Boys and Physical Education
- A Study of Boys’ Experiences of Single-Sex and Co-Educational Physical Education

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Abstract

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The role of schools as agencies in the social construction of gender has been well researched and efforts to design the most appropriate learning environment often lead to discussions of single-sex versus co-educational schooling. Physical education is a subject where content and grouping arrangements can contribute to stereotypical expectations and assumptions about gender appropriate role-play. Typically, when gender is raised as an issue in physical education, attention is often directed towards the problems encountered by the girls and their evident alienation and lack of participation in physical education classrooms. To date, few studies have focused on boys’ experiences and whether their needs are met in the various forms of physical education.

The aim of this study was to investigate boys participation in and experiences of physical education in single-sex and co-educational classes in order to examine how this is affected by the two different groupings of genders and whether any discrepancies in participation and experiences could be identified within groups of boys. The results show that in both physical education settings there exists a group of boys who are not enjoying their physical education since it is too closely associated with the dominant definitions of masculinity. These boys clearly express their dissatisfaction with what activities they get to do and how they often turn into being overly aggressive and competitive. It was also identified that this group of boys was somewhat greater in the single-sex compared to the co-educational format.

The results of this study therefore demonstrate that there is a great need to start recognising the different needs amongst boys (and girls) and that the image of boys and girls as two homogeneous groups aligned with stereotypical perceptions of activities and behaviours of which they are capable and in which they should be engaging, needs to be challenged.

Keywords: physical education, single-sex, co-educational, boys, masculinity

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1. Introduction

Many physical educators, like much of the rest of society, remain locked in ideological debates about the value of single-sex versus co-educational classes (Soderlund, 2005). Efforts to design the most appropriate learning environments for adolescents frequently lead to discussions of separate-sex versus co-educational schooling. Arguments and research supporting both types of schooling have been made, particularly as they relate to academic, socioemotional, and interpersonal development (Mael, 1998). The conduct of physical education classes in single-gender versus co-educational formats is widely debated internationally (Penney, 2002). Many studies have investigated girls’ alienation and lack of participation in physical education, but few studies have focused on boys’ experiences and whether their needs are met in the various forms of physical education. Moreover, as pointed out by Lundvall (2004), studies investigating the separate genders’ experiences of physical education, are typically comparative and rarely looks at differences within each gender. This study examined boys participation in and experiences of single-sex and co-educational physical education.

1.1 Background

Physical education as an activity in the school curriculum has been gendered since it first appearance in the modern era, which dates from the mid- to late 1800s and the beginning of mass compulsory schooling (Kirk, 2003). For well over one hundred years, then, the practices that make up physical education have been strongly associated with girls being “feminine” and boys being “masculine”. This gendered history has strongly influenced what we now regard as legitimate knowledge in physical education (Kirk, 2003).

This influence is all the more profound when we note that there are many optimists in our midst, among the general public and the teaching profession, who are unable (or sometimes unwilling) to recognise these gender dimensions of physical education and who assume that the subject is gender neutral (Kirk, 2003). The consequences of this inability to recognise the lasting influence of the gendered history of physical education are serious. Many girls and more boys than is often acknowledged fail to receive appropriate physical education in the present because of the ongoing influence of the past (Kirk, 2003).

Young people’s activity levels and health raise important questions for professionals working in physical education and sport. In the twenty-first century, concerns about obesity are becoming more prevalent. However, debates about obesity, body image and physical
activity also raise important gender issues. The social construction of an ideal femininity and masculinity can influence young people’s self-perceptions and esteem, and affect how others interact with them (Flintoff & Scraton, 2005).

While girls’ experiences of physical education have remained the focus of much popular as well as academic debate, an emerging concern for the education of boys has highlighted the importance of sport as a site for the reproduction of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell, 1983). What this research has usefully done is to show that while boys as a group are advantaged by the association of sport and hegemonic masculinity, more individual boys than is commonly supposed experience physical education negatively (Martino, 1999). Moreover, this research is consistent with feminist analyses that suggest the ‘problem’ lies not with girls, but with the gender order and with physical education as a site in which conventional femininities and masculinities are reproduced (Skelton, 1998).

1.2 Aim and Scope

The main purpose of this study was to investigate boys participation in and experiences of physical education in single-sex and co-educational classes in order to examine how this is affected by the two different groupings of genders. Furthermore, it was examined whether any discrepancies in participation and experiences could be identified within groups of boys. In order to accomplish this, a combined quantitative and qualitative study of boys attending single-sex and co-educational physical education classes was conducted in an attempt to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1  Do boys prefer single-sex or co-educational physical education classes, and why?

Research Question 2  In what ways do their participation and experiences differ between single-sex and co-educational physical education classes?

Research Question 3  What differences in participation and experiences of single-sex and co-educational physical education can be identified within groups of boys?
1.3 Outline
The literature review provides the reader with necessary background information to set the study and the discussion presented in this paper in its context. In the methodology section, background information on the study is provided along with particulars of the data collection and analysis procedure. Results of the study are presented and subsequently discussed, and conclusions drawn.
2. Literature Review

The role of schools as agencies in the social construction of gender has been well researched and the secondary school curriculum, in general, is known to perpetuate gender-stereotyped behaviour (Lines & Stidder, 2003). Physical education is one aspect of the secondary school curriculum where content and grouping arrangements can contribute to stereotypical expectations and assumptions about gender appropriate role-play. This can, and does, influence pupils’ overall perceptions of sex differences and accentuates a broader, hidden, ‘gendered’ curriculum (Lines & Stidder, 2003).

Mixed- and single-sex physical education during the past thirty years has been an issue of critical pedagogical debate amongst the physical education profession all over the world (Humberstone, 1990). This is not a new debate or particular to physical education within educational dimensions. In some co-educational schools there have been moves to segregate girls and boys within and across subjects in order to optimise learning and increase academic performance. For example, it has been shown that girls benefit from single-sex teaching in English, Science and Maths whilst boys benefit in Modern Foreign Languages and certain aspects of Music education (Lines & Stidder, 2003).

It is often assumed that when gender is raised as an issue in physical education, we are referring mainly to the “problem” of girls and their alleged low motivation and high levels of dropout from sport. A significant number of studies in physical education provides evidence of girls’ alienation and lack of participation in physical education classrooms (Bain, 1995; Ennis, 1999; Hastie, 1998). Lack of participation in physical education, or less than optimal experiences in classes, can limit girls’ learning and their physical activity levels across the lifespan.

Several researchers argue that girls’ alienation in physical education settings results from socially institutionalised gender roles that maintain and reproduce boys’ dominance and girls’ subordination in physical activities. According to Nilges (1998) “gender relations of dominance and subordination actively disempower female physicality” (p. 184). Girls’ lack of participation in and alienation from physical education is seen as a consequence of oppression. Ennis (1999) asserted that girls’ oppression is due to boys’ aggression, competitiveness, attitudes of superiority, and domination in physical activities. There is also evidence that male domination of physical education classes result in girls’ feelings of inferiority and characterisation of their experiences as meaningless, powerless, and marginalised (Satina, Solmon, Cothran, Loftus & Stockin-Davidson, 1998). “Attitudes of physical superiority and domination are promoted within male hegemonic forms of sport and
are developed through forceful occupation of space, skilful control over objects, or physical power” (Connell, 1983:157).

Over the last decade and a half, however, there has been a spectacular increase in interest in boys’ experiences and the social construction of masculinity in physical education and sport. Studies have shown that it is no longer safe to assume, and indeed never was, that current and past forms of physical education meet boys’ needs (Kirk, 2003).

2.1 The History of Physical Education

Any school subject, its teaching practices, the teachers and the students, do not exist in a historical, cultural and societal void. The subject and its teaching practices are strongly influenced by traditions, beliefs and customs which have arisen out of entirely different contexts. Consequently, the norms, values and perceptions which are inherent in the subject today can be traced back to historical, cultural and societal contexts which to greater and lesser extent no longer can be seen as reasonable or even desirable (Larsson & Meckbach, 2007).

Physical education as an activity in the school curriculum has been gendered since its first appearance in the modern era, which dates from the mid- to late 1800s and the beginning of mass compulsory schooling (Kirk, 2002). What this means is that for over one hundred years, the practices that make up physical education have been strongly associated with stereotypical views about the behaviours and activity that is appropriate for girls and boys respectively and with notably singular images of femininity and masculinity. Kirk (2002) suggests that:

> what we now regard as legitimate knowledge in physical education has been strongly influenced by this gendered history and that this influence is invariably overlooked. Many members of the general public and of the teaching profession do not recognise the gender dimensions of physical education and assume that the subject is unproblematically androgenous, or gender-neutral.

(p. 25)

This inability to recognise the lasting influence of the gendered history of physical education has serious consequences for children’s experiences of and opportunities in physical education and sport. For many girls and more boys than is often acknowledged, these experiences and opportunities are limited because of the ongoing influence of the past (Kirk, 2002). The history of physical education discussed below is mainly taken from the UK and Sweden, since most of the pertinent literature has its origin in the former and the latter being the country in which the study was conducted, but serve to illustrate issues that have relevance beyond this context.
From the 1880s up to the 1950s, gymnastics was the main content of physical education programmes in the UK (as in most Western countries), and by the end of the Second World War, three distinct versions of gymnastics were competing for teaching time; the Swedish (or Ling) gymnastics; educational gymnastics; and German or Olympic gymnastics (Kirk, 2002).

Swedish gymnastics was invented by Per Henrik Ling in the early decades of the nineteenth century and consolidated into a system of physical training at the Central Gymnastic Institute in Stockholm, which he founded. It involved mostly free-standing exercises that sought to systematically exercise each part of the body through increasingly intricate flexions and extensions. It also involved some apparatus work such as vaulting. Teaching with the Ling system was highly formalised and particularly in the 1800s featured movements performed to militaristic commands such as ‘at the double’ and ‘fall in’. It was easily practiced with large groups in confined spaces (Kirk, 2002).

Educational gymnastics made a rapid and dramatic impact on female physical education from the first appearance of Rudolf Laban’s ideas on movement and dance in Britain in the 1930s. Laban’s philosophy argued for the release of “dangerously pent up and inhibited energies through free, spontaneous movements” (Kirk, 2002:27).

