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Indigenous Students' Experiences in Physical Education Across Canada, the United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand: A Scoping Review

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Author Biographies

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Abstract

Positive experiences in Physical Education (PE) throughout one's childhood encourages life-long interest and participation in exercise and movement, as well as increased mental and physical well-being (Akbar & Tsuji, 2020). However, for many Indigenous students' a positive PE experience may not be a reality. Research has demonstrated that Indigenous students have negative experiences in traditional Western education programs (McHugh et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aimed to gain a better understanding of Indigenous students' experiences in public school PE across Canada, the United States of America (USA), Australia, and New Zealand.

This scoping review was conducted guided by Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) framework. Fifteen pieces of literature were identified that met the inclusion criteria for the scoping review. A descriptive analysis of these pieces of literature identified key descriptors from each and a Thematic analysis was conducted, and two overarching themes were identified: (1) Experiencing a cultural disconnect in the PE curriculum and the content being taught and (2) Connections between students' and the PE environment.

The results of this study demonstrate that although research presently exists with regards to Indigenous students' sharing their experiences in PE, there is still a need for more work specifically focused on this topic.

Keywords: Indigeneity, class content, teaching, curriculum, physical education

Résumé

Des expériences positives en éducation physique (ÉP) durant l'enfance favorisent un intérêt et une participation à vie à l'exercice et au mouvement, ainsi qu'un mieux-être mental et physique accru (Akbar & Tsuji, 2020). Cependant, pour de nombreux élèves autochtones, une expérience positive en ÉP peut ne pas être une réalité. Les recherches ont démontré que les élèves autochtones vivent souvent des expériences négatives dans les programmes éducatifs occidentaux traditionnels (McHugh et al., 2019). Cette étude visait donc à mieux comprendre les expériences des élèves autochtones en ÉP dans les écoles publiques en Amérique du Nord, en Australie et en Nouvelle-Zélande.

Cette revue exploratoire a été réalisée en suivant le cadre méthodologique d'Arksey & O'Malley (2005). Quinze articles répondant aux critères d'inclusion ont été identifiés pour cette revue. Une analyse descriptive de ces articles a permis d'extraire des descripteurs clés, suivie d'une analyse thématique qui a révélé deux grands thèmes : (1) le décalage culturel ressenti dans le curriculum et les contenus enseignés en ÉP, et (2) les connexions entre les élèves et l'environnement d'ÉP.

Les résultats de cette étude montrent que, bien que des recherches existent sur les expériences des élèves autochtones en ÉP, il reste un besoin urgent de travaux supplémentaires spécifiquement axés sur ce sujet.

Mots-clés: Indigénéité, contenu des cours, enseignement, curriculum, éducation physique

Introduction

Positive experiences in physical education (PE) throughout childhood encourages life-long interest and participation in exercise and movement, as well as increased mental and physical well-being (Akbar et al., 2020; Hilborn et al., 2004; Lu & Buchanan, 2014). In Canada, providing an inclusive and safe environment in PE can contribute to all students, and especially minorities, enjoying a positive school PE experience and life-long participation in exercise and physical activity (Doherty & Taylor, 2007; Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Waez, 2024). Therefore, examining the student experiences of all racial minorities in Canadian PE is of importance, including the experiences of Indigenous students. Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that Indigenous students experience much negativity, in the realm of sport and physical activity (Blodgett et al., 2014), and have poor experiences overall when it comes to public school education in Canada and globally (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). There is a need within education and curricula to incorporate Indigenous peoples history, cultures, and traditions to provide an equitable space and positive experiences in PE, because it has been demonstrated how impactful culture can be in PA settings such as PE (Akbar et al., 2020; Blades et al., 2000; Gilliland, 1995; Kalyn, 2006;). Indigenous ways of knowing and pedagogy can offer multiple layers of learning to education; storytelling, learning from the land, sharing and taking turns, etc. (Kalyn, 2006). Although most PE curricula in North America include outcomes/objectives that support students' well-being and ability to learn, unfortunately these curricula mostly cater to one population of students: white and middle-class and able-bodied students (Azzarito, 2009a; Tatum, 1997;). This is not just prevalent in Canada or the USA, but also historically in other English speaking colonized countries (e.g., New Zealand) where the curricular textbooks idolized the British race and deemed Indigenous peoples as aggressive and angry throughout history (Hokowhitu, 2003).

Consideration for non-Eurocentric culture and theoretical underpinnings connected to Indigenous worldviews are presently lacking in many colonized nations' PE curricula, especially across Canada (Halas et al., 2012b; Kalyn, 2014; Melnychuk et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2013). For example, the current PE curriculum in Ontario, Canada, does not state the importance of students connecting and feeling connected to the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015). Under the section 'Supporting students' well-being and ability to learn' the grades 9 to 12 curriculum states "The health and physical education curriculum engages students in learning about the factors that contribute to health and well-being and in building skills to live healthy, active lives" (Ministry of Education, 2015, pg. 3). The importance of all students seeing themselves in what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is applied to the outside world are important aspects of that connection. Consequently, an argument could be made that change is needed to address these issues. However, before changes should be implemented in public schools to address the aforementioned issues, it would make sense to first develop a better understanding of students' experiences in PE in general and more specifically the experiences of Indigenous students. Such knowledge could help inform administrators and future PE teachers on how to better support Indigenous students as well as ways to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into their pedagogy. This leads to the question, "what is presently known about Indigenous students' experiences in school-based PE programs?"

