

Socialization in sport: how children's sports habitus is constructed

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Author: J.L.M. Overdeest

Supervisors: dr. I.M. van Hilvoorde and J.N. Pot MSc

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate children's socialization in sport using both the concept of habitus as suggested by Bourdieu and the concepts of code and socialization context proposed by Bernstein. In addition, the perceived relation between sport and health was investigated. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 children from 6th grade primary school (9 or 10 yrs) and 11 parents (38 to 51 yrs) from families with a high socio-economic status. Results indicate that parents stimulate participation in organized sport because they believe it is normal, but leave the choice of sports to their children, who often choose sports their parents, siblings or peers already play. When participating in sport, coaches are perceived to be the main source of sport-specific knowledge, teaching the restricted code of the sport to the children, even though parents might also do this if they have access to the restricted code. Parents also structure their children's opportunities for outdoor play by planning other activities and providing equipment. Children themselves like playing outside, especially playing football or their own sport with peers. Parents and children stress that sport should be fun, which parents try to accomplish by cheering children on during matches and giving compliments about hard work rather than winning, helping children to cope with negative emotions as a result of a lost match. In all, parents believe sport to be a supplement for health in case children do not move enough, similar to why parents and children perceive physical education is on the curriculum, but they mainly stimulate participation in organized sport because they believe it contributes to the development of social skills. Children, on the other hand, believe sport and health are intrinsically linked. Future research should include families with a low SES, investigating whether they share the same dispositions.

1. Introduction

In the past decade, people have grown more concerned with the rapid increase in childhood overweight and obesity. The prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity in the Netherlands has risen substantially. In 2009, an average of 14.6% of boys and 17.0% of girls between 2 and 21 years of age were overweight or obese, compared to 10.3% and 13.5% in 1997 (Schönbeck et al., 2011). As childhood overweight and obesity tends to persist into adulthood, this poses serious consequences for health, such as diabetes, cardiovascular problems and psychological problems (Reilly, Methven, McDowell, Hacking, Alexander, Stewart & Kelnar, 2003). We might thus conclude that in order to reduce the health problems, the problem of obesity has to be tackled in the younger generation.

Several lifestyle choices contribute to either a healthy weight or overweight. American research has shown that apart from diet, both a long screen time (watching television, playing video games etc.) and little physical activity (PA) highly increase the odds of overweight (Laurson, Eisenmann, Welk, Wickel, Gentile & Walsh, 2008). Reducing the screen time and concurrently increasing PA levels might thus be an effective way of fighting childhood obesity, as both appear to track moderately well from childhood to adulthood (eg. Biddle, Pearson, Ross, Braithwaite, 2010; Craigie, Lake, Kelly, Adamson, Mathers, 2011; Telama, 2009). This is why, in the Netherlands, the Dutch Norm of Healthy Activity (NNGB) has been introduced. It advises that children ought to have minimally an hour of moderate PA at least 5 days a week (Verhagen, 2012). In addition, the Fitnorm stands for at least 20 minutes of intensive PA at least 3 days a week (idem). The type of PA is irrelevant in these measurements, as long as it raises your heart rate sufficiently.

Even though PA has been reduced to the NNGB and the Fitnorm, children have several ways to reach these norms, several modes of PA. In everyday life, they have physical education (PE) at school, might use an active mode of transportation and have the opportunity to play outside during breaks and after school. In addition, 75% of the Dutch children (6-17 years) participate in organized sport (Collard & Hoekman, 2013). Sport participation appears to depend both on preferences and the social position of the family (Bourdieu, 1978). It cannot, however, be completely explained by these factors. Other barriers such as time constraints or a long travel distance to the sport club might also limit the possibilities for participation in sport (Hardy, Kelly, Chapman, King, Farrell, 2010). PA for children thus minimally includes PE, active transportation and play and could also include sport activities for those children active in organized sport.