German gymnastics had been around at least as long as Ling’s system and involved work on apparatus such as the rings, parallel bars and pummel horse. Following the 1948 Olympics, which presented gymnastics as a competitive sport made up of the six activities of floor-work, vaulting, rings, bars, beam and pummel horse, there was an increasing level of interest in this version of gymnastics and a growing number of advocacies for its inclusion in school physical education programmes (Kirk, 2002).

It is important to note that each of these three versions of gymnastics had strong gender associations. When women performed Swedish gymnastics their movements were required to be dainty, nimble and flexible. When men performed Swedish gymnastics, they were required to be strong and powerful. Educational gymnastics was invariably associated with women’s and girls’ physical education, and the education of young children in the infant school. However, this form received a lot of opposition from both men and women. The focus of opposition from the men was claims that it was possible to develop generalised movement competencies through gymnastics and that there was little or no place for competition in the gym. Meanwhile opposition from women can be associated mainly with those women who were members of the old school of Swedish gymnastics, who criticised the informality and apparent lack of discipline of educational gymnastics (Kirk, 2002).
Olympic gymnastics was practiced by both men and women, and practiced differently according to dominant notions of femininity and masculinity. This was most obviously expressed in the different activities that comprised Olympic gymnastics for men and women respectively; namely rings, pommel and parallel bars for men, and asymmetric bars and the beam for women (Kirk, 2002).

By the end of the 1950s, male physical educators were in the majority within the profession, in the UK. Before long they began to champion two developments that up to this time were quite alien to physical education. The first of these was the idea that physical education was not primarily about gymnastics at all or rather, should not be in the UK. Instead, they argued that physical education should be centred on sports and games. The second development that the male physical educators championed was the use of science in the service of physical performance. The first and most prominent achievement of this scientific approach was the development of work in the areas of strength and endurance, two dimensions of physical performance closely associated with the sport that were then clearly identified as ‘male’ (primarily rugby, athletics and weight-lifting) (Kirk, 2002).

During this period, female physical educators had also been involved in debate about the desirable content of their subject. For them the issue was not the place of gymnastics, but the relative place of which form, and specifically, the respective merits of Swedish versus educational gymnastics. As male antagonism to educational gymnastics began to become increasingly more vocal through the 1950s, two major issues focused the debate between the ‘female’ and ‘male’ perspectives that became very evident in physical education. The first issue was the controversy surrounding the level of specificity required for skill development and the matter of transfer of training. The second concerned the application of objective standards to gymnastic performance and the place of competition in the gym (Kirk, 2002).

In the UK, Munrow (1955) suggested that in moving away from the Swedish system after Second World War, male and female physical educators had reacted in different ways to the question of skill specificity:

The men have made overt acknowledgement that other skills are as important and have ‘diluted’ the gymnastic skill content of gymnasiun work so that now boys may be seen practicing basket-ball shots and manoeuvres, carrying out heading practiced or practicing spring starting. The women, in the main, have ‘diluted’ the traditional gymnastic skills by a quite different device. They have ceased both to name and to teach them. Instead, a description is given, in general terms, of a task involving apparatus and individual solutions are encouraged. A much wider range of solutions is thus possible; some may include traditional skills but many will not.

(Munrow, 1955:276)
The problem with the female alternative to the Swedish system, according to Munrow, was that pupils rarely had the chance to consolidate their skills because no specific skill teaching took place. Randall contested this by stating that the major aim of gymnastics was the achievement of what she termed body awareness, which included neural control combined with a higher level of kinesthetic awareness, that could be developed through experience into an intuitive control of movement. Also in contrast to the male approach she added to this the need to engage the child cognitively. Randall accused the men of stressing only the physical effects of exercise, and consequently regarding cognition as out of range. The masculine approach to gymnastics, Randall (1961) claimed:

> separates content from method. Movement gymnastics requires the intelligent co-operation of the child, rendering command-response methods obsolete, which represents a big-break away from the traditional approach of the ‘see this’ and ‘do it this way’ school of thought.

(p. 25-26)

Randall’s response to Munrow showed that behind the less formal methods of educational gymnastics lay an attempt to treat the pupils holistically, encouraging the simultaneous development of intellectual and creative abilities in a movement medium and relegating the physical effect of movement to a level of lesser importance (Kirk, 2002).

However, the notion of body awareness, which lay at the centre of the women’s scheme, suggested a theory of learning that ran directly counter to the new knowledge being produced by motor learning theorists. Knapp argued that transfer of training was most likely to occur when the tasks in question were similar, and that the best way to learn a specific action was to perform that action repeatedly over a period of time. The main point of the motor learning theorists’ criticisms of educational gymnastics, which the male physical educators championed vigorously, was that skill learning is specific and that repeated practice in the same or similar conditions is the key to mastery. Taking these principles to heart, male physical educators developed an approach to teaching skills that consisted of reducing a skill to its component parts, and learning each part separately before re-assembling them gradually until the entire skill had been learned. “This appeared to make nonsense of the claim amongst female physical educators that it was possible, indeed preferable, to develop a general body awareness as a foundation on which to build more specific learning“ (Kirk, 2002:31).

The second objection to the educational gymnasts’ perspective related to the place of standards and competition in the gym. From the male point of view, it seemed unlikely that the educational gymnasts’ child-centred approach could continue to stimulate pupils beyond
the early stages of learning. Munrow argued that it could not challenge older boys or girls. He contended that competitive activity was essential as a stimulant or incentive for advanced learning.

Allied to a teaching philosophy which seeks actively to avoid confronting less able children with failure, is the belief that the child’s own solution to the problem being always valid and right. This make more sense with young children than with older boys and girls and with first efforts at a skill rather than with later ones. To leave children floundering to evolve their own technique when we could guide them is a neglect of our professional duties.

(Munrow, 1955:280-281)

In response to Munrow’s view that standards were a necessary and important means of challenging pupils to strive for excellence, Randall suggested that girls, particularly in adolescence, had quite different needs to boys. She argued that the growing boy “derives considerable prestige and social prominence through physical advantage in competitive games which his increase in height, weight and strength gives him (Randall, 1961:20). Girls, on the other hand, may have little to gain from competitive sport during the adolescent period.

In the gymnastic lesson let her be free from all this competition and let her progress at her own rate and find joy and satisfaction in the slow but sure progress of controlling her body. Through her pride in the mastery of her body in the gymnasium will grow a certain independence, security and emotional stability.

(Randall, 1961:21-22)

The aims of independence, security and emotional stability contrast sharply with the desire to develop strength, endurance, flexibility and particular skills, and to use these attributes in competitive situations. The contrasts reveal starkly the contested issues that divided the male and female physical educators. It is also important to reflect upon the degree to which both sides were effectively arguing that boys and girls have different needs in relation to physical education. Notably absent in these debates is a recognition of different needs amongst either girls or boys. The image legitimated and reinforced is of two homogeneous groups aligned with stereotypical perceptions of activities and behaviours of which they are capable and in which they should be engaging.

By the mid 1970s the male view of physical education had become the dominant perspective. What the subject is today, the forms of engagement that it requires from learners and the criteria by which success should be measured, are stereotypically masculine. It follows that in order to be successful in the subject girls and women need to perform in a
masculinised way, and furthermore, a particular masculinised way. This is a profound development and one that requires close and critical scrutiny since it impacts on the quality of physical education for all young people, female and male (Kirk, 2002).

2.1.1 The Swedish Perspective

For the purposes of this study a closer examination of the history of physical education in Sweden will be made, where physical education as a subject has been compulsory in the various types of schools since the Grammar School Ordinance of 1820 and the Primary Education Code of 1842. However, due to the lack of rooms, equipment and teachers it was not until the early 20th century that all students were given instruction in the subject. Girls in particular were deprived of teaching (Annerstedt, 1991).

As in the UK, up until the 1940s, ‘Lingian gymnastics’, based on Ling’s ideas, was the dominant content in Swedish schools. However, at the beginning of the 20th century an increasing number of female physical education teachers were employed in schools, and they began adjusting the masculine Lingian gymnastics to the female students. The adaptation involved exercises with rhythm and grace and such exercises as were also considered to be in better harmony with women’s intellectual and emotional life (Carli, 2004).

Even if the curricula was gender neutral, the more detailed written instructions issued by the Swedish National Agency for Education were gender coded. The teaching thus successively came to be adapted to girls and boys respectively with different content and in different groups (Johansson, 2000). Boys and girls therefore stayed in separate classes until the beginning of the 1980s. It was also desirable that the students were taught by teachers of the same-sex affiliation (Annerstedt, 1991). Even the physical education teacher training was separate for men and women until 1977 (Larsson, 2003). The reasoning behind this gender separation was the belief that boys and girls are different in many ways, especially physically, and that it is therefore not reasonable that boys and girls should have physical education together.

One effect of sex-segregated groups in physical education has been different and gender-specific subject contents. In the 1950s it was stated: ‘gymnastics, rhythm, swimming, some ball games and individual sports seem to be suitable for girls, but not football, throwing heavy athletic equipment, or long distance running’ (SOU, 1951:25). There was a belief that, through physical education, boys wanted to become strong, rapid, flexible and show endurance, while girls wanted to exercise for grace, litness and rhythm. Consequently the aim was to construct two different bodies.
Co-education was introduced in Sweden in the 1980s at the same time as the subject changed its name from ‘gymnastics’ to ‘sport’. This might be seen as a paradox, as the notion until then had been that the teaching of sports was not suitable for girls. No reason was given, in the physical education syllabus, for the introduction of co-education. In an instruction from the Board of Education one year after the introduction of the new curriculum and syllabus it was stated: “This arrangement is seen as a means to level out sex-roles and it can be part of the school’s duty to work for equality between women and men” (Carli, 2004:205). The girls were to be given the same teaching as the boys, and since the name was changed, sports became the dominant element. The goal was no longer two different bodies but rather gender neutral (i.e., not gender specific) bodies.

In the present Swedish curriculum the needs and interests of every single student are supposed to guide the teacher and the content of the teaching (SOU, 1993). One of the main purposes of physical education and the goal-oriented schools in Sweden of today is to make it possible for all students to take part in the different activities on their own terms, that is, the teacher is to cater to the individual student’s needs. The goal is now to construct the individual body, not the gendered one.

