipated to receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, it is hoped that this research advances inclusive physical education programs similar to the one at [Star] High School. One foreseeable risk to the research may be your discomfort with the interview questions. If that occurs, I will immediately stop asking questions until your discomfort has been alleviated. There is also the potential risk that your responses may be linked back to you through the publication of the research. In addition, when presenting the results, the school will be described as a "public high school in Northern New England."

I plan to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in the research. Since there are so few people associated with the Unified Physical Education program, it is conceivable that people may be able to identify you. I will upload all data to UNH Box, in a shared folder which only research personnel (Matthew Patey, Dr. Michelle Grenier, and Dr. Ali Brian) will have access. The data collected through audiotaped interviews via voice recorder will be downloaded to a computer. Interview audio recordings will then be deleted from the voice recorder. All audio recordings will be transcribed by Matthew Patey, Dr. Grenier, and Dr. Brian using Microsoft Word. All identifying data will be removed once the analyzation of data is completed. I will report all data using pseudonyms. The results may be used in reports, presentations and publications. You should understand, however, there are rare instances when I am required to share personally identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and/or regulatory and oversight government agencies may access research data. You also

should understand that I am required by law to report certain information to government and/or law enforcement officials (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases).

If you have any questions pertaining to the research you can contact Dr. Michelle Grenier at (603) 862-1835, Dr. Ali Brian at 803-777-3101, or me, Matthew Patey at (702) 720-9154, or email at mpatey@email.sc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you can contact Melissa McGee in UNH Research Integrity Services, 603/862-2005 or melissa.mcgee@unh.edu to discuss them.

I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice. The other copy is for your records.

Yes, I, _____consent/agree to participate in this research project.

No, I, _____do not consent/agree to participate in this research project.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program
CONSENT FORM
(JANUARY 2020)

Dear Classroom Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Paraprofessional]

My name is Matthew Patey and I am a graduate student at the University of South Carolina. I am currently working on a doctoral degree in physical education. I am conducting a research study that seeks to uncover the perspectives and lived experiences of students, teachers, and paraprofessionals of [Star] High School's Unified PE program. I will be working with Dr. Michelle Grenier, from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of New Hampshire, and Dr. Ali Brian, from the University of South Carolina. I am writing to invite you to participate in this study. During the research, I plan to observe both of [Ms. Gable's] Unified Physical Education Classes and collect daily notes, identify social networks among students, capture the extent to which teachers perform the behaviours and establish an environment where students' feelings of being included within their physical education classes, focus group interviews with students with and without disabilities, and interviews.

I would like to conduct an interview with you to discuss your thoughts on Unified Physical Education. These interviews will be conducted by Dr. Grenier and Matthew Patey in a quiet and convenient location such as the library or your office. The interview will last between 20-30 minutes and I will ask you the following questions (see attached document). Interviews will be audio recorded on my voice recorder. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to not participate, there will be no consequences. If you agree to participate in this study and you then change your mind, you may stop participating at any time. Any data collected as part of your participation will remain part of the study records.

Although you are not anticipated to receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, it is hoped that this research advances inclusive physical education programs similar to the one at [Star] High School. One foreseeable risk to the research may be your discomfort with the interview questions. If that occurs, I will immediately stop asking questions until your discomfort has been alleviated. There is also the potential risk that your responses may be linked back to you through the publication of the research. In addition, when presenting the results, the school will be described as a "public high school in Northern New England."

I plan to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in the research. Since there are so few people associated with the Unified Physical Education program, it is conceivable that people may be able to identify you. I will upload all data to UNH Box, in a shared folder which only research personnel (Matthew Patey, Michelle Grenier, and Ali Brian) will have access. The data collected through audiotaped interviews via voice recorder will be downloaded to a computer. Interview audio recordings will then be deleted from the voice recorder. All audio recordings will be transcribed by Matthew Patey, Dr. Grenier, and Dr. Brian using Microsoft Word. All identifying data will be removed once the analyzation of data is completed. I will report all data using pseudonyms. The results may be used in reports, presentations and publications. You should understand, however, there are rare instances when I am required to share personally identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research,

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officials at the University of New Hampshire, designees of the sponsor(s), and/or regulatory and oversight government agencies may access research data. You also should understand that I am required by law to report certain information to government and/or law enforcement officials (e.g., child abuse, threatened violence against self or others, communicable diseases).

If you have any questions pertaining to the research you can contact Dr. Michelle Grenier at (603) 862-1835, Dr. Ali Brian at 803-777-3101, or me, Matthew Patey at (702) 720-9154, or email at mpatey@email.sc.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you can contact Melissa McGee in UNH Research Integrity Services, 603/862-2005 or melissa.mcgee@unh.edu to discuss them.

I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice. The other copy is for your records.

Yes, I, _____consent/agree to participate in this research project

No, I, _____do not consent/agree to participate in this research project.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program

RQ$_1$: What are the perceptions of and experiences with an augmented physical

education program from one secondary school in Northern New England?

RQ$_2$: What is the perceived degree of influence of an augmented physical education

program on one secondary school in Northern New England?