PA tracks reasonably well from childhood to adulthood (Telama, 2009), and this also appears to be the case for sport participation, as childhood sport participation is a good predictor of participation in sport and exercise in adulthood (Perkins, Jacobs, Barber & Eccles, 2004). At approximately 16 years of age, sport participation of adolescents in some families drops, whilst in other families it persists (Birchwood, Roberts & Pollock, 2008). This persistence of sport participation hints at a persistent PA level, decreasing the odds of overweight and obesity. Not all adolescents, however, have acquired such persistent habits in sport participation. Birchwood et al. (2008) believe this discrepancy is due to family characteristics, indicating that the differences in sport participation at age 16 can be explained partially by different family socio-economic statuses (SES), adolescents with a higher SES being more likely to participate in sports. Educational level appears to be an even stronger predictor of continued sport participation. Birchwood et al. (2008) thus conclude that social factors in the family influence the continuation in sports.

1.1 Theoretical background

In explaining this phenomenon, Birchwood et al. (2008) refer to the concept of habitus as used by Bourdieu (1978). The habitus consists of internalized beliefs and values that influence both how people perceive the world and how they act in it. Depending on the social environment children are in and the resources they or their parents possess, children internalize different values and will act in different ways when they grow older. Bourdieu (1986) denotes three types of so-called capital that might differ between families. Social capital is explained as the social network that someone has, the people he or she can fall back on. The wealth people possess in terms of finances are called economic capital and the cultural symbols people have in their possession, are called cultural capital. This last type of capital has three aspects. Objectified cultural capital consists of the objects, the cultural goods that a family has, such as paintings or a trampoline. Diplomas or proof of attainment of a certain educational level are collectively called institutionalized cultural capital. What is called embodied cultural capital relates to the internalized values and beliefs that shape day to day interaction. When comparing the descriptions of habitus and embodied cultural capital, they appear to be identical and we will use them as such.

Wacquant (2006; Bourdieu, 1978) describes this embodied cultural capital or the habitus as a “system of durable and transposable dispositions” (p 6). These somewhat stable dispositions can be subdivided into dispositions to believe and dispositions to act (Lahire, 2003). Dispositions to believe constitute how people perceive the world, whereas dispositions to act constitute the actual behaviour. Bourdieu (1978) explains how dispositions are structured through interaction in various situations or so-called fields. Fields are distinct parts of the social space that appear to have their

own rules of conduct and qualifications, such as the academic world or sports. In these different fields, dispositions are structured, collectively forming an individual's habitus.

The beliefs and values connected to sport and exercise can thus be regarded as a field-specific element of habitus we call the sports habitus. The sports habitus structures how people think about the role of sport in life and also the type of activities they undertake or do not undertake. It is constructed through interaction within the field of sports, so by internalizing communicated values and practices regarding sport and exercise. Lahire (2003) explains how this process could lead to dispositions as passions, thoughtless routines or as obligations, depending on the manner in which the values are transmitted. In addition, differences between social groups might arise concerning the value assigned to sport and exercise or the actual behaviour, because the internalization takes place in an environment that can be characterized by the amount of social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1978).

Yet, even though Bourdieu indicates which social factors or which types of capital might influence the formation of the sports habitus, the socialization process by which this happens remains largely unexplained. Stuij (2013) has used the theory of Bernstein (1974) to shed light on this process. Bernstein (1974) explains socialization as a process of language, both verbal and non-verbal. Language consists of symbols, which in terms of Bourdieu is part of the cultural capital. In this context, Bernstein used the concept of 'code' that, similar to the habitus, regulates acting in the world connected to the social environment a person moves in:

“As the child learns (...) specific codes which regulate his verbal acts, he learns the requirements of his social structure. (...) Individuals come to learn their social roles through the process of communication. A social role (...) is a constellation of learned meanings through which individuals are able to enter stable, consistent and publicly recognized forms of interactions with others.” (p 144)

Bernstein (1967) recognizes two types of code: the restricted code is rigidly bound to a specific social structure and therefore predictable, whereas the elaborated code is more flexible and personal, making it less predictable. We understand restricted code, in other words, as a more group oriented mode of expression, where meaning is implicit since the speaker and the listener share the same idea of concepts or the same symbols. Differences between individuals are likely to show in non-verbal ways. Elaborated code, on the other hand, we understand to express more personal symbols and thus to be verbally explicit. Comparing working-class and middle-class children, Bernstein (1974) indicates that children from both social classes have access to both the restricted and the elaborated code, but that working-class children will use restricted codes more often because they have had a different upbringing.