2.2 Biological and Cultural differences

There are both biological differences (sex differences) and culturally created differences (gender differences) between boys and girls which affect attainment and attitudes towards physical education. Sex differences tend to be more influential during the secondary than the primary phase of physical education. Gender differences are significant at both primary and secondary phases of education. Primary aged pupils enter the education system with different experiences regarding engagement in physical activities and with strongly formed views regarding gender appropriate behaviour (Piotrowski, 2000). Similarly, in the case of secondary aged pupils, Scraton (1993) observed that by the age of 11, girls on average, do not start from an equal position to boys both in terms of physical skill and hand-eye coordination.

Biological differences between boys and girls from adolescence onwards generally have the effect of making boys taller, faster and physically stronger, on average, than girls. It would be wrong to ignore these biological differences between adolescent boys and girls in secondary school physical education on grounds of assumed ‘sameness’ between the sexes. To expect girls to compete against boys on equal terms in activities where strength, force, and power largely determine success would not only place girls, in general, at a disadvantage to
reach equivalent levels of attainment but, in contact sports, could make it unsafe for girls to participate on these terms (Piotrowski, 2000).

The recognition of biologically based differences between ‘average’ adolescent and post-adolescent boys and girls should also be tempered by an acknowledgement that there are wide differences within the sexes. Women, at the upper end of a continuum relating to physical characteristics of size, weight, speed, strength, force etc. are likely to be superior, in these qualities, to many men. Rather than segregating according to sex differences those activities in which strength, speed and physique are likely to determine outcomes, it might be more appropriate to rank sport-related activities according to height/weight/strength etc. Physically powerful women would then have the opportunity to compete safely with men of similar capacities on equal terms, other things being equal.

Piotrowski states (2000) that the phrase ‘other things being equal’ is highly significant in drawing attention to the fact that relevant differences between the sexes include culturally determined ‘gender differences’ as well as the biological determined sex differences. Men and women are unable to compete on equal terms if either sex has been disadvantaged by their cultural experiences in developing the kind of skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for successful participation in a particular activity. Early socialisation processes can advantage boys and disadvantage girls when they first enter school physical education. “The roots of inequality are laid early in life as boys are provided with more opportunities to develop self confidence and basic motor skills through play” (Piotrowski, 2000:29).

In addition to differences in opportunities to develop motor skills, differences in upbringing which encourage boys to develop masculine identities and girls to develop feminine identities may disadvantage girls form succeeding in many sports. Sports are sometimes described as ‘gendered’ because success in those contexts generally requires the display of characteristics, e.g. physical power, speed, strength, etc. which are more frequently associated with masculinity than femininity. The upbringing of girls is more likely to develop those characteristics traditionally associated with femininity such as supportiveness, kindness, responsiveness and caring. The upbringing of boys is more likely to develop those characteristics typically associated with masculinity such as aggression, physical power, competitiveness and dominance. This gives boys an advantage in those physical activities which predominantly require the display of qualities associated with masculinity rather than femininity for their success (Piotrowski, 2000).

The demand for equality of opportunity in physical education is not therefore a demand for recognition that people are all the same in a descriptive sense. There are
differences between individuals, including sex and gender differences, which may influence achievement in certain environments, such as physical education classrooms.

2.3 Masculinity

The past two decades have seen increasing recognition of the body’s significance in social processes and an expansion in research and writing on the sociology of the body. Featherstone and Turner (Featherstone & Turner, 1995) suggest that much of the contemporary interest in the body and issues of embodiment have been driven by radical French feminist literature. Indeed the body’s centrality to the formation of gender identity has guided much feminist research (Bordo, 1989) where sport has been identified as an important site for the construction of gender and the embodiment of unequal gender relations. This focus on the body is also beginning to guide research on the construction of masculinity.

The work of anthropologists such as Mauss (1973) and Bourdieu (1977) suggests that the body exists in both nature and culture simultaneously. Bourdieu, in particular, argues that not only is culture imprinted on the body but that it is the central means through which culture is produced and reproduced. Mauss (1973) has shown that even the most elementary movements such as the ways we walk, sit, stand and dress are social and cultural practices. The shape, size and deportment of bodies, the ways they are positioned in relation to each other and their occupation of space all communicate powerful social and cultural meaning. As Bourdieu (1977) contends, such bodily discourse operates implicitly at subconscious levels to mark the bearer with cultural and social meaning that is constantly and unconsciously communicated.

Research and writing on the social construction of masculinity through sport and physical education has highlighted the ways in which gender is socially constructed through corporeal engagement in social and cultural practice. Connell (1995) suggest that any analysis of masculinity needs to account for the multiple forms that it can assume. Connell argues that masculinities assume different forms that are shaped by their different class and culture specific contexts. Drawing on Gramsci’s (1971) notion of cultural hegemony Connell contends that certain forms of masculinity, typically connected to ideals of dominance, force and physical competence, assume positions of hegemony to operate as uncontested, common sense notions of what it is to be a man. The hegemony of such forms, however, is never complete and must constantly undergo change and modification to maintain its dominance. Whitson (1990) argues that hegemonic ideals of toughness and dominance must also be seen as constructs that have developed over time within particular social and cultural fields. The
processes through which boys learn to become particular types of men must thus be viewed as collective patterns of empowerment and expectations of physical domination developed over generations of boys.

In studies by Brännberg (1998) and Fundberg (2003) it was investigated how sport, specifically handball and soccer, can contribute to creating male norms, images of men and typical male views. Both authors argue that these team sports and the context in which they are played serve as a kind of “free-zone” for male behaviours which in the wider society are no longer seen as acceptable. A type of masculinity that is characterised by sexism and homophobia. In addition, these particular images of masculinity are then often used and developed further by media. Both studies conclude by stating that sport, especially team sports, contributes to a view of masculinity that in the context of sport is then considered the norm.

Furthermore, Piotrowski (2000) argues that mixed sex grouping may encourage intensified displays of masculinity and femininity as adolescent boys and girls recognise that judgements as to their attractiveness may be based on these qualities. This can cause girls to disengage from sport as the display of feminine qualities, unlike the display of masculine qualities, are not congruent with sporting prowess and, indeed, are likely to require disassociation from ‘tomboyish’ behaviour. Girls who do not conform with dominant definitions of femininity may find their female status questioned and find themselves the target of disparaging labels such as ‘lesbian’ (Scraton, 1993).

Similarly, boys who fail to display the qualities associated with dominant forms of masculinity may find themselves referred to as wimps, cissies or gays. For example, dance is less associated with masculine traits and is more closely associated with typical feminine qualities such as sensitivity, expression, grace and poise. It is therefore not surprising that girls generally are found to have a good control of body management skills in gymnastics and dance, while boys in these activities are frequently found to be poor or undeveloped (Piotrowski, 2000).

Mixed sex groupings may intensify these differences as adolescent pupils look to gain acceptance through conformity with dominant definitions of masculinity and femininity. However, access to a different curriculum for boys and girls can reinforce rather than challenge gender stereotypes and existing patriarchal relations in wider society. These gender stereotypes may limit the opportunities of women (and of some men who do not conform closely to traditional conceptions of masculinity). For example, the inferior status of women’s sports may reinforce the idea that women are naturally weaker and inferior to men and may
appear to confirm that having fewer women in positions of power in wider society follows the natural order of things. In contrast, in the coeducational adventure environments studied by Humberstone (1990), where boys and girls where often equally inexperienced in activities, the girls were often found to outshine the boys and in doing so able to challenge the assumption that boys are the stronger sex. The co-educational adventure environments that Humberstone studied were found to encourage: collaboration between boys and girls; greater understanding and respect from boys of not only girls, but of other boys and themselves; behaviours demonstrating collaboration, responsibility and group support rather than aggressive, competitive individualism; and boys to rethink their views about girls’ physical potentials and competencies (Humberstone, 1990).

2.4 Body Image

Body image is a multidimensional phenomenon that has been variously defined and is a construct that has received substantial research attention. Fisher (1990) defined body image as the psychological experience of one’s own body while Davis (1997) stated that body image is the manner in which we view our body and the mental representation we have of it. Previous research has found that a positive body image is significantly related to greater selfesteem, more positive self concept, lower incidence of depression, lower levels of body fatness and lesser likelihood of the development of eating disorders (Duncan, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill & Jones, 2004).

Children have reported considerable body image concerns (McCabe, Ricciardelli & Finemore, 2002). This is important because body image disturbance among children might be a risk factor for the later development of eating disorders. These concerns may also differ depending on maturational status in children. McCabe et al. (2002) have reported that, although many children are dissatisfied with some aspect of their body, such tendencies may be exacerbated by the process of puberty. This is particularly so in girls where the changes associated with puberty may take them further away from the societal ideal female body. In boys, the increased muscle mass that occurs with puberty may actually enhance body image due to greater congruence with the societal ideal male body (McCabe et al., 2002). Furthermore, at least among girls, body image problems are associated with the use of weight control techniques including dieting and compulsive exercising, which may have short- and long-term effects including increasing the risk of development of eating disorders and obesity (McCabe et al., 2002).
Body image may also be influential in terms of an individual’s physical activity behaviour. This is important as participation in regular physical activity has been shown to positively influence a number of chronic diseases in adults and children including coronary heart disease, hypertension and depression, hip fracture, obesity and certain types of cancer (Duncan et al., 2004). Research has indicated that children may not be participating in sufficient physical activity for health benefit and this is of concern as physical activity habits developed in childhood may track into adult life (Duncan et al., 2004). Thus, the need to promote a positive image of one’s own body and establish physical activity habits in childhood may be of importance to children’s future health. Duncan et al. (2004) have also suggested that development of a positive body image may lead to lifestyle changes including increased physical activity participation, exercise motivation and development of greater self-confidence in the physical domain. This may be particularly relevant to physical education as it may foster a sense of value for the body and could therefore help enhance body image.

2.5 Equality of Opportunity

Sex segregation in physical education would seem inappropriate as a long term strategy for equal opportunities since it “reflects and maintains male hegemony and does little to create greater understanding between the sexes” (Humberstone, 1990:203). However, coeducational grouping for physical education is not an instant solution to the provision of equal opportunities as there are significant sex and gender differences (as mentioned above) that should not be ignored in the quest for equality of opportunity in physical education. While it may be appropriate for equal access to a common curriculum in physical education for boys and girls to remain the long term goal, the means of reaching this goal may require short term strategies which “enable the traditional base of gender imbalance to be redressed” (Scraton, 1993:152). For example, it may be necessary to assess the physical skill levels of all pupils entering schools and to implement programmes for any pupils (male or female) who exhibit a motor skills deficit.