Indigenous Students' Overall Experiences in Public School Education

It has been demonstrated that Indigenous students struggle to find their culture, traditions, and practices in public education as their communities and practices have not been honoured, recognized, or valued. Due to this, Indigenous students experience low self-esteem, and negative attitudes and interactions with their teachers and classmates (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). Hare and

Pidgeon interviewed Indigenous students regarding their experiences in Canadian public schools and reported that, regardless of whether discrimination was explicit or not, they still felt as if they did not belong and did not fit in alongside their non-Indigenous classmates at school. Other researchers who have examined this topic have reported that racism towards Indigenous students in schools exists in multiple forms ranging from verbal racism (name-calling, racist jokes), behavioural racism (assault), institutional discrimination (denial of services), to macro-discrimination (media misinformation, biases in history) (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). Bodkin-Andrews and colleagues suggested that the result of racism led to increased perceptions of racism in testing, teacher grades in the subjects of English, Math, and Science, and was related to the increased patterns of academic disengagement among Indigenous students.

In the USA, a five-year qualitative study by Quijada Cerecer (2013) with "American Indian" students demonstrated that these students felt their public schools neglected their educational needs and views. Furthermore, Quijada Cerecer (2013) indicated that the students in this study felt schools "marginalized native students through specific policies" (p. 591). Similar results have been reported in Canada. For example, a study by Berger, Epp, and Møller (2006) shed light on Indigenous students' experiences at a public school in Northern Canada. In this study the researchers found that the school used irrelevant curriculum and teaching approaches with their students. The school and teachers also did not value the Inuit community and their language which eventually resulted in the students lacking discipline, as well as demonstrating poor attendance, and overall academic achievement. For example, the administrators and teachers at this school expected students to abide by a Eurocentric lifestyle (e.g., being on time for class, abiding by rules, lining up in single file and straight lines, etc.) which did not align with these individuals' way of life and values. These are just a few examples that demonstrate some of the ongoing negative experiences (e.g., day-to-day racism and discrimination) that Indigenous students have faced in public schools and what little is being done to help support them.

It is extremely important that future teachers and school administrators understand the experiences of Indigenous students in schools. Not only the students they are teaching and will be teaching in the future, but also the students that came before them. School can be a traumatic and challenging space for many Indigenous youth; some of these children have extreme generational trauma (Barnes & Josefowitz, 2019). Therefore, by learning about the schooling experiences of their students, their students' parent and grandparents, and other Indigenous students, hopefully future teachers can come from a place of understanding rather than judgement when teaching Indigenous students. Such considerations should be made in all areas of education, including PE.

Existing Related Research

In areas of study related to Indigenous students' experiences in PE, such as Indigenous youths' experiences in sport, physical activity, and public-school education in general, considerable research has been conducted and review articles synthesizing such research are common (e.g., Anderson et al., 2023; Bruner et al. 2016; May et al., 2020; McHugh et al., 2019). However, when it comes to specifically looking at Indigenous students' experiences in PE no such syntheses exist. The closest existing work related to this topic would be Halas and colleagues (2012a) in which they provided a summary of the research related to culturally relevant PHE. Within this study, they discussed the challenges that Aboriginal students faced and the best ways for PE teachers and sport coaches to understand where their students were at using culturally relevant PE. This article is extremely valuable but does not (and was not intended to) synthesize the literature about school-aged Indigenous students' experiences in PE programs. Therefore, the purpose of the present research was to expand upon existing knowledge by

exploring literature that directly focuses on Indigenous students' experiences in PE, in Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, and synthesize this work. To achieve this, a scoping review of the literature was conducted.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the present research was to expand upon existing knowledge by exploring literature that directly focuses on Indigenous students' experiences in PE, in Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand The objectives were:

1. To provide a map of existing literature on the topic of Indigenous students' experiences in PE; including where such literature is coming from (i.e., countries in the world where literature is being produced) and what format it is being shared in (e.g., academic journals).
2. To pinpoint and clarify the existing themes that exist in the literature with respect to Indigenous students' PE experiences.

The countries of Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand were selected due to their historic similarities as British colonies that are still majority English speaking and have Indigenous populations that existing literature related to educational experiences has considered. Other countries that have similar British colonial backgrounds were initially contemplated and would have been included (e.g., South Africa), however through the process of identifying literature that met the exclusion and inclusion criteria of this study (see methods section) no pieces of work were identified that discussed nations outside of the four included (i.e., Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand).

Methodology and Methods

This scoping review was developed using Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework for conducting a scoping review. Recommendations from Levac and colleagues (2010) as well as the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) scoping review methodology (Peters et al., 2021) also supplemented design of the protocol. Therefore, the review included the following steps: 1) identifying the research questions, 2) identifying relevant studies, 3) study selection, 4) charting and analyzing the data, and 5) collating, summarizing, and reporting the results (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010).

Positionality

I am a biracial Filipino who passes as a white, cisgender women and I have family connections to the Mohawk, Blackfoot and Algonquin communities. As someone who celebrates my culture as a Filipino woman and lives joyfully in the skin I am in, a large part of why I did this work was not only because of my familial ties and passion for PE but also to demonstrate the power that voices, experiences, and stories have. My critical friend for this study identifies as a Euro-Canadian heterosexual male and is an associate professor in PE. We understand and are aware of the harmful history of research that has been done on Indigenous peoples and their communities (Smith, 2021) and acknowledge that we do not identify as an Indigenous person or researcher. In the past decade or so, there have been amazing individuals who have been paving the way for better research with Indigenous peoples and we are willing to do the work to become a part of that change.

Identification of Literature and Search Process

Data collection started in May 2023. Four search methods were used for this scoping review: (a) searches of academic databases; (b) searches of peer-reviewed articles; (c) searches of grey literature which is "information produced outside of traditional publishing and distribution channels, and can include reports, working papers, newsletters, government documents, speeches, white papers, urban plans, and so on" (Simon Fraser University Library 2018); and (d) searches of the reference lists of the pieces of literature. Initially, literature was systematically searched through for information on a combination of the terms "Indigenous students" and "PE". However, based on suggestions from a critical friend a revised set of search terms was created to address the fact that other words besides "Indigenous" and "students" can and have been used historically to refer to the population of interest. This was done to help increase the amount and depth of literature identified. A Canadian Métis expert in the field, and a Canadian Haudenosaunee Elder were consulted on the final set of revised search terms to ensure they were appropriate, and none were missed. Table 1 includes the final list of the key words and combinations of terms used in the searches. The following six databases were employed as search resources: PubMed, SportDiscus, ERIC, ProQuest, iPortal, and Google Scholar.