This upbringing, the socialization that leads to children learning or internalizing the different codes, or the habitus in terms of Bourdieu, takes place in four different but interrelated contexts: the regulative, instructional, imaginative and interpersonal context. Here, children respectively learn (1) demands of social status and social relationships, (2) different skills, (3) to experiment in their own way and (4) awareness of both their own emotions and emotions of others (Bernstein, 1974).

In these different contexts, there are different socializing agents. For children, Bernstein (1974) distinguishes the family, the school and the peer group. Within the family, parents are argued to

have the greatest influence on children’s sport participation (Côté, 1999). The influence of siblings, though argued by Côté (1999) to be quite important, has received limited attention and has resulted in mixed findings (Weiss & Knoppers, 1982). Stuij (2013) has identified parental and extended family influences in the regulative and interpersonal context, yet more limited in the instructional and imaginative context. In the instructional context, PE teachers and coaches were more important for respectively children from low SES or high SES families. Children from high SES families were more likely to engage in organized sport. The peer group was mentioned as very influential in the imaginative context, as well as in the regulative context.

1.2 Research objective

Research so far has thus recognized five different socializing agents in parents, siblings, peers, PE teachers and coaches that appear to play a role in different socializing contexts (Bernstein, 1974; Côté, 1999; Stuij, 2013). These agents appear to have specific goals regarding children's PA and sport participation. Wheeler (2012) has interviewed parents and children about family culture and sport participation, and found that parents with a high SES had quite specific goals for their children's sport participation and displayed certain behaviour to reach these goals. In this process, they are influenced by the resources they have regarding economic capital or finances. Parenting practices, however, may also on a more unconscious level influence children (Gevers et al., submitted), which is precisely what Bourdieu (1978) believes to occur with the formation of habitus. Parents are then unconsciously influenced by their own cultural capital in the form of education and their own sports habitus in the type of behaviour they display. This leads to the conceptual model depicted in figure 1.

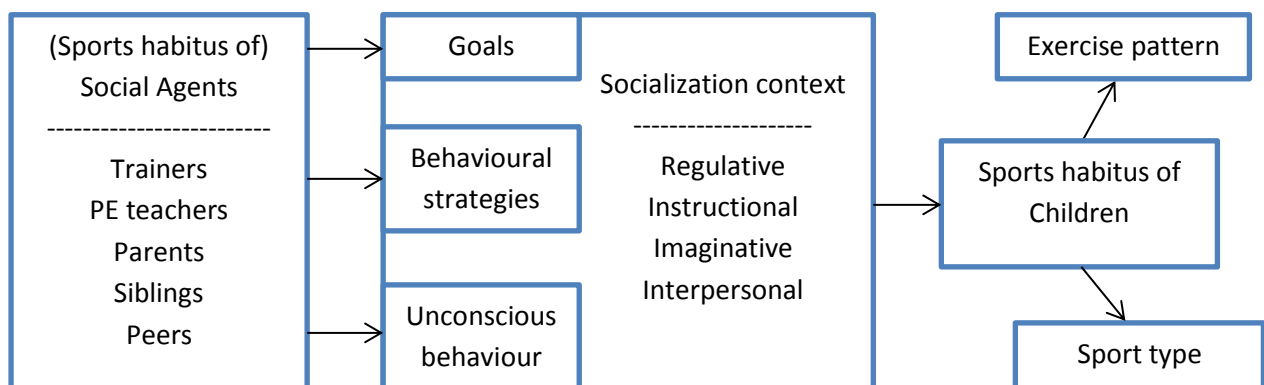


Figure 1: Conceptual model for the influence of various social agents on children’s sports habitus.