The question is, how can the grouping process be handled with accuracy and sensitivity so that the physical learning needs of individuals can be addressed most effectively? As pointed out by Piotrowski (2000), the issue of equality of opportunity in physical education is related to appropriate differentiation of curricular provision. This was also acknowledged by Vickerman (1997:139) who stated “If you are to respond to the challenge of providing equality of opportunity for all pupils, whilst catering for diversity of need, you have to plan for differentiated teaching and learning”.

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Differentiated provision in physical education need not imply automatic allocation of boys and girls to separate groups or the automatic allocation of separate tasks for boys and girls. It may be that in some cases it is more appropriate to run separate experienced and beginner curricular and extra-curricular sessions which include opportunities for participation by both boys and girls. Similarly, in the setting of tasks within classes, it may not be appropriate, as pointed out by Harris (1993), for girls to be asked to perform ‘easy’ versions of exercises, such as ‘girls’ press ups’ while boys are asked to perform the ‘full’ or ‘real’ version. Instead, Harris recommended setting tasks which cater for individual differences and which allow pupils to answer at their own level. This selection of tasks, Harris identified:

is not a simple-gender-related issue; an individual’s ability to perform exercises is dependent on many personal factors such as physique, stage of maturation, and appropriate exercise training. Many girls can adequately perform ‘harder’ exercise alternatives and many boys would benefit from working through exercise progressions rather than being forced to tackle inappropriate exercises.

(Harris, 1993:35)

Vickerman (1997) suggested that in seeking to provide for equal opportunities in physical education, teachers should plan initially for complete inclusion of boys and girls, of pupils with special needs and of pupils from other ethnic minorities. From this point teachers may then “work backwards towards the substation and segregation of activities if necessary for the purpose of adequately addressing pupil differences and ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to enjoy, learn and succeed in physical education (Vickerman, 1997:145).

What is important to remember is that for equality of opportunity to be an effective principle in physical education, does not mean that all pupils should reach the same level. This is both unrealistic and fails to offer equal opportunities to gifted and more able pupils who are equally entitled to develop their potential as part of a programme of physical education, which implies that it is a programme of learning and not of social engineering (Penney, 2002). If all pupils are to have the opportunity to develop their potential then it is important that any form of discrimination that might act as barriers to the development of the physical potential of groups of pupils are removed, i.e., practices which deny access to particular groups to develop their potential in particular physical activities, e.g. limited access for boys to develop potential in dance. However, even in a situation where all pupils have an entitlement to a physical education programme, all have access to a common curriculum, and the measurable progress of all groups of pupils is comparable, a genuine realisation of equality of opportunity may still fail without recognition of the need to address issues of equity. A commitment to equity seeks to prevent physical education programmes from
functioning to confirm and reinforce patterns of social injustice and inequality in wider society (Penney, 2002).

Coakley (1994) argued that real equity lies in developing alternative sport forms which are constructed according to the values and experiences of women and of men who do not see themselves in terms of dominant definitions of masculinity. Some boys, as suggested by Hargreaves (1994:154), “hate the images and conventions of masculine sport”. Thus, gender equity is not just a female issue. It requires greater access for men to participate in forms of sports that are not based on dominant definitions of masculinity. Coakley (1994:237) believed that “gender equity will never be complete or lasting unless there are changes in the way people think about masculinity and femininity and unless there are changes in the way sports and physical education programmes are organised and played”. Piotrowski (2000) suggests that changes to physical education that could occur in the interests of gender equity include the following:

- Pupils having increased opportunities to participate in less gendered physical activities, such as the kind of more neutrally gendered outdoor and adventure activities studied by Humberstone. These activities were found to challenge gender stereotypes, encourage greater mutual respect from both sexes, and promote co-operative relations between the sexes.

- Pupils having greater access to physical activities which challenge traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity (for example, greater access to dance for boys; rugby for females).

- Greater awareness from physical education teachers to encourage alternative definitions of masculinity and femininity and to oppose behaviors which denigrate males and females who do not conform to traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity. For example, teachers should oppose references to males who do not excel in sports or who excel in dance as whores. Teachers should avoid reinforcing conceptions of females as weak, for example by asking for strong boys to carry the apparatus. Physical education teachers can also lessen the gendered nature of sports through discouraging references which frequently associate sport with masculinity. For example, the association of sports with boys proving themselves to be men can be dropped. Similarly, teachers should avoid encouraging such views as boys throwing correctly ‘throw like a boy’, boys throwing incorrectly, ‘throw like a girl’.

(Piotrowski, 2000:27)
3. Methodology

To discover whether boys prefer single-sex or co-educational physical education and how their participation and experiences differ between the two different gender groupings, boys from eight physical education classes were given a questionnaire (see Appendix) on the subject of single-sex and co-educational physical education. The school, an upper-secondary school, is located in the southern part of Sweden where most students attend various vocational programmes, such as carpentry, woodcrafts and hairdressing. A mixture of single-sex (four classes) and co-educational physical education classes (four classes) was used. The students consisted of a mix of year 1 – year 3 so aged between 16 and 19. The number of male respondents was 103. As the questionnaires were completed in school under the control of either the researcher or a teacher the response rate was 100%, with only six papers being rejected as incomplete (97 filled in).

The questionnaire was divided into five different themes dealing with: background of the students, the students’ overall perception of physical education and whether it should be taught in mixed or separate gender groups, what the students believe the content of physical education should be, spare time activity habits, and body image and masculinity. The questions were formulated using earlier studies, the literature and the research questions. Using questions from previous studies in which the ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ has been affirmed increases the validity of the study and enables comparisons to be made (Ejlertsson, 2005).

The definitions of reliability and validity in quantitative research reveal two strands: Firstly, with regards to reliability, whether the result is replicable. Secondly, with regards to validity, whether the means of measurement are accurate and whether they are actually measuring what they are intended to measure. Researchers who use quantitative research employ experimental methods and quantitative measures to test hypothetical generalisations (Hoepfl, 1997). Thus, quantitative research allows the researcher to familiarise him/herself with the problem or concept to be studied, and perhaps generate hypotheses to be tested (Golafshani, 2003).

However, one of the disadvantages of using questionnaires is that it is not possible for the researcher to ask follow-up questions, hence limiting the insights to be gained in to the students’ views on the various questions. Therefore, the responses to the questionnaires (quantitative) are used in this study together with the response to focus group interviews (qualitative). This also in an attempt to deal with another issue associated with using
questionnaires, which is also worth pointing out, namely to what extent the students are truthful and honest in their answers (Patton, 2002).

The focus group interviews were carried out in all the eight classes used for the questionnaires. Groups of four boys, all volunteers from those who had filled in the questionnaires, were interviewed by the author. Many boys volunteered to be part of the research, and the researcher, with the help of teachers who knew the boys, chose a sample that matched the make-up of the original classes. Care was taken to include students from ethnic minorities, varying economic backgrounds and academic abilities in proportion to their presence in the separate physical education classes. Permission was given by the principal of the school to interview the boys at a convenient time on the understanding that anything discussed with the researcher would be confidential and the boys could talk freely.

Morgan (1988:12) states that the hallmark of a focus group is “the explicit use of the group’s interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in the group”. In order to ascertain the feelings of boys regarding their experiences of physical education it was necessary to collect qualitative data. No scribe was used as this could have inhibited discussion but the conversation was taped and later transcribed. The researcher asked questions and then allowed the boys to talk and exchange ideas with each other, merely providing prompts when needed, so as not to overly influence responses.

Watts and Ebbutt (1987) claim that focus groups are more likely to produce critical comments than when individuals are interviewed; they encourage the exploration of complex motivations and behaviours. This is because the nature of the groups makes the members concentrate on one another, not the researcher. The questions asked were open ended or merely introduced topics for discussion. One of the advantages of this is that it is then possible for the interviewer to formulate follow-up questions throughout the interview (Bryman, 2001). All the groups were asked to address the same questions and/or topics which all relate to the various themes in the questionnaire:

- Whether they prefer single-sex or co-educational physical education? And if there are times when it is better to be separated from or together with the girls at physical education?
- Are there any other ways of grouping students in physical education instead of by gender?
- Are certain activities more for boys and/or girls? If so, what are the possibilities and consequences of someone showing an interest in an activity typically associated with the other gender?
• What biological differences are there between boys and girls? How do they affect participation in physical education? And what differences are there within each gender?
• What constitutes being masculine? How come you have this view of masculinity?
• What does the ideal body of a man look like?

Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalisation of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997). The concepts of reliability and validity are, thus, viewed differently by qualitative researchers who strongly consider these concepts defined in quantitative terms as inadequate. In other words, these terms as defined in quantitative terms may not apply to the qualitative research paradigm. The question of replicability in the results does not concern them, but precision, credibility, and transferability provide the lenses of evaluating the findings of a qualitative research (Hoepfl, 1997). In this context, the two research approaches or perspectives are essentially different paradigms.

A good qualitative study can help us “understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing” (Eisner, 1991:58). This relates to the concept of a good quality research when reliability is a concept to evaluate quality in quantitative study with a “purpose of explaining” while quality concept in qualitative study has the purpose of “generating understanding” (Stenbacka, 2001:551). The difference in purposes of evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and quantitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research. According to Stenbacka, (2001) “the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research. If a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good” (p. 552).

The concept of validity is described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. This concept is not a single, fixed or universal concept, but “rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects” (Winter, 2000:1). Although some qualitative researchers have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, they have realised the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research. As a result, many researchers have developed their own concepts of validity and have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Winter, 2000).

It is also through this association that the way to achieve validity and reliability of a research get affected from the qualitative researchers’ perspectives which are to eliminate bias
and increase the researcher’s truthfulness of a proposition about some social phenomenon using ‘triangulation’ (Patton, 2002). Triangulation is a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. Patton (2002) advocates the use of triangulation by stating “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches” (p. 247). Thus, by employing both a quantitative and qualitative approach in this study, the validity and reliability is strengthened.