Table 1

Conceptualization of Search Strategy

Indigenous population search terms		Physical education search terms
"Indigenous students"		"Physical Education"
"Indigenous youth"		"Phys Ed"
"Indigenous children"		
"Aboriginal students"		
"Aboriginal youth"		
"Aboriginal children"		
"First Nations students"		
"First Nations youth"		
"First Nations children"	"AND"	
"Native American students"		
"Native American youth"		
"Native American children"		
"American Indian students"		
"American Indian youth"		
"American Indian children"		
"Māori students"		
"Māori youth"		
"Māori children"		

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Searches

To help enhance the rigor of the document identification process, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed based around the objectives of the study. The documents included in the search must have met the following inclusion criteria:

1. The English terms identified in Table 1 were included as keywords, or in the title or abstract of the document.
2. Population included (Indigenous students, youth, and children; First Nations students, youth, and children; Aboriginal students, youth, and children; Native American students, youth, and children; American Indian students, youth, and children; Māori students, youth, and children).
3. Selected documents were written in English.
4. Included physical education in the title

Additionally, pieces of literature were excluded from the search based on the following exclusion criteria:

1. PE was not a measured variable or primary concept.
2. Pieces of literature that only focused on higher education/university and/or pre-school/early childhood student populations.

Data Collating

All documents meeting the inclusion criteria were entered into Zotero (Online bibliographic management and sorting program). Key descriptive features of each piece of literature were extracted. Extracted descriptive data included: the author, year of publication, origin of the article, abstract, type of study (e.g., qualitative, quantitative), participants and methodology. Initially, each document's title and abstract were examined to ensure that it matched the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Pieces of literature that did not meet the criteria were excluded. Through this process a list of 41 pieces of literature were identified. However, further analysis, specifically a detailed examination of the methods and results sections of these forty-one pieces of literature, clarified that only fifteen met all inclusion criteria. For example, Brown and colleagues (2005) was found within the 41 articles, due to the term 'Aboriginal Youth' being included in the title, however, through a deeper analysis it was determined that the youth in this article did not discuss their experiences in PE.

A Canadian Métis expert in the field (Professor Emeritus specializing in research related to First Nations and Aboriginal peoples and PE) was also consulted regarding any additional Indigenous research that may have been missed in the searches, but none was identified. Finally, the reference lists of the fifteen pieces of literature were then reviewed to establish if any further articles that met the study criterion had been missed and should be included. No additional articles that met the study criteria were identified during this process and data collection was completed in August 2023. A summary of the search process is outlined in the form of a flowchart in Figure 1.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

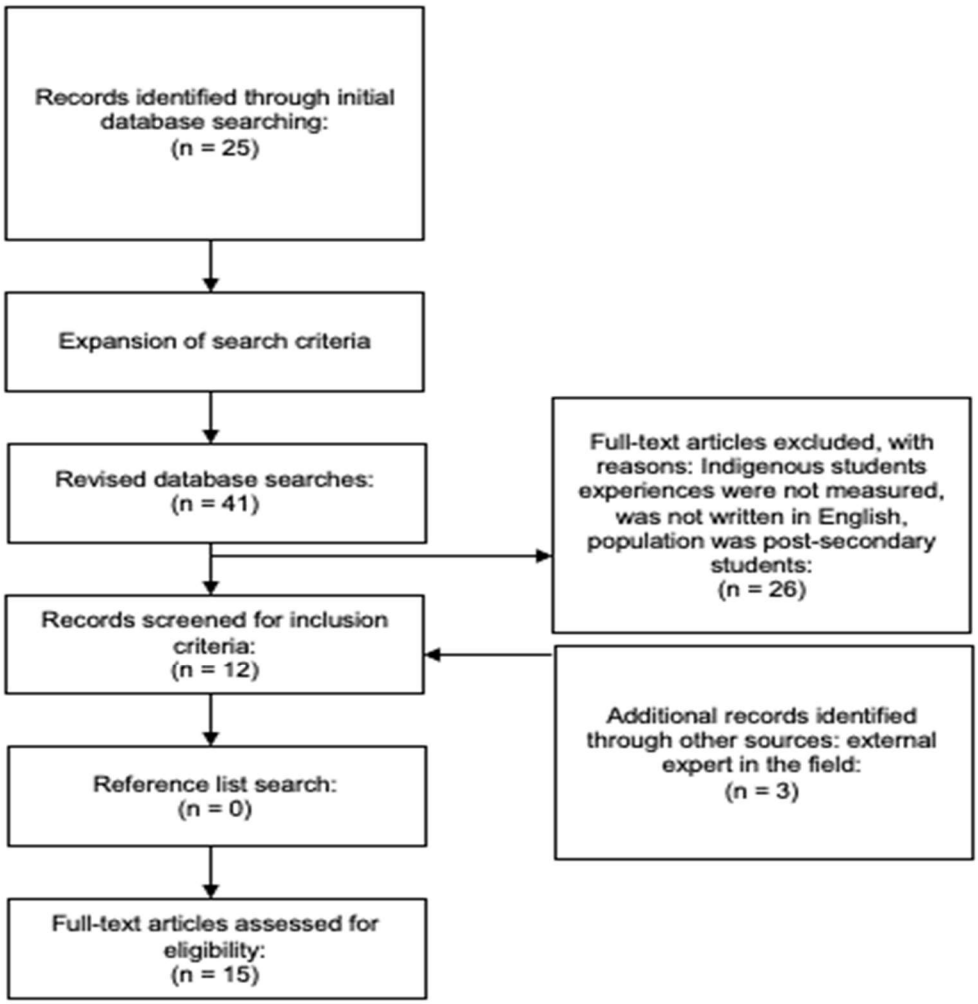
An excel document was created in which key descriptive features of interest were identified for each piece of literature. Specifically, the descriptors included: the title, authors' names, country of origin, population/grade in school, year of publication, method type, literature type, journal publisher, and database it was found in. Then, percentages were calculated for each of the various categories to establish prevalence of various descriptive features (e.g., when and where literature was published) across the literature.