This investigation serves a double purpose. First, in the light of the increasing obesity problems, we aim to discover whether and in what way the sports habitus influences the perceived connections between PA in general, sport and health. Secondly, we aim to explore how children’s sports habitus is constructed, focusing on content and transmission of values and practices. Expanding on research by Wheeler (2012) and Stuij (2013) we will investigate which social agents are perceived to influence socialization in the different contexts and in what way. Utilizing the perspective of both parents and children, this allows us to distinguish between what parents believe is transferred and what children actually seem to have internalized. In addition we hope to shed light on the process of transmission, answering the question of how parents transmit their own dispositions to their children and whether they do so consciously.

In accordance with Wheeler (2012), we expect parents to show primarily supporting behaviour for their children's organized sport activities. We expect parents from these high SES families to have a preference for organized sport as also claimed by Stuij (2013), and that they prefer this type of PA because they perceive it as normal and because they perceive it to be healthy. In addition, we expect that older siblings also influence habitus formation as role models closer to the child's own age.

Based on the findings of Wheeler (2012) and Stuij (2013), we also have more specific hypotheses. Regarding the regulative context, we expect parents to consciously introduce children to appropriate sports, but be unconscious of the way they talk about sports or engage in role modeling. In addition to parents, we expect peers and older siblings to play a role in this context. In an instructional context, we hypothesize that PE teachers will have only limited influence, whereas the trainer at a sport club will have a big influence on children's sports habitus by explaining and showing how the sport is executed. Parents are expected to consciously do the same, provided they have knowledge of the sport. Playing outside is what constitutes the imaginative context, where parents consciously structure the time children have for outdoor play and provide equipment. We expect peers and siblings to accompany the children and to play with them. We expect all five groups of social agents to play a role in the interpersonal context. Parents, PE teachers and trainers are likely to consciously reward appropriate behaviour and talk about winning, losing and team play, whereas siblings and peers are expected to influence children through interaction, unconscious of what they convey.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

Participants in this study were nine families with a child in sixth grade of primary education from the area of Leiden, the Netherlands. Only two fathers were able to attend the interviews, so the participants were nine children (six boys and three girls), nine mothers and two fathers. For each family, parents were asked to fill out forms for family composition, demographics, a sport biography and an activity schedule with daily activities of the child, including PE lessons. Characteristics of the families interviewed can be found in Table 1. In total, eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. The parents ranged in age between 38 and 51 and the interviewed children were 9 or 10 years of age. All interviewed parents had received college (HBO) or university education and apart from family 4, all had an above average income as indicated either in the questionnaire or during the interview. The interviewed families were thus a fairly homogenous group regarding SES and education.

Participants were recruited by spreading an informative letter (specifying the purpose and method of the investigation) through several schools that were willing to assist and through sport clubs. Parents were asked to send an email if they were interested in participating in an interview together with their child, after which more specific information was provided and an appointment was made for the interview at the child's home.

2.2 Procedure

Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Human Movement Sciences. Interviews with children were conducted first with a parent present and lasted approximately 45 minutes, and interviews with the parents lasted

between 30 and 60 minutes. Children were given four assignments during the interview. The first assignment was completed at the start of the interview, when the child chose a weekday to describe what he or she would do between getting up and going to sleep. This served as a prompt for the questions. A similar assignment where children described the sport and exercise behaviour of an entire week, including PE and unorganized play, served to focus the attention on this type of behaviour and also served as a prompt. A list with 33 sports was provided so children could tick of the sports they had played, be it at a club, during PE or in a different environment. Children also had the opportunity to add sports they missed to the list. The final exercise consisted of dividing 36 cards with objects they could play with into those they have available at home and those they do not. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

A month prior to the first interview, pilot interviews were performed with a child and mother in the same age range and with a similar SES as the actual participants in the interviews. During the pilot interviews, it was indicated that some questions were too difficult for the child, so they were adapted in the interview guide. The mother also indicated a question that she felt was somewhat inappropriate, especially when asked by a stranger, so this question was taken out of the interview guide. During the pilot interview, both child and mother agreed that cards with objects would be easier for the fourth assignment than a list, because the words on the list were rather lengthy. For the actual interviews therefor, cards were provided rather than a list. To recall the sports the child had played, she indicated it might be easier to have a list with sports, to aid recall. This was provided during the actual interviews.