Furthermore, when conducting research there are in general four ethical criteria, which the researcher needs to take into consideration (Vetenskapsrådet, 2008). The first criterion deals with informing the participants of the purpose of the study which they are taking part in. Secondly, participation in the study should be voluntary and if any of the participants are under the age of 15 consent forms need to be obtained from their parents. Thirdly, the researcher has to guarantee the participants confidentiality to the extent which it is possible. The last criterion asserts that the information obtained from the participants should only be used for research purposes (Vetenskapsrådet, 2008).

In this study the participants were well informed of the study’s purpose, however, no consent forms were obtained since all the participants were aged 15 or older. The participants were also told that taking part in the study was not compulsory. They were also assured full anonymity and confidentiality and that the responses from the questionnaires and interviews would be destroyed once the researcher had finished analysing them.

The responses from the focus group interviews and the questionnaires were collated and analysed based upon issues and themes which were identified. By far the richest data came from the focus group interviews as the boys had time to discuss and respond in detail to the questions asked. However, many questionnaires included ideas on how physical education in school could be improved that are pertinent to this paper. The responses attained from the questionnaires echoed the findings from the focus group interviews.
4. Results & Analysis

In this section the results of the questionnaires and the focus group interviews are presented, in form of tables and examples. Not all the questions from the questionnaires and the interviews were included, but only those in which interesting themes emerged relating to the particular focus of this study. Additionally, the data is presented either with the boys as one group or according to the two different gender groupings, depending on the particular focus of the subsequent analysis. The data is presented in five different categories and analysed accordingly.

4.1 Background Data

Table 1 displays the background data on the students (n = 97) participating in the study. The majority of the boys were between 16- and 17-years old and in their first year of upper-secondary school. Additionally, most students attended a vocational programme (automotive and construction) whereas a smaller group of students belonged to a social science programme. The participating students were mainly born in Sweden and did not confess to any particular religion. Table 1 also shows that most of the participating students’ parents had not continued their schooling after upper-secondary school and gone on to university studies.

Table 1. Background data on the students participating in the study (n = 97)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Age</th>
<th>16</th>
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<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
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<th>3</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
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<th>Construction</th>
<th>Social Science</th>
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<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
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<th>Kosovo</th>
<th>Bosnia</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<th>Islam</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>112</td>
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The fact that most of the boys in this study were still in their first year of upper-secondary school can have influenced the results of this study in terms of their perception of the physical education subject since, as pointed out by Larsson (2007b), boys tend to enjoy physical education in school further up the years compared to the girls. If the study had instead consisted of a majority of boys from year 3, the results could thus have been quite different. Similarly, it is also worth noting that virtually all the students were born in Sweden, did not have any strong religious beliefs and had parents who had not studied at a university level. This also affects the generalisations that can be made from the results of this study.

4.2 Overall Perception and the Issue of Single-sex vs Co-Educational Physical Education

From Figure 1 it is possible to identify that more boys from the co-educational classes find physical education fun compared to the boys-only classes. A further examination of the distribution of the numbers for the two different groups reveals that in the boys-only classes there seem to be one group of boys who are really enjoying their physical education classes but also another group, similar in size, which is clearly not that pleased.

![Figure 1. Boys overall perception of physical education](image)

Figure 2 shows that the majority of boys in both groups think that physical education should be taught together with the girls. However, this majority is somewhat greater in the boys-only classes compared to the co-educational classes. Nevertheless, this gives support to previous research (Tannehill, Romar, O'Sullivan, England & Rosenberg, 1994) which has shown that most students believe the benefits of participating in a gender mixed environment outweigh those derived from a gender separate format.
When asked to explain why they believe that boys and girls should be taught together most of the boys claimed that it is more fun that way and some boys even fail to see the point at all with separating boys and girls, and posed questions such as “why shouldn’t we have physical education together with girls?” Other explanations included more socially orientated interests such as getting to know the girls better and that it is nice to have the girls there “to look at”. Some boys also said that the mere presence of girls means that they work harder and better since they want to impress the girls by their skill and performance. This is consistent with a study by Lirgg (1994) who found that boys perceive themselves to be more involved in co-educational classes. The strong male support for mixed gender groupings, which was also evident in this study, has lead some authors to conclude that it is an indication that boys may derive more perceived benefits than girls in a co-educational physical education setting (Hill & Cleven, 2005).

Another reason why some boys found it useful to include the girls is demonstrated by this boy who said that:

1. When we play together with the girls it does not get as rough and competitive as when there are only boys in the class (author’s translation).

Hence, one explanation of why the boys in the mixed classes are overall happier with their physical education may be the creation of a less competitive and physically threatening environment when the girls are also present. This supports Lirgg’s (1994) finding that boys in general view co-educational classes as more cooperative than competitive in nature. Therefore, for those boys who do not feel that they are as capable and/or competitive as the dominant boys in the group, mixing with the girls might ease some of the pressure to perform.
and win. Increased opportunities to participate and become involved may allow this group of boys to develop greater skills proficiency and thus a more positive attitude towards the physical education subject.

Those boys who do not want the girls to be part of their physical education classes mainly stated that the quality of the lesson is lowered by their presence, where the main argument seemed to be the biological differences between the two sexes. One of the boys expressed this by saying:

(2) Boys are overall better and stronger than the girls (author’s translation).

The most widespread explanation as to why some of the boys prefer the two genders to be separated seemed to be the belief that boys and girls are different in many ways, especially physically, and that it is therefore not reasonable that boys and girls should have physical education together most of the time. The teaching, thus, has to be adapted to girls and boys respectively with different content and in different groups.

It also appeared as if many of the boys believed that boys have quite different needs to girls. The boys seemed to think, as Randall (1961) argued, that there is considerable prestige and social status to be gained through the physical advantage in competitive games, which boys greater height, weight and strength compared to the girls gives them. Girls, on the other hand, the boys argued in the interviews, therefore do not like competitive team contact sports since they have little to gain from such activities and instead are more concerned with their appearance and socialising. This view that boys have different needs compared to girls and that this is demonstrated by what activities that they want to engage in during physical education classes can be linked to Connell’s (1995) notion of cultural hegemony. Connell argues that the ideals of physical competence, force and dominance promoted among adolescent boys, assume positions of hegemony to function as unchallenged, common sense notions of masculinity and what it is to be a man.

As stated by Piotrowski (2000), biological differences between boys and girls from adolescence onwards generally have the effect of making boys taller, faster and physically stronger, on average, than girls. Consequently, it would be wrong to ignore these biological differences between adolescent boys and girls in secondary school physical education on grounds of assumed ‘sameness’ between the sexes. Having girls competing against boys in activities which put emphasis on strength, force, and power would not only place girls, in general, at a disadvantage but, in contact team sports, could even make it unsafe for girls.
However, the recognition of biologically based differences between adolescent and boys and girls should also include an acknowledgement that there are wide differences within the sexes. Some girls are can be superior in size, weight, speed, force etc to many of the boys. This can then become rather problematic for some boys in a co-educational setting as one of the boys said during an interview.

(3) I prefer playing games with just boys, because if we play together with the girls and some of the girls are much better than me, I feel ashamed and embarrassed. And then the other boys laugh at you (author’s translation).

The intensified displays of masculinity and femininity that mixed sex groupings encourages can, thus, become problematic for those boys and girls who fail to or who are not able to conform with the dominant definitions of masculinity and femininity (Piotrowski, 2000). However, this also means that the kind of girls mentioned in the example above are not that common since girls usually disengage from sport as the display of feminine qualities, unlike the display of masculine qualities, are not typically associated with sporting prowess. Girls who do conform to the qualities more associated with masculinity therefore find their female status questioned and their behaviour considered as ‘tomboyish’. Nevertheless, this highlights one of the disadvantages with co-educational groupings, namely that it might actually reinforce, rather than challenge, current stereotypical views on masculinity and femininity.

Figure 3 demonstrates that a significant number of the boys from the co-educational classes expressed a desire to sometimes have classes with only boys whereas in the boys-only classes there were almost an equal number of boys for and against this. A similar pattern can be identified in Figure 4 where the boys from the mixed classes mainly believed that there are times when boys and girls should be mixed. In the boys-only classes, however, there were more boys who believed that there is never a need to have mixed-gender classes.

![Figure 3. Are there times when it is better if boys are by themselves?](image-url)
Figure 4. Are there times when boys and girls should be mixed?

It is especially soccer and other team sports that got mentioned when the boys were asked what type of activities they do not want the girls to be part of. Many of the boys seemed to be of the opinion that as soon as they want to do something ‘properly’, meaning playing tougher and more ‘seriously’, it is better if there are only boys in the class. Some of the boys gave the explanation that the reason for this is that girls are not that good at team sports, that they are weaker and slower, and that it is therefore more fun without them. However, those boys who did not see that there are times when boys should be by themselves said that it is always better and more fun if the girls are present, regardless if they are playing team sports or doing some other activity. One of the interviewed boys elaborated:

(4) I do not understand why we should be separated from the girls in physical education when this is not case in any of the other school subjects and in “real life”? (author’s translation)

As for the kind of activities that the boys believed should be done together with the girls, the majority of boys answered dance. When asked to explain why, the most frequent answer was “it is much nicer to hold a girl’s hand when dancing than holding hands with another boy”. When going to the swimming pool was another occasion when the boys thought that mixing the two genders is a good idea. The fact that boys often call for aquatic activities, such as swimming, to be taught in a co-educational setting was also observed in a study by Hill and Cleven (2005). Those boys who did not believe that there are any occasions when mixing would be beneficial still to some extent acknowledged that when dance was on the schedule it “could be nice to have some girls there”.

These results give support to previous research which has emphasised the fact that physical education is a subject in school where the ‘heterosexual game’ between boys and
girls becomes very apparent. Larsson (2007b) claims that a common argument for the use of single-sex physical education is that the girls should not have to be constantly gazed upon by the boys, since studies, by for instance Lirgg (1994), have shown that girls are sensitive to revealing their bodies and are generally less comfortable with their body images than boys.

When interviewing some of the boys and talking about whether there are times when it is better to be separated from or together with the girls at physical education, a view that seemed to be common among the boys was that when the activities are more socially orientated it is useful if the girls are also there but when the activities get more physically challenging it is better if there are only boys in the group. Hannon and Ratcliffe (2007) argue that teachers may use this kind of information from the students to construct co-educational physical education classes so that mixed gender activities are used for socialisation purposes but separate gender grouping strategies are used to increase movement opportunities during certain types of activities. For instance, teachers may maintain a co-educational setting for warm-ups and conditioning activities then chose to separate male and female students to provide a more effective learning environment during game play in team contact sports, such as soccer (Hannon & Ratcliffe, 2007).