Following the descriptive analysis, a thematic analysis of the content in each of the data sources was conducted following Braun and colleagues (2016). As part of this process, inductive open coding took place, where verbatim text highlighting Indigenous students' experiences in PE and their thoughts on PE for specific topics was identified. Codes were then sorted into "higher

level patterns" or themes and sub-themes that were believed to identify the meaning and relationships between the codes which related to the research questions (Braun et al., 2016; Campbell et al., 2021). These themes and their names were then refined based on consultation with a critical friend and discussion with an Elder.

Figure 1

Summary of Document Search Process



Results and Discussion

Results and discussion of the findings will be shared together in this article. Of the fifteen pieces of literature that met the study inclusion criteria, twelve were peer-reviewed journal articles, one was classified as grey literature (i.e., thesis), one was a book chapter, and one came from a Canadian Métis expert in the field (i.e., published conference proceedings). The descriptive information of interest from each piece of literature was then recorded into a table. Table 2 provides the following descriptive information for each identified piece of literature: (a) document name; (b) author; (c) country where data was collected; (d) population/grade in school; (e) year published; (f) quantitative/qualitative/mixed; (g) article/theses/book/other; (h) journal/ book name; and (i) database used.

Table 2

Descriptives of Identified Literature

Document #	Document Title	Authors	Year Published	Country Where Data Collected	Student Population/ Grade in School	Quantitative/ Qualitative/ Mixed	Article/ Theses/ Book/ Other	Journal/ Book Name	Database
1	Claiming Space: Aboriginal Students within School Landscapes	Van Ingen & Halas	2006	Canada	Aboriginal/ high school	Qualitative	Journal Article	Children's Geographies	Google Scholar
2	Native American Students' Activity Preferences and Self-Reported Activity	Bycura et al.,	2011	USA	Native American/ grade 4-12	Mixed	Journal Article	Journal of Teaching in PE	Google Scholar
3	Aboriginal Youth and Their Experiences in Physical Education: "This Is What You've Taught Me"	Halas	2011	Canada	Aboriginal/ high school talking about elementary PE	Qualitative	Journal Article	PHEnex Journal/ Revue phénEPS	ProQuest
4	Advice for PE Teachers from Aboriginal Youth: Become an Ally	Halas et al.,	2012	Canada	Aboriginal/ high school talking about elementary PE	Qualitative	Journal Article	Physical & Health Education Journal	ProQuest
5	'I didn't even know that there was such a thing as Aboriginal games': A Figurational Account of how Indigenous Students Experience PE	Williams	2018	Australia	Indigenous/ year 6-9	Qualitative	Journal Article	Sport Education and Society	ERIC
6	A Figurational Analysis of how Indigenous Students Encounter Racialization in PE and School Sport	Williams	2018	Australia	Indigenous/ year 6-9	Qualitative	Journal Article	European PE Review	ERIC
7	Hauroa and PE in New Zealand: Perspectives of Māori and Pasifika Students	Fitzpatrick	2005	New Zealand	Māori/ year 11-12	Qualitative	Journal Article	Waikato Journal of Education	Google Scholar

Document #	Document Title	Authors	Year Published	Country Where Data Collected	Student Population/ Grade in School	Quantitative/ Qualitative/ Mixed	Article/ Theses/ Book/ Other	Journal/ Book Name	Database
8	Brown Bodies, Racialization and PE	Fitzpatrick	2013	New Zealand	Māori/ year 8-12	Qualitative	Journal Article	Sport, Education and Society	Sport Discus
9	Physical Activity: What Do High School Students Think?	Hohepa et al.,	2006	New Zealand	Māori/ high school	Qualitative	Journal Article	Journal of Adolescent Health	Google Scholar
10	Maintaining Hózhó: Perceptions of Physical Activity, PE and Healthy Living Among Navajo High School Students	Jones	2015	USA	Native American / high school	Qualitative	Thesis	N/A	Google Scholar
11	Playtime at the Treatment Center: How Physical Activity Helps Troubled Youth	Halas	2001	Canada	Native Children/ grade 6 – 11	Mixed	Journal Article	AVANTE	Google Scholar
12	Pathologizing Billy: Enabling and Constraining the Body of the Condemned	Halas & Hanson	2001	Canada	Native Children/ grade 9	Qualitative	Journal Article	PHEnex Journal/ Revue phénEPS	ProQuest
13	The experience of PE for Aboriginal Youth: The unfulfilled potential of physical education	Halas et al.,	2004	Canada	Aboriginal/ high school talking about elementary PE	Qualitative	Journal Article	Physical & Health Education Journal	ProQuest
14	The Quality and Cultural Relevance of PE for Aboriginal Youth	Halas et al	2012	Canada	Aboriginal/ high school talking about elementary PE	Qualitative	Book Chapter	Red and White: Aboriginal Peoples and Sport in Canada	ERIC
15	'I Quit': Aboriginal Youth Negotiate the 'Contact Zone' in PE	Champagne & Halas	2003	Canada	Aboriginal/ high school	Qualitative	Other	N/A	Google Scholar

Quantitative Descriptive Findings

Who and Where?