The kind of questions asked during the interviews related to four different environments, namely PE lessons, unorganized play, organized sports and the home situation. Questions were focused on behaviour and motivation. Children, for example, were asked why they participate in a particular sport. Another example is that they were asked what their teacher does and says during a PE lesson. Parents were asked if they believe organized sports are more important than unorganized play, for example, and what they have done to stimulate sports in the family. The questions thus distinguished between the four different environments and different socializing agents. An attempt was made to make a distinction between the different socializing contexts as well, but in some cases this was rather difficult. A question such as 'are there any sports you prefer and why' can yield responses that relate to social status and relations, but also to skills or emotion. Not all questions are therefore directly linked to one context. The distinction between conscious and unconscious behaviour was sometimes already made by the interviewee, and was otherwise questioned asking 'did you consciously choose to do this' or similar questions.

2.3 Data analysis

Coding was done as much as possible using the conceptual model in figure 1. The interviews were analyzed comparing the accounts of the children and parents. This can be found in the result section. Firstly, a general overview is provided of what children and parents do with regard to sport and PA, and how they perceive the link between PA in general and sport. Then the socialization in the four different contexts as provided by Bernstein will be discussed, with first the regulative context, then the instructional context, subsequently the imaginative context and finally the interpersonal context. Whether behaviour is conscious or unconscious runs as background through all paragraphs, the distinction made where possible.

Table 1: Participating families with demographics. People indicated with an * were interviewed. In family 4, parents were divorced.

Family number	Family composition	Age (yrs)	Sport(s)	Income/month (€)	Education
1	Mother*	41	Pilates, running	5000	University
	Father	45			University
	Son*	10	Basketball		
	Daughter	8			
2	Mother*	47	Fitness	3800	HBO
	Father	48	Fitness		University
	Son*	9	Football, Judo		
	Daughter	6	Swimming		
3	Mother*	48	Tennis	7000	HBO
	Father*	44	Running, strength training, Boxing		University
	Daughter*	9	Icehockey, Tennis		
4	Mother*	43	Running	No answer	University
	(Father)	47			MBO
	Son*	9	Korfball		
	Daughter	7	Korfball		
	Daughter	5	Korfball, Swimming		
5	Mother*	47	Yoga	>2500	University
	Father*	45	-		University
	Son	13	Canoe polo, Judo, Chess		
	Son*	9	Korfball, Judo		
6	Mother*	43	Hockey, Tennis	>2500	HBO
	Father	47	Tennis, Running		University
	Son	18	-		
	Daughter	16	Hockey		
	Daughter	14	Hockey		
	Daughter*	9	Hockey, Skateboarding		
7	Mother*	49	Fitness	5800	HBO
	Father	51	Fitness		HBO
	Daughter*	10	Korfball		
8	Mother*	38	-	No answer	HBO
	Father	42	-		University
	Son	12	Hockey		
	Son*	9	Hockey		
9	Mother*	41	Tennis	No answer	HBO
	Father	40	Tennis		HBO
	Son*	9	Tennis, Chess		
	Son	3			

3. Results

In this chapter, the results of the interview will be discussed. The first paragraph will highlight the perceived connections between PA in general and sport, touching the subject of sport and health. The subsequent paragraphs will deal with the four socializing contexts that have been explained in the theoretical background.