However, the shortfall of this argument can be found in its sole focus on arguing that boys and girls have different wishes and needs in relation to physical education. Notably absent is the recognition of different wishes and needs amongst either girls or boys. The image legitimated and reinforced is of two homogeneous groups aligned with stereotypical perceptions of activities and behaviours of which they are capable and in which they should be engaging. This brings up the question whether there are any other ways of grouping students in physical education instead of by gender? As stated by Vickerman (1997) the question is at hand is not about whether boys and girls should be taught together or not, but more importantly about how the grouping process be handled with accuracy and sensitivity so that the physical learning needs of each individual can be addressed most effectively.

This view that the needs and interests of every single student are supposed to guide the teacher and the content of the teaching is also something that the present Swedish curriculum emphasises (SOU, 1993). The curriculum states that one of the main purposes of physical education and the goal-orientated school in Sweden of today is to make it possible for all students to take part in the different activities on their own terms, that is, the teacher is to cater to the individual student’s needs.
When the boys addressed this issue in the interviews there seemed to be a wish among them that the physical education classes could perhaps be structured in a different way. One of the boys said:

(5) I do not know why there is so much talk about having classes with either boys and girls together or separate. I think that it would be better if both boys and girls could choose what activities to take part in, and that way everyone would feel more motivated to do well and have fun. Then it would not matter so much if the group consisted of just boys and girls or a mix (author’s translation).

How can teachers structure their physical education classes so that it incorporates the notion of equality of opportunity? What does the demand of attempting to stop the reproduction of traditional gender differences in the curriculum really mean? As shown in the example above differentiated provision in physical education does not necessarily have to mean that boys and girls should be placed in separate groups or the automatic allocation of separate tasks for boys and girls.

Larsson and Redelius (2004) state that separating boys and girls in physical education should only be seen as a temporary solution. They argue that studies have shown that instead of working with gender groups maybe teachers need to work with groups organised according to other criteria such as previous experience, aptitude or interest. Thus, an alternative may be that in some cases it is more appropriate to run separate experienced and beginner ‘classes’ which include opportunities for participation by both boys and girls, and setting tasks which cater for individual differences and allow pupils to participate at their own level. This format will allow both males and females to participate in an environment that provides an appropriate level of challenge. In addition, Hill and Cleven (2005) suggest that in order to provide students some variety in activities, teachers, whenever possible, should consider allowing students from various classes to select classes taught by other teachers during that class period. This brings us to the question what the boys thought about what the content of physical education should be.

4.3 Content of Physical Education

Table 2 displays the type of activities that the boys mainly want to engage in during their physical education classes. Team sports such as soccer and volleyball were very popular, but also going to the gym. Figure 5 shows the boys’ response to the question whether they get to do the kind of activities they like during their physical education classes. A greater percentage of the boys in the mixed classes felt that this is the case compared to the boys from the boys-only classes.
Table 2. Five most wanted activities in physical education among all the boys

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Soccer</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Floorball</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Volleyball</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gym</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Basketball</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Do you feel like you get to do the kind of activities you want to in class?

Overall, the boys who were not happy with the activities during class seemed to think that the teacher spent too much time on “silly games” and that they do not get to play enough “proper” and tougher games such as soccer. One boy expressed his frustration this way:

(6) We only get to do all these kind of “girl activities” (author’s translation).

This apparent division of activities that are more for boys or for girls can possibly be traced back to when the different types of gymnastics made up most of physical education, where each version, as Kirk (2002) points out, had strong gender associations. When girls engaged in these forms of gymnastics focus was on the girls being graceful, agile and flexible, whereas the boys were meant to demonstrate strong and powerful movements. In addition, girls and boys often did often not perform the same type of activity, for instance, girls would use apparatus such as symmetric bars and the beam when instead the boys used the rings, pommel and parallel bars. It therefore seems as these stereotypical views about the behaviours and
activities that are appropriate for girls and boys respectively still today very much influences the practices that make up physical education. In statements, such as the one above (6), singular images of femininity and masculinity are made very apparent. As Coakley (1994) asserts working with gender equity is about challenging and changing the way people think about masculinity and femininity. He even goes so far to suggest that real equity can only be reached by developing alternative sport forms which are not constructed according to the dominant definitions of masculinity.

However, there was also a number of boys, especially in the boys-only classes, who believed that the lessons should consist of less team sports and more of other activities, such as gymnastics and various forms of fitness training (i.e. aerobics), since they do not like how games and activities often get overly aggressive and competitive. In fact, there seemed to be a strong disbelief in what the physical education subject constitutes, and the forms of engagement that it requires from the students and the criteria by which success should be measured. These boys felt that in order to be successful in the subject they need to perform in a masculinised way, and furthermore, a particular masculinised way. This is, as Kirk (2002) points out, a very serious issue, and something that requires close and critical scrutiny, since it impacts on both the quality and experiences of physical education for all boys. Thus, it is important to remember that some boys, as suggested by Hargreaves (1994) do not want to be associated with the dominant definitions of masculinity. Gender equity is therefore not just a female issue. It requires greater access for men to participate in forms of sport, games and activities that are not based on dominant definitions of masculinity.

Some boys asked for more dance to be included in the physical education classes. One boy said:

(7) I wish we had more classes with dance. I like dance, it is fun and I think a lot of the other boys like dance too, but do not want to admit it (author’s translation).

A probable explanation to the fact that some of the boys do not want to admit that they actually like certain activities such as dance, may be that dance is less associated with dominant forms of masculinity and is more closely associated with typical feminine qualities such as sensitivity, expression, and grace. By associating themselves with these qualities they risk finding themselves being referred to as ‘wimps’, or even ‘gays’. As pointed out by Piotrowski (2000) it is therefore not surprising that boys generally are frequently found to be poor or undeveloped in these activities.
When asked if they believe that certain activities in physical education are liked better by boys and girls the most common answer was that boys like team sports, such as soccer, and going to the gym, whereas girls like dancing or going for walks. As an explanation to this many of the boys suggested that it is because boys like to compete and get stronger, and that girls focus more on how they look and spending time with their friends. Some also claimed that boys like team sports and girls like individual sports, since boys are better at team sports than girls.

Larsson (2007b) argues that the debate about single-sex or co-educational physical education accentuates the view of boys and girls as homogeneous groups, who in turn like different type of activities. He claims that views, such as girls like dancing and aerobics but do not like to compete, whereas boys like team sports and competing, are used as arguments for why girls and boys should not have physical education together and often leads to boys and girls doing different activities even within a co-educational setting. However, the results presented above indicate that the image of boys as homogeneous group who all like team sports and competing needs to be reconsidered.

If all students are to have the opportunity to develop their potential then it is important that any form of discrimination that might act as barriers to the development of the physical potential of groups of students are removed, i.e., practices which deny access to particular groups to develop their potential in particular physical activities, such as limited access for boys to develop potential in dance. One thing that also needs to be mentioned in this context is the influence of the teacher’s own perceptions of various activities. Lundvall and Meckbach (2007), for instance, refer to the example of a physical education teacher student who in an essay wrote “To me dance is just a mating ritual and creates anxiety. Why should I expose myself and my students to this?” (p. 108) (author’s translation).

In the case of student teachers, Flintoff (2005) highlighted concerns regarding the relative lack of attention given to reflection on the issue of equality of opportunity in physical education in initial teacher education. A possible danger of insufficient reflection on the principle of equality of opportunity by both student and qualified teachers, as pointed out by Evans, Davies and Penny (1997:44) “is that this may lead teachers to revert back to the methods that they experienced when they were young, relying on practices that were not always educational or conducive to the promotion of equity in physical education”. This is likely to maintain the status quo and to lead to what Evans et al. (1997) described as a “reification of existing hierarchies” (p. 7).
In addition, as pointed out by Lundvall and Meckbach (2007b), most physical education teacher students have themselves been successful in the physical education subject but also in organised sport outside of school. A study by Meckbach, Wahlgren and Wedman (2006) showed that most future physical education teachers believe to be highly confident with teaching team sports but not at all confident with teaching gymnastics and dance. This then influences what activities physical education teachers chooses to include in their classes. These issues must not be ignored but instead brought out into the light and scrutinized, in order to better our understanding of how the teacher’s own values and beliefs affects the type of activities that the students get to engage in during their physical education classes.

As stated Greenwood, Stilwell and Byars (2001) physical education should be viewed not only as preparation for future life, but also as an important part of the present life of the student. As a result, the movement experiences should not be unpleasant so as to be endured for some predicted outcome, but rather should be satisfying experiences independent of their long-term effects. From this perspective, the immediate quality of the movement experiences provided for the students should be a criterion for the selection of activities within the physical education curriculum. Consequently, as suggested by Larsson and Redelius (2004), it might be more fruitful to divide the students into groups according to, for instance, interest rather than by gender.

Additionally, as pointed out by Humberstone (1990), there is great potential in using outdoor education to create various co-educational adventure environments, where boys and girls are often equally inexperienced and that has been found to encourage collaboration between boys and girls, and greater understanding and respect from boys of not only girls, but of other boys and themselves. In addition, these co-educational adventure environments have been found to promote behaviours demonstrating collaboration, responsibility and group support rather than aggressive competitive individualism. The fact that girls have also been shown to outshine boys in these environments forces boys to rethink their views about girls’ physical potentials and competencies.

4.4 Spare Time Activities

Figure 6 demonstrates the spare time physical activity levels of the boys participating in this study. The data reveals that the majority of boys are very physical active in their spare time, and many of the boys compete on a regular basis in various sports. Table 3 displays the boys’ answers on the question of what their motives for exercising in their spare time are. Most boys appeared to regard physical activities in their spare time as a way of improving their
strength and stamina, but also as a chance to take part in competitions. Enhancing their body image by, for instance, looking fitter is also important. It seemed as if the non-competitive aspects of physical activity, such as spending time with friends, relaxing, or being active just because it is good for you, were of lesser importance to these boys.