The descriptive analyses revealed that 40% (6/15) of the pieces of literature identified, used the term Aboriginal youth or Aboriginal students, 27% (4/15) used the term Native American or Native children, 20% (3/15) used the term Mãori, and 13% (2/15) used the term Indigenous students. These findings demonstrate that researchers should be aware that historically, there have been a variety of different terms used for Indigenous peoples and their communities globally in PE. Another key descriptive finding was the lack of literature focusing on Indigenous children in elementary and middle school (grades 1-8) PE. The population focused on in 93% (14/15) of the pieces of literature were high school students (grades 9-12).

Upon examining where the pieces of literature included in this review originated, it was found that all of them had been developed in one of four English speaking (as official language) countries. Specifically, it was found that 53% were from Canada (8/15 pieces of literature), 20% from New Zealand (3/15), 13% from Australia (2/15), and 13% from the USA (2/15). The lack of literature from other parts of the world may be due to the inclusion criteria (i.e., only English articles), but the fact that over half of the existing literature comes from Canada suggests that there has been some focused attention given to Indigenous students' experiences in the PE environment.

When and What?

Regarding when the various pieces of literature were produced, the descriptive results show that 60% (9/15) were published pre-2012 and none have been published since 2018. This suggests that much of the existing literature is somewhat dated. This is an issue, especially considering that in the past twelve years not only have PE curricular documents been updated in all the countries where this literature has been published (see Health and Physical Education (HPE), 2015) but awareness regarding Indigenous communities and the discrimination they have faced has increased (see Azzarito, 2009a; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Flintoff et al., 2014; Petherick, 2018). Therefore, there is a need for more current research with this population and their experiences in PE.

With respect to the type of research methods that were most employed across the literature reviewed in this study, qualitative designs dominated (i.e., interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, sharing circles). Specifically, 87% (13/15) of the pieces of literature employed strictly qualitative methods. Conversely, 13% (2/15) of the literature followed a mixed-method design and none of the literature employed strictly quantitative methods. The findings related to a qualitative method dominance in this research area could be attributed to the importance of shared experiences and stories, and putting the participants at the centre of the research process when working with Indigenous populations. However, these results also demonstrate that there is room for more variety when it comes to the methods researchers are selecting when doing work related to this topic.

A final descriptive finding was related to what publication venues authors used to share their work on this topic. Academic journals were the clear publication venue of choice with 60% (9/15) publishing their work through journals featuring an education focus (e.g., Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, PHENex Journal/Revue phénEPS). This result could suggest that the topic of Indigenous students' experiences in PE has been perceived mostly as an educational concern and that work regarding PE is best shared with an education focused audience. In contrast to this, another prominent finding was that no books or book chapters specifically focusing on Indigenous students' experiences in PE were found. It would be beneficial to see Indigenous students' experiences outlined in textbooks to help current and future educators gain insight on

how to best teach this population and approach their teaching through a more holistic lens. Specifically, in North American Indigenous communities, the medicine wheel is a philosophy where individuals are believed to have four dimensions: the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual (Andreotti et al., 2011; Ball and Pence, 2006; Bouchard and Martin, 2009; Chartrand, 2012; Corbiere, 2000; Goulet and Goulet, 2014; Kitchen & Raynor, 2013; Morcom, 2017; Ray, 2013; Ray & Cormier, 2012; Toulouse, 2011). There is a large emphasis on learning in various ways, whereas Eurocentric teachings put an emphasis on scientific knowledge and the intellectual (Morcom, 2017). When discussing holistic approaches to PE and education, this is one aspect that could aid non-Indigenous teachers' pedagogy.

Qualitative Thematic Findings

Two major themes were identified through thematic analysis. These were: *experiencing a cultural disconnect in the PE curriculum and the content being taught;* and *connections between students and the PE environment*.

Experiencing a Cultural Disconnect in the PE Curriculum and the Content Being Taught

Eurocentric PE Curriculum. Historically in Canada the education curriculum is Eurocentric in nature, putting a substantial emphasis on literature, math, and science (Halas et al., 2012; Kalyn, 2014; Melnychuk et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2013). Specifically, the PE curriculum and pedagogy is rooted in militaristic exercises, rules, and games. It has also been used as a tool of assimilation centering white, male, able-bodied, heterosexual, and middle to upper class students (Case et al., 2012; Chinn et al., 2022; Ennis, 1999; Flintoff et al., 2014; Laker et al., 2003). In four pieces of literature (Halas, 2011; Hohepa et al., 2006; Jones, 2015; and Williams, 2018;) out of the fifteen (33%) the sub-theme of a *Eurocentric PE curriculum* was identified.

In Hohepa and colleagues (2006) study, a student indicated activities such as fitness and cardio should not be included in PE and that they would appreciate being involved in the selection process of activities in class. Activities such as fitness testing, cardio training, and competition were used and forced on Indigenous children in Indian Residential Schools, demonstrating the Eurocentric nature of the PE curriculum (Forsyth & Heine, 2017). The expectation that teachers impose on their students regarding their fitness levels is not a fair expectation to have. In any other subject such as math, English, and science students are not expected to learn the same way, whereas in PE for some reason teachers expect their students to be able to perform at the same level and learn the same. For students who are not as athletic, having to participate in fitness testing and running can be an intimidating task, whereas for the students who excel athletically it can be seen as easy or fun competition, creating social division in the classroom between those who actively have the opportunity to engage in sport outside of the classroom and those who do not (Erdvik, 2020; Säfvenbom et al., 2015; Thorjussen, 2021). Students want to participate in activities and sports to have fun with their classmates; they want to feel a part of their learning process and feel a sense of belonging.