<u>**Questions**</u>

1. **If you had to tell someone about UPE who does not know anything about it, how would you describe UPE to them?**
2. **How would you describe the way students interact with each other? Can you give me an example?**
3. **Describe your experiences working with each other?**
    a. Are there things that have been hard? How did you work them out?
    b. What are some of the good thing in PE? What made them good?
4. **Since being involved in UPE have you noticed a change in yourself or in your classmates?**
    a. E.g., Patience, respect, skill, happy, joy, friendship, understanding, etc.
    b. Do you have a story you can tell me about any of these things?
5. **How would you describe your school's atmosphere?**
    a. How would you describe the general interactions between students, teachers, and other school staff?
6. **What final comments would you like to make? What question should I have asked, but didn't?**

Generic Probes:

- Tell me more.
- Do you have a story that illustrates that idea?
- I'm not clear, can you tell me another way?
- How would you explain your idea to someone else not familiar with…

ADULT INTERVIEW GUIDE

An Examination of a High School Unified Physical Education Program

RQ$_1$: What are the perceptions of and experiences with an augmented physical education program from one secondary school in Northern New England?

RQ$_2$: What is the perceived degree of influence of an augmented physical education program on one secondary school in Northern New England?

<u>Questions</u>

Demographic Information

Name: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Gender: _____ Years of teaching experience: _____

Education:

_____

Position:

_____

1. **How would you describe your school's UPE program?**

   a. Why was UPE implemented?

   b. Do you know the process involved in implementing your UPE program?

   c. What type of content is covered in UPE?

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    d. What is unique or special with your school's UPE program compared to others?

2. **How would anyone know [Star] HIGH SCHOOL has a UPE program?**

3. **What do you think UPE brings to [Star] HS?**

4. **How would you describe yourself before being involved in UPE?**

    a. How would your colleagues have described you?

    b. How would you describe your colleagues?

5. **Since being involved in UPE, how would you describe yourself?**

    a. How would your colleagues describe you?

    b. How would you describe your colleagues?

    c. Have you noticed a change in yourself or in colleagues?

        i. E.g., Patience, respect, skill, happy, joy, friendship, understanding, etc.

        ii. Do you have a story you can tell me about any of these things?

6. **How would you describe your school's atmosphere?**

    a. How would you describe the general interactions between students, teachers, and other school staff?

7. **How would you describe the general interactions between students who participate in your school's UPE program?**

    a. Inside class

        i. Do you have a story that illustrates any of these interactions?

    b. Outside class

        i. Do you have a story that illustrates any of these interactions?

    c. Has the current school climate differed since implementing UPE?

      i. Do you have a story that illustrates any of these insights?

8. **Since being involved in UPE, what have you noticed about how you approach teaching or working with a student?**

    a. Do you have a story that illustrates any of these insights?

9. **Describe your experiences working with students within your school's UPE program.**

    a. What challenges do/did you face?

    b. How did you manage those challenges?

    c. Tell me about times you felt uncomfortable

    d. Tell me about times you felt other students/teachers/support staff were uncomfortable

10. **Since being involved in UPE, have you noticed any changes in students who participate in UPE?**

    a. With regards to inclusive behavior

    b. With both students with and without disabilities

    c. Do you have a story that illustrates any of these insights?

11. **Since being involved in UPE, have you noticed any changes in students in your school who <u>do not</u> participate in UPE?**

    a. With regards to inclusive behavior

    b. Both students with and without disabilities

    c. Do you have a story that illustrates any of these insights?

12. **What final comments would you like to make? What question should I have asked, but didn't?**

Generic Probes:

- Tell me more.

- Do you have a story that illustrates that idea?

- I'm not clear, can you tell me another way?

- How would you explain your idea to someone else not familiar with…
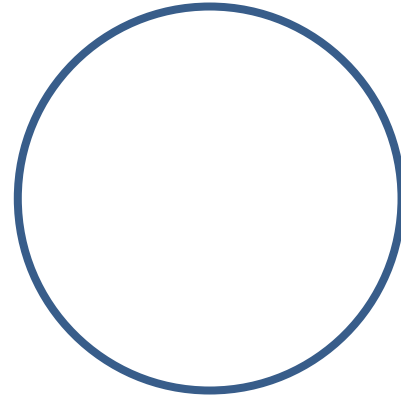
Figure F.1 Sociogram document for participants

Table G.1 *Star high school – Data collection schedule*

Date	Focus Group Interviews	Sociograms	Observations / Field Notes	One-On-One Semi-Structured Interviews	Reflective Journal
Jan 8			1 Class	Isaac	1
Jan 9			1 Class		1
Jan 10			1 Class		1
Jan 13	Annie Bill Charlie Dylan		1 Class	Ken	1
Jan 14	Eric Fleur Greg		1 Class	Fran Charlotte	1
Jan 15			1 Class		1
Jan 16			1 Class		1
Jan 17	Henry Isla Jessy Jody		1 Class	David Tony Hayes	1
Jan 19				Ms. Gable	1
Jan 20		1 Class			1
Jan 21	Kyle Mike	1 Class			1
Jan 22				Alex Jenna Emily Bev Lesley	1
Mar 9			1 Class		1
Mar 10			1 Class		1
Mar 11			1 Class		1
Mar 12			1 Class	Ms. Gable	1
Mar 13				Isaac David Tony Hayes	1