![Pie chart showing spare time physical activity levels of the participating boys](image)

**Figure 6. Spare time physical activity levels of the participating boys**

**Table 3. Motives for exercising (more than one alternative was possible)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To look fit</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because it is good for you</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To relax</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a nicer body</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To spend time with friends</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get stronger and better stamina</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compete and be successful</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One aspect that was searched for in the analysis of this data was whether any differences in participation and views on spare time physical activities between socioeconomic groups could be identified. This to test Duncan, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill and Jones’s (2004) hypothesis that low socioeconomic status individuals are less likely to participate in appropriate physical activity for health, since they have less regard for their own health and see the body in a more instrumental way. Conversely, high socioeconomic status individuals tend to try to increase their acquisition of physical capital by greater participation in health-enhancing physical...
activity. However, no significant differences could be identified neither for physical activity levels or motives for exercising. This can be due to the limited amount of data available to this study, thus future investigations need to include a larger sample consisting of participants from a wide range of socioeconomic status groups.

In figure 7 the boys’ views on whether boys and girls take part in different type of activities in their spare time are presented. A similar pattern can be identified in the two groups, with the majority of boys stating that boys and girls do not generally choose the same type of spare time activities.

![Figure 7. Do boys and girls engage in different kinds of exercise in their spare time?](image)

Figure 7. Do boys and girls engage in different kinds of exercise in their spare time?

When asked what the differences might be, a high number of boys responded that girls mainly exercise by themselves or in pairs, and therefore participates more in individual sports or various types of fitness training, such as aerobics. Boys, on the other hand, they claimed like team sports better where they can compete against each other. One of the boys said:

(8) Girls go to aerobics. Boys play team sports (author’s translation).

When the boys discussed spare time activities in the interviews another theme related to the content of physical education was identified. There seemed to be a group of boys who were not that satisfied with their physical education classes since a substantial amount of time is spent on sports that many of the other boys play outside of school but which this particular group of boys does not play. This issue of how physical education can meet the needs of all students, especially those who do not take part in various forms of organised sport in their spare time was also raised by Larsson and Redelius (2004). They suggest that “maybe physical education teachers must to a greater extent than what is done today dare to risk not meeting the expectations of those students with more experience of organised sport?” (p. 237)
(author’s translation). Consequently, in order to provide a physical education curriculum that takes into the consideration the needs and interests of all boys and not just groups of boys, teachers may need to rethink what to and what not to include in their physical education classes.

4.5 Masculinity and Body Image

Table 4 shows what words that the boys most frequently associated with masculinity. The most common words are all related to appearance. Other answers that came up were, as demonstrated by this example, a bit more elaborate:

(9) Being masculine to me, is not being feminine (author’s translation).

Some of the boys however, came up with slightly different answers and said being masculine is about taking care of the people around you, for instance, by being the one that earns the highest income.

Table 4. Most frequent words associated with being masculine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strong</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Muscular</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tough</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tall</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Beard</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, it seemed like most boys views were, as demonstrated by the above example (9), characterised by a form of sexism and homophobia. This can possibly be explained by the fact that many of the boys who attend this school play soccer in their spare time and, as the study by Fundberg (2003) showed, that team sports such as soccer typically contributes to and reinforces these particular images of masculinity. This is further supported by the findings below, when the boys were asked about the ideal man’s body and many of them gave various famous soccer players as examples of how they want to look.

When discussing the ideal body many of the boys brought up characters from movies, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger in Terminator, to exemplify the type of tall, muscular, strong body that is desirable. Many of the boys also stated that since this is the type of body shape
that is highly regarded many of them feel like they have to go to the gym. One of the boys said:

(10) Everyone goes to the gym to get bigger muscles, so then I have to do that as well even though I find it boring (author’s translation).

Another recurring theme seemed to be various soccer players, since a lot of the boys play soccer both at school and competitively in their spare time. However, some boys had other views on the ideal man body, and suggested that a man should neither be too muscular nor too skinny. Some explained this by saying that this is what the girls find attractive, and gave actors such as Johnny Depp as an example.

When asked where they get these views on the ideal body the most common answer was from TV and other forms of media. As an explanation to why this particular body image is portrayed in media as the male norm the boys stated that this is “what the girls like”. Overall this seemed to be the most frequent reason for why this particular body image is desirable. However, another reason that got mentioned was that they want to look “cool” in front of the other boys, and having bigger muscles makes them feel more in control.

When it comes to the masculinity and body image, it is also interesting to link this to, Bourdieu’s (1984) proposal that the habitus of low and high socioeconomic status groups differs. According to Bourdieu lower socioeconomic status groups have less regard for the body’s well-being and see the body in a more instrumental way. This instrumental view on the body became very evident, as described by all the examples above, when the boys associated masculinity with words such as tall, strong, muscly etc. However, when the data was sorted according to perceived socioeconomic status groups no significant differences in the view on masculinity and body image could be established, although there seemed to be a few more boys from ‘higher’ socioeconomic status groups who questioned the image of the man as tall, muscly and strong, and who instead referred to non-bodily aspects such as income levels and being the one taking care of the family. Still, further investigations including larger samples are needed before any conclusion regarding the correlation between socioeconomic status group and views on masculinity and body image can be drawn.
5. Conclusions
In summary, the results of this study suggest that majority of boys in both single gender and co-educational groups prefer to have physical education together with the girls, where a somewhat greater percentage was identified for the single gender group. However, two different motives for this opinion have been identified. The majority of boys believe that girls should be part of the physical education classes when doing activities that they deem require girls to be present, i.e., dance or when they want them there to have something to look at, such as in the swimming pool. The rest of time, when engaging in more competitive games and activities, it is better if the boys can be on their own. However, some of the other boys, who belong to a smaller group, state that they rather have all their physical education classes together with the girls, regardless of what activity they are doing.

When comparing the two different physical education settings, this study has shown that there is greater percentage of boys in the single gender grouping who are not really enjoying their physical education since it is too closely associated with the dominant definitions of masculinity. These boys clearly express their dissatisfaction with what activities they get to do and how they often turn into being overly aggressive and competitive. However, a great number of boys in the single gender setting also claim the total opposite, that they prefer doing most activities with just boys so that the game ends up being tougher and more intense. This evident gap between different groups of boys within the single gender setting could not be identified to the same extent in the co-educational setting which leads to the tentative conclusion that overall it seems as if boys are more satisfied with their physical education when grouped together with the girls. Nevertheless, there exist a small group of boys within the co-educational format who utter their disapproval of always having the girls there, since they feel that it lowers the quality and competitiveness of the games and activities.

As discussed earlier much attention has previously been focused on that boys and girls have different needs in relation to physical education. The results of this study suggest that there is a great need to start recognising the different needs amongst boys (and girls). Thus, the image of boys and girls as two homogeneous groups aligned with stereotypical perceptions of activities and behaviours of which they are capable and in which they should be engaging, needs to be challenged.

Moreover, this study gives further support to previous studies (e.g., Martino, 1999) which has shown that while boys as a group are advantaged by the association of hegemonic masculinity, more individual boys than is commonly supposed experience physical education
negatively. In addition, the results of this study are consistent with feminist analyses that suggest the ‘problem’ lies not with the girls or the boys, but with the gender order and with physical education as a site in which conventional femininities and masculinities are reproduced.

When looking at the differences of experiences of the physical education subject it was also examined whether this is influenced by the socioeconomic status group the boys belong to. This, since it has been proposed that different socioeconomic status groups see the body and the benefit of physical activity in different ways. However, in this study no significant differences could be identified neither for physical activity habits nor body image between high and low socioeconomic status groups and further investigation of this issue would be welcome. Particularly interesting would be to investigate whether the perception and the experiences of the physical education subject differs between different socioeconomic groups.

Providing quality physical education that is equitable to all students is a complex task. As pointed out by Humberstone (1990) sex segregation in physical education would seem inappropriate as a long term strategy for equal opportunities since it reflects and maintains male hegemony and does little to create greater understanding between the sexes. Gender-equal physical education, thus need to go beyond the dichotomy of single-sex or co-educational classes. As Hannon and Ratcliffe (2007) points out it is important for teachers to remember that grouping students into co-educational or single gender settings is simply an instructional tool. Larsson (2003) states that it is time to ask the question what this grouping strategy is actually based upon, and proposes that it is nothing more than an attempt to adhere to the well established norm of heterosexuality. Hence, the more accurate question to pose is what grouping strategy will most effectively allow all students, regardless of gender, to achieve desirable learning goals and standards. The aim should be to provide a balance of co-educational and single-sex classes, in a balanced curriculum based on students’ needs and legitimate learning goals, and to deliver instruction using recognised effective methods so that all students can achieve positive results in physical education. It is therefore up to each individual teacher to evaluate the teaching context and determine the best grouping strategy to maximise their students’ movement and learning opportunities. However, until further research is conducted and disseminated it remains unclear whether the instructional setting itself, instructional practices of the teacher, or a combination of both are most responsible for students participation and enjoyment of physical education (Hannon & Ratliffe, 2007).
In order to be able to draw any distinct conclusion regarding the differences in how boys experience and participate in single-sex and co-educational physical education a much larger sample would need to be investigated and include a closer examination of aspects such as socioeconomic class, ethnicity, religious views etc. It would also be of interest to investigate further how girls’ experiences differ between single-sex and co-educational physical education settings to see whether similar trends can be identified as for the boys. This would also shed more light on the dynamics of the interaction that takes place between boys and girls in the co-educational setting.

It is important that physical education students enjoy their classes. Physical educators should strive to discover and develop new and innovative ways to engage their students and create a more enjoyable atmosphere. In addition, physical educators should ensure the environment is emotionally safe and there is equity in opportunity for all students regardless of gender or skill level.
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7. Appendix – Questionnaire

Frågeformulär – Idrott och Hälsa (Swedish Original)

Spendera inte för mycket tid på varje fråga, men försök att svara så ärligt som möjligt och tacksam för motiveringar/kommentarer där det efterfrågas. Alla svar behandlas anonymt och förblir konfidentiella. Tack för hjälpen! / Göran

______________________________

1. Vilket kön tillhör du?
☐ Kille ☐ Tjej

2. Vilken är din ålder?
☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 ☐ 19 ☐ Annan ............

3. Vilken årskurs går du i?
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ Annan ..............

4. Vilket gymnasieprogram går du på?

5. Bor du med dina föräldrar?
☐ Ja, båda två
☐ Ja, med min mamma
☐ Ja, med min pappa
☐ Ja, annat ..........................
☐ Nej ............................