Jones (2015) emphasized Indigenous students discussing the first year of high school PE lacking choice and a variety of non-Eurocentric activities and sports units that resonated with them. These students also mentioned wanting to participate in non-traditional activities, for example, instead of basketball and soccer they suggested golf or lacrosse. However, in the case where teachers tried to expand their repertoire of activities, they still were unable to connect with the students because they did not know their students. Similarly, Williams (2018b) suggested that what

Indigenous students learned in their PE class, lacked meaning and connection. They felt what was being provided and taught was unnecessary for all students. This does not come as a surprise as, in the school's physical education and sport policy and implementation guidelines (ACT ETD, 2009; Williams, 2018b), there is mention of 'Australian cultural activities' being implemented regarding football codes, swimming, and school carnivals, however, nothing regarding Australian Indigenous culture. There is also a large emphasis on the PE program benefitting and improving the wellbeing for all students, implying that the curriculum meets 'all' students' needs (Williams, 2018b). However, how can this the case when there is a lack of Australian Indigenous people's collaboration in the curriculum?

It is very important that teachers do everything they can to make their classrooms a space for everyone, and that starts with the curriculum and content. As previously mentioned, the PE curriculum puts an emphasis on Eurocentrism, emphasizing competition and students who excel athletically to succeed (Erdvik, 2020). Further, Halas (2011), made the observation that PE promotes Eurocentric values such as competition and individualism and a space where hierarchies prevail (male students are often seen as more skilled than female students and the fit and athletic students receive good marks, and the unfit students get left behind). She also mentioned there needs to be a shift towards a curricular focus on active and healthy living that will eventually create space for Indigenous values (i.e., mastery, independence, belonging, generosity) in the classroom (Halas, 2011). Not only does there need to be efforts made to move away from Eurocentric focused PE curricula, but moreover PE teachers need to provide diverse PE content within the curriculum that break away from traditional Eurocentric activities and more effectively resonate with Indigenous and other minority students (Azzarito, 2009b; Azzarito & Simon, 2016; Macdonald, 2011). Furthermore, providing support for PE teachers to gain a better understanding of non-Eurocentric cultures and communities is needed so that teachers are then able to connect with minority students and have a conversation about what content they would like to see in PE class. Recognition for these students needs to be the first step.

Absence of Indigenous Content. In the study by Williams (2018), it was reported that Aboriginal students started learning about their community's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands (Australia) games. However, a few of the students mentioned that not only was there minimal encounters with any Aboriginal content in their PE classes, they also were surprised to learn that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island games existed (Williams, 2018). This finding is interesting as it demonstrates the lack of Indigenous content being shared and taught to students. Further, integrating Indigenous cultures and history in an informed and meaningful way, can have a great impact as students gain exposure and are able to have a better understanding of culture and history, specifically Indigenous communities. Alongside learning about Aboriginal games, other students mentioned that they also had never been taught Aboriginal sports and Aboriginal dance forms (Williams, 2018). As previously mentioned, many Aboriginal students only experienced European and American physical activities, dance being one of them. However, the fact that these students and their non-Aboriginal classmates have also clearly had little to no exposure to Aboriginal activities throughout their PE experiences further demonstrates a need for more diverse and inclusive PE curriculum and content. These findings are not uncommon or surprising as it has been demonstrated that PE curricula in many instances lacks cultural relevance and, in this case, First Nations and Aboriginal content (Halas et al., 2012; Kalyn, 2014; Melnychuk et al., 2011; Petherick, 2018; Robinson et al., 2013).

Halas and colleagues (2012), discuss Champagne's (2006) work that focused on PE teachers who successfully worked with First Nations and Aboriginal students, and mentioned: "the

importance of teachers knowing their students in the context of the students' historical identities, and in the context of power dynamics between teachers and students cannot be overstated" (p. 16). As previously stated, to have Indigenous students feel seen and understood it must start with the content being provided and the overall PE curriculum. However, it is not that surprising the literature reviewed suggested a lack of cultural relevance when it came to Indigenous students and the PE curriculum. Flintoff and colleagues (2015) emphasized the lack of overall cultural relevance not only in the PE curricula but also in PETE curricula. This has not only been demonstrated in the curricula but also institutionally in PETE programs where the majority of the faculty are also white. To enhance cultural sensitivity in academia, there needs to be more effort and attention put into learning about other cultures first (Kalyn, 2006; La France, 2000). To help reduce the lack of Indigenous content in PE, there needs to be an acknowledgement that starts with teachers, administrators, and policy makers understanding the colonial history of education and understanding their social identity. Further, if teachers and administrators take the time to reflect on their social identities and the historical context of education, hopefully this will encourage them to create a more welcoming learning environment for their Indigenous students (Champagne, 2006; Halas et al., 2012). This concerted effort to reduce the lack of Indigenous content in PE must come from current and future educators, as they are working directly with the students and can get to know them on a personal level. Future educators must want to develop a new era of teaching students and holding space for Indigenous and minority students in the classroom.

On a more positive note, the literature reviewed did provide one example where some students were exposed to Indigenous cultures during PE and decided to take what they had learned about their Indigenous and Aboriginal culture and use it to better understand themselves and their education. In the study by Fitzpatrick (2005) that was conducted in New Zealand, the Hauora model was incorporated in the PE curriculum. This model can be interpreted differently depending on the person. Two Māori students from this study who identified and recognized the concept of Hauora in their PE class, mentioned that they did not realize until later that they use Hauora in their everyday lives. However, two other students did not connect with the concept of Hauora (one Cook Island student and one Tongan student) because they felt more confused with what the word meant as opposed to thinking about the bigger picture (Fitzpatrick, 2005). By incorporating Indigenous and Aboriginal students' cultures and ways of knowing into the PE curriculum, this allowed the students to develop a further understanding of their cultures and themselves. However, when incorporating the concept or philosophy of Hauora in the secondary years of school where PE is optional, does not allow for all students to gain knowledge. There is still an absence of Indigenous content in this regard because like most secondary school curricula, PE is optional beyond the freshman (grade 9; age 13-14) year. It is more than participating in culturally relevant sports and games but truly seeing oneself as a part of the content and curriculum that can impact a student's experience and outlook on their education.