8. I vilket land är du född?
☐ Sverige ☐ Annat.......................

9. Utövar du någon religion?
☐ Ja, vilken?............................. ☐ Nej

10. Vad tycker du om ämnet Idrott och hälsa i skolan?
☐ Mycket roligt
☐ Roligt
☐ Sådär
☐ Tråkigt
☐ Mycket tråkigt

11. Vilka har du Idrott och hälsa ihop med?
☐ Bara killar ☐ Blandat killar och tjejer

12. Tycker du att killar och tjejer ska ha Idrott och hälsa ihop?
☐ Ja ☐ Nej

Motivering:
13. Finns det tillfällen då du tycker att det passar bättre att killarna är själva under Idrott och hälsa lektionerna?
   - Ja, när till exempel? (motivera gärna)
   - Nej (kommentar)

14. Finns det tillfällen då du tycker att det är bra att tjejer blandas med killarna under Idrott och hälsa lektionerna?
   - Ja, när till exempel? (motivera gärna)
   - Nej (kommentar)

   - Badminton
   - Bandy
   - Curling
   - Basket
   - Bordtennis
   - Bowling
   - Brottning
   - Simning
   - Långskidor
   - Slalom
   - Snowboard
   - Dans
   - Fotboll
   - Friidrott
   - Styrketräning
   - Tennis
   - Frisbee
   - Redskapsgymnastik
   - Handboll
   - Innebandy
   - Volleyboll
   - Yoga
   - Orientering
   - Annan aktivitet
   - Ingen aktivitet
   - Ingen aktivitet


17. Känner du att ni gör sådant i Idrott och hälsa som du gillar?
   - Ja
   - Nej, motivera (t.ex. vilka aktiviteter vill du ha mera/mindre av)

18. Vad tycker du i allmänhet att man ska få lära sig i ämnet i Idrott och hälsa? (t.ex vilka kunskaper, kompetenser, aktiviteter etc).

   - Har rört mig mycket lite
   - Har rört mig mycket lite men ibland tagit någon enstaka promenad eller liknande
   - Har fått lättare fysisk motion i samband med promenader till och från skolan, eller i form av lättare praktiskt arbete, dans etc motsvarande minst två timmar per vecka
   - Har avsiktligt ägnat mig åt lättare form av motion som promenader (eller andra aktiviteter med motsvarande ansträngning) minst en gång per vecka, och då oftast:.................................................................
   - Har ägnat mig åt mer ansträngande motion som t.ex. joggning, simning, motionsgymnastik eller motsvarande minst en gång per vecka, och då oftast:.................................................................
   - Har regelbundet ägnat mig åt hård träning eller tävling där den fysiska ansträngningen varit stor, t.ex. löpning och olika bollspel, och då oftast:.................................................................

20. Hur många av dina vänner motionerar regelbundet (dvs. minst en gång per vecka)?
   - Ingen
   - Några
   - De flesta
   - Alla
21. Skiljer det sig vad killar och tjejer sysslar med för typ av motion på fritiden?
   □ Ja, på vilket sätt?
   □ Nej

22. Om du motionerar eller idrottar på din fritid, vad har du för motiv för det? Kryssa de alternativ som stämmer in på dig.
   □ För att se spännande och vältränad ut
   □ För att det är nyttigt
   □ För att få avkoppling
   □ För att få en snyggare kropp
   □ För att träffa och umgås med kompisar
   □ För att bli starkare och få bättre kondition
   □ För att tävla och nå framgång

23. Beskriv med några ord vad det innebär för dig att vara maskulin?

   □ Tränat
   □ Gått på diet
   □ Bantning
   □ Kostersättningssupplement
   □ Kostförstärkningssupplement
   □ Otillåtna medel (doping)
   □ Annat..........................


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inte alls</td>
<td>Fullständigt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nöjd</td>
<td>Nöjd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   □ Väger för mycket
   □ Väger för lite
   □ Löst hull
   □ För kort
   □ Missnöjd med figuren
   □ För lång
   □ För lite muskler
   □ Annat ..........................

27. Är du nöjd med din fysiska prestationsförmåga?
   □ Ja, helt
   □ Ja, i stort sett
   □ Nej, inte riktigt
   □ Nej, absolut inte

   □ Dålig kondition
   □ Stel
   □ För svag
   □ Klumpig
   □ Ospännig
   □ Annat ..........................

29. Upplever du att din kropps utseende har betydelse för ditt självförtroende?
   □ Väldigt Mycket
   □ Mycket
   □ Till viss del
   □ Inte speciellt mycket
   □ Inte alls
30. Hur ser din perfekta manliga kroppen ut enligt dig? Hur kommer det sig att du har just denna uppfattningen tror du?
31. Tycker du att killar och tjejer har olika biologiskt betingade (medfödda) fysiska förutsättningar?
   □ Ja, vad är det då som skiljer?
   □ Nej
32. Övriga synpunkter/kommentarer?

Questionnaire – Physical Education (English translation)

Don’t spend too much time on each question, try and answer as honestly as possible and please motivate/comment where asked to. All questionnaires will be treated anonymously and kept confidential. Thanks for your help! / Göran

1. What is your sex?
   □ Boy □ Girl

2. What is your age?
   □ 16 □ 17 □ 18 □ 19 □ Other..........

3. What year are you in?
   □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ Other ..............

4. What programme do you attend?

5. Do you live with your parents?
   □ Yes, both of them
   □ Yes, with my mum
   □ Yes, with my dad
   □ Yes, other ......................
   □ No ...........................

6. What is the highest educational qualification that your parents have? Vilken är den högsta utbildning som dina föräldrar har? (i.e. mum – university, dad – upper-secondary school).

7. What are your parents’ occupations? (i.e. mum – dentis, dad – teacher).

8. In which country were you born?
   □ Sweden □ Other.........................

9. Do you belong to any religion?
   □ Yes, which one?........................... □ No

10. What is your perception of the Physical Education subject?
    □ Very fun
    □ Fun
    □ Neutral
    □ Boring
    □ Very boring

11. Who do you have Physical Education together with?
    □ Just boys □ Mixed boys and girls
12. Do you believe that boys and girls should have Physical Education together?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Motivate:

13. Do you believe that there are times when it is better that the boys are by themselves during the Physical Education classes?
☐ Yes, when for instance? (motivate)
☐ No (comment)

14. Are there times when you believe that it is better that the girls are mixed with the boys during the Physical Education classes?
☐ Yes, when for instance? (motivate)
☐ No (comment)

15. Which of the following activities do you like engaging in during Physical Education classes? Check one or several boxes.
☐ Badminton  ☐ Dance  ☐ Running
☐ Bandy  ☐ Soccer  ☐ Walking
☐ Curling  ☐ Athletics  ☐ Orientering
☐ Basketball  ☐ Gym  ☐ Yoga
☐ Table Tennis  ☐ Tennis  ☐ Other activity
☐ Ten Pin Bowling  ☐ Frisbee
☐ Wrestling  ☐ Gymnastics  ........................................
☐ Swimming  ☐ Handball  ☐ No activity
☐ Cross-Country Skiing  ☐ Floor Ball
☐ Downhill Skiing  ☐ Volleyball
☐ Snowboarding  ☐ Aerobics

16. Are some activities in Physical Education mainly liked by boys or girls? If so, which ones and by whom? Why do you think?

17. Do you feel that you get to do the activities which you like in Physical Education?
☐ Yes
☐ No, motivate (i.e. what activities do you want more or less of?)

18. What do you believe that you should learn about in Physical Education? (i.e. what type of knowledge, competencies, activities etc)

19. How much have you in general exercised in your spare time during the last year? NB. Check all the alternatives that fit your description.
☐ Have done very little exercise
☐ Have done very little exercise but have sometimes taken shorter walks
☐ Have mainly exercised when walking to and from school or lighter forms of exercise, such as dance classes at least twice a week
☐ Have purposely engaged in lighter forms of exercise such as going for walks (or other forms of exercise with similar levels of intensity) at least once a week and then mainly:........................................................................................................
☐ Have engaged in exercise of moderate intensity such as running, swimming, aerobics or similar at least once a week and then mainly:........................................................................................................
☐ Have regularly engaged in exercise of high intensity or competitions where the physical effort have been substantial, such as running or team sports and then mainly:........................................................................................................
20. How many of your friends exercise on a regular basis (that is, at least once a week)?
   □ No one
   □ Some
   □ Most of them
   □ All of them

21. Is there a difference between what type of exercise boys and girls engage in during their spare time?
   □ Yes, in what way?
   □ No

22. If you exercise in your spare time, what is your motive for this? Check the alternatives that fit you.
   □ To look fit
   □ Because it is good for you
   □ To relax
   □ To get a nicer body
   □ To spend time with friends
   □ To get stronger and better stamina
   □ To compete and be successful

23. Describe with a few words what being masculine means to you?

24. Do you or have you ever done any of the following in order to improve your body image? Several boxes can be checked. If you check 'other', specify what.
   □ Exercised
   □ Been on a diet
   □ Lost weight
   □ Food replacement tablets
   □ Food enhancement tablets
   □ Illegal substances (doping)
   □ Other .........................

25. Overall – how satisfied are you with your body? Put a mark on the continuum from 0-10 where 0 stands for not at all satisfied and 10 entirely satisfied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Entirely Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. If you are not entirely satisfied, what are you not happy with? You can check more than one box
   □ Weigh too much
   □ Weigh too little
   □ Loose fat
   □ Too short
   □ Not happy with body
   □ Too tall
   □ Not enough muscles
   □ Other ..................................

27. Are you satisfied with your physical performance level?
   □ Yes, completely
   □ Yes, somewhat
   □ No, not quite
   □ Nej, not at all

28. If you are not satisfied, what are you not happy with? You can check more than one box
   □ Bad stamina
   □ Stiff
   □ Too weak
   □ Clumsy
   □ Not very flexible
   □ Other ..................................
29. Do you feel that your body image affects your self confidence?
☐ Yes, a lot
☐ Yes, quite a lot
☐ Yes, to some extent
☐ No, not much at all
☐ No, not at all

30. What does the ideal body of a man look like? How come you have this perception?

31. Do you believe that boys and girls have different biologically determined physical capabilities?
☐ Yes, what is the difference?
☐ No

32. Other opinions/comments?