Disconnect of Activities in PE. Based on the articles reviewed, some students mentioned their positive feelings for PE diminished when they transitioned from middle school to high school as they felt the activities they were "forced" to do were "irrelevant" (Halas et al., 2012). Two suggestions students mentioned were extending the sports units and participating in low-competition games and activities. In doing so, students felt they could learn more about the activities and new skills (Halas et al., 2012). Some students from New Zealand, specifically female students, also mentioned that they did not enjoy performing activities in front of their classmates and mentioned that their teachers never encouraged input from them and would be told what they were doing that day (Champagne & Halas, 2003). By not engaging with students or getting to

know their likes and dislikes, students decided to not show up to class or just leave once they found out what they were doing, thus demonstrating a clear disconnect between students and the content being covered in their PE classes.

Students are more likely to participate in physical activity and sport if there is an already developed personal connection and level of competence involved (Bycura, 2011; Chen et al., 1999; Poag-DuCharme & Brawley, 1993). Teachers who do not connect with their students and impose activities that do not resonate with the students' interests will most likely see limited participation and attendance in their classes (Champagne & Halas, 2003). In Bycura's (2011) study Native American students' physical activity participation in PE class was contingent on the familiarity of the sport or activity. For example, many students participated in basketball in their communities at local community centres or in public spaces, therefore, there was already a personal connection to basketball being a fun, comfortable and familiar game for them. The PE environment for Indigenous students needs to incorporate relevance and a personal connection as it will allow them to feel more comfortable, more motivated, and eventually more confident in PE class (Bycura, 2011). There is potential for Indigenous students to feel connected to the content, curriculum and activities if they are able to contribute to their learning in PE class. However, this starts with administrators and educators understanding where these students are coming from historically, socially, and culturally (Champagne & Halas, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Without teachers getting to know Indigenous students and wanting to do better for them, there will always be a cultural and emotional disconnect, leading to a lack of participation in PE for Indigenous students.

Connections Between Students and the PE Environment

Discomfort in PE Spaces. It has been demonstrated that in general, current PE teachers display gender-biased behaviours and practices when interacting with some students which may affect students' willingness and participation in PE. Specifically, for Indigenous females, middle school was the beginning of their lack of interest in participating and attending PE class (Davis, 2003). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that most female students (regardless of ethnicity) no longer participate in PE class in high school due to low self-esteem, sweating, and physical appearance (Cicchillitti, 2015). High school PE can be an intimidating space for many young adults of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the literature with Indigenous students suggests that these students are no different. Some male and female Indigenous students suggested that if they were unathletic, they would get made fun of and the students on sports teams would make them look bad in high school PE class (Hohepa et al., 2006). Getting changed for PE class was also a determining factor in students lack of participation. For example, in Moen and colleagues' (2018) study, students were told that if they did not come to class with the proper uniform (i.e., school t-shirt, athletic bottoms, and running shoes) they were unable to participate in PE that day. In Halas and colleagues' study (2004), mainly female students mentioned feeling surprised that they had to change for PE class. Some students did not have a change of clothes and became self-conscious about their bodies. To avoid this feeling of embarrassment and judgement, students stopped attending PE all together (Halas et al., 2004).

An issue many teachers do not understand is the trauma that some Indigenous and Aboriginal students carry with them. This can result in something as simple as getting changed for PE being overlooked. One student mentioned that the change room was a scary space for herself and other Aboriginal youth because they have "scars" due to the intergenerational trauma and abuse from the IRS and colonization (Halas, 2011). It is not a surprise that changing in PE has been found to be harmful among Indigenous students, as what happens in the PE changeroom (i.e.,

feelings of embarrassment and judgement) translates further to what happens outside of PE. In addition, previous research has shown that in general, many females regardless of ethnicity or race, have reported issues with changing for PE (Fisette, 2009).

Beyond the changerooms, Indigenous students also appear to feel a sense of discomfort in the PE class environment as well. Specifically, Hohepa and colleagues (2006) discussed how Indigenous female students perceived incompetence and perceptions of peer judgments as inhibiting their involvement in PE classes. Again, this finding among the Indigenous population seems to coincide with existing literature with other populations. Regardless of race and ethnicity, all students not only judge other students in PE class, but also, they judge one another for what they were wearing, whether they have shaved prior to class, different body types, etc., (O'Donovan & Kirk, 2007). Clothing in particular can reflect 'oneself', as well as demonstrate one's taste and interests, and their socioeconomic status (O'Donovan & Kirk, 2007). How students were perceived by one another contributed to their 'self-image'. Jones (2015) described how one Indigenous student mentioned the importance of her self-image starting to develop in middle school PE and further into high-school. She began to feel alienated and like an outcast, not fitting in with the 'average' group of students and began to be perceived as less than by other students. Similar feelings of self-image related discomfort during PE, among adolescent females, are again not isolated to the Indigenous student population. Several studies have reported non- Indigenous adolescent females share in such feelings (e.g., Røset et al., 2020; Watkins et al., 2019).

The discomfort that PE appears to present for Indigenous students is clearly a concern, but it also seems that Indigenous students experience many of the same discomforts with the PE environment as other non- Indigenous students. This finding is extremely important as learning about Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' experiences with discomfort in PE, will hopefully encourage policy makers, teachers, and administrators to listen to students' voices and enact change in the PE curriculum and environment.

Meaningful Space. Some of literature reviewed reported students perceiving the gymnasium as a space that brought a sense of safety and enjoyment. This was due to team sports and activities where high fives and cheering were common, and where students could break from their classes (Halas, 1999). Students in Halas' study also mentioned they trusted the PE environment to be a space to have fun and be with their friends. Similarly, in the article by Fitzpatrick (2010) a Kikorangi student from New Zealand discussed how they strongly identified with PE as they found the environment welcoming, affirming, and all-around a meaningful space. This idea of PE offering comradery and a team environment has also been mentioned by non-Indigenous students. Specifically, Taylor and Doherty (2007) reported that recent racial minority students in Canada discussed how PE was important for them as it was emotionally beneficial, helped them develop friendships, provided physical/health benefits, and allowed them to learn about Canadian culture. These are just a few examples of how PE can provide a meaningful space for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Students can show up, destress from their other classes, and have fun learning and playing with their peers.

Alongside this idea of PE bringing forth a meaningful and team-oriented environment, other students in Halas' (1999) study mentioned that they felt a sense of safety in the PE environment due to their teachers being actively engaged in supervising the class in comparison to other classes. This helped them feel not just physically safe but psychologically safe, which brings forth a whole new light to PE and how important a sense of belonging can be for students. These examples support the sub-theme of PE as a meaningful space for all students, and teachers are a huge part in the creation of that space. When students feel safe, welcomed, and supported, it

shifts their perspectives. Through these examples of PE becoming a meaningful space, it appears that it was more than the physical space of the gymnasium that made students feel this way. It was also the environment that had been created (i.e., friendly, comforting, and fun) that made students feel this sense of meaningfulness.

Stereotyped and Racialized. Indigenous students are presumed to be naturals in sport and PE, but intellectually inferior from their white peers (Fitzpatrick, 2010; Harrison et al., 2004). Western society and the colonial world have stereotyped black and brown bodies as "naturally physical" instead of hard-working athletes (Hokowhitu, 2003) and because of this, schools often exploit black and brown athletes for their abilities (Fitzpatrick, 2010; Hokowhitu, 2003). For example, Halas and colleagues (2012) described how one student felt pressured to know how to participate in archery because they were Aboriginal, even though they had never tried it before. It is not uncommon that teachers will point to their students of colour for answers; just because a student is Aboriginal does not necessarily mean they know all there is to know about hunting or kayaking and that does not mean they have genetic abilities to certain sports (Carrington, 2010; Halas et al., 2012; McDonald, 2013; Sailes, 1991; Spracklen, 2008). Further, the notion that black and brown students will thrive athletically and not academically is simply not true and not one of the reasons why these students decide to take PE. Some Māori and Pasifika students mentioned wanting to take PE because they enjoy science and learning about the human body; another student mentioned how she took PE because it best aligned with what she wanted to study in university (Fitzpatrick, 2010).

Current and future teachers and administrators need to encourage comfort in their classrooms and promote a safe space for all their students. It has been mentioned throughout this paper that there is a large disconnect between teachers and Indigenous and minority students and this disconnect it is putting both students and teachers at a disadvantage (Douglas & Halas, 2013).

Conclusion

In this study, the literature reviewed provided evidence for the existence of gaps with PE curriculum and content and the PE environment, in how it is experienced by Indigenous students. PE continues to put an emphasis on Eurocentric ways of knowing, resulting in a lack of Indigenous content, and leaving Indigenous students to feel disconnected and unacknowledged. To address some of the themes and gaps highlighted in this review, it would be most beneficial for current and future educators, administrators and policy makers to take the time to understand the history of Indigenous peoples and education in their countries to help them implement a more holistic approach to teaching PE in their schools. That being said, it is important to recognize that some such efforts are already underway thanks to Reconciliation efforts happening in the various countries examined in this review. However, there is still a long way to go.

It would also be beneficial to have more Indigenous teachers, administrators, and coaches working in schools with students implementing Indigenous pedagogies and practices. There is also a need for all students (including Indigenous students) to have the choice of getting changed for PE class, as it has been demonstrated that the changerooms in PE not only impact students in PE class but also outside of it (Halas, 2011). Finally, members of Indigenous communities need to be consulted and be actively involved with future PE curriculum development teams to ensure that Indigenous culture and the needs of Indigenous students are being honoured and accounted for in the PE curriculum. Taking such actions would allow for a more positive, holistic, and safe space in PE class for not only Indigenous students, but all students (Barrett et al., 2018).

With this study only focusing on Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand Indigenous students' experiences in PE, this does not account for the many other Indigenous communities internationally (i.e., Southern America, Africa, Asia, etc.). Thus, future research should look beyond Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand as there still needs to be a focus on experiences globally. Similarly, because only literature written in English was included in this review it is possible that not all literature related to Indigenous students' experiences in PE that presently exists was found and included. Regarding the literature that was included in this study, a considerable amount was published pre-2018, suggesting that much of the literature is dated and while this may be a finding here, it should be noted that efforts around PE and Indigenous communities have been underway in other areas (i.e., teacher education, work with Indigenous professionals in communities, Elders, etc.).

This review has also demonstrated a need for future research to focus on pre-secondary school aged students, as it is important to provide a more well-rounded understanding of the full scope of Indigenous students' experiences in PE. It is important that all Indigenous students' experiences are being considered as the voices of younger Indigenous students are no less important. Further, the importance of Indigenous students being spoken to and discussing their experiences needs to be addressed as it would allow for a strengthened relationship between student-centred PE teaching and pedagogy. It is extremely important that student voices are being shared, as teachers' and administrators' perceptions regarding Indigenous students' experiences in PE are not enough to fully convey the depth of these students' experiences or accurately describe them. Future research should examine places where updated PE curriculum documents have enhanced Indigenous related content and how this might influence Indigenous students' experiences in PE. For example, British Columbia, Canada, has the most updated PE curriculum in Canada, implementing Indigenous ways of knowing and practices into their curriculum. This study supports the need for Indigenous students' experiences in PE and their stories to be shared and regularly considered by PE teachers, physical education teacher education course instructors, and PE policy and curriculum makers. There is still much work to be done to help us better understand and ultimately improve the experiences of Indigenous students in PE.

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