3.1 Sport and PA

The sport biography of all interviewed children starts with swimming lessons. Parents want their children to know how to swim because it is safe in a land such as the Netherlands, where there is a lot of water. This is illustrated by mother 3:

"It is, we live here close to so much water that I thought 'that child should know how to swim', in full clothing and everything."

Father 5 adds that he believes all parents ought to motivate their child to learn how to swim:

"I don't see any reason why, as a parent, you wouldn't motivate a child at some point in time to learn how to swim. It might be difficult for some and easy for others, but that is also just about motivating."

Parents 5 and mother 2 also believe swimming is important for your social life: swimming is something often done with school, friends or during birthday parties, so you should know how to swim. This disposition to believe that swimming is a vital skill appears to have led to strong feelings of obligation in these parents, causing them to provide swimming lessons for their children.

In addition to knowing how to swim, seven out of the nine mothers interviewed are disposed to believe that being active is also important, both in daily life and in sport. Accordingly, these parents indicate they believe exercise in general is healthy and beneficial, as for example mother 6 indicates:

"Because it simply is healthy and I think children can develop well if they can move a lot."

Most parents and children conform to the NNGB and use both daily activities and participation in organized sport to account for the required time. Regarding a healthy exercise pattern, mother 1 is clear about where responsibility lies:

"Parents are primarily responsible."

This responsibility has led to parents' disposition to use active transport rather than passive transport, as mother 7 states:

"You can go to Leiden by bike and you can go by car, and if you are not used to cycling and you go by car, I think that is not OK, because that is not moving."

All parents report that they use the bicycle as primary mode of transportation and prefer it over the car. They only take the car when the distance is great or when the weather is regarded especially bad, as mother 6 illustrates:

“I feel guilty if I take the car over a distance I could also do by bike. I think that when it is within 20 minutes by bike, you should just cycle. And that, you know, when it is really far, only then you should think about taking the car.”

These feelings of guilt thus appear to arise when mother 6 does not act in accordance with her belief. Though all parents share the belief that cycling is better, the disposition to actually take the bicycle is not equally strong in all parents. Mother 3 reports that she is more likely to take the car, since she did not grow up here and is not used to cycling that much, highlighting that the disposition to cycle appears to be a sort of national habitus. Other parents confirm this by indicating that specifically in the Netherlands, cycling is regarded as an essential skill. In terms of transferring these dispositions, mother 3 indicates that she and her husband do not consciously try to teach their daughter to go by bike, but that it is just normal:

“We always go by bike if we are going to town, that is very normal for her. She doesn’t think about that at all.”

Children indeed perceive cycling or an active mode of transportation to be normal, as son 2 responds:

“Everybody does that. Everybody cycles every day, I think.”

All parents are thus disposed to believe that active transport is important and have turned cycling into a routine for traveling over short distances, causing children to believe it is normal.

A second mode of PA is outdoor play, which most parents actively stimulate in their children. Some do this by telling them to go outside, such as mother 9:

“[...] such as with friends, I always throw them outside. By definition when they play here, it’s fine if they play on the computer for half an hour, because they have a new game or something like that, and then they go outside. So I try to steer it.”

This example also illustrates that some parents have explicit rules with regard to staying indoors. Not only in family 9, but also in families 3 and 5, screen time is limited, thereby stimulating children to go outside. Though parents make a conscious choice to set these rules and to make sure their children go outside, many children appear very active and do not require their parents’ stimulation. Their own disposition appears to be to go outside, mainly because they enjoy it.

In addition to active transport and outdoor play, children also engage in PE at school and in sport at a club. Table 2 depicts a normal week for the interviewed children and the activities they have planned. All children have PE twice a week. One of the lessons, the children indicated, is given by a certified PE teacher, whilst the other lesson is given by their class teacher, except when the teacher fulfills both roles.

PE is perceived by children to be on the curriculum to provide movement for those who do not move enough. Daughter 6 believes they might have PE:

“to keep a child moving or something. So they don’t just sit.”

To which son 8 adds:

“That they find it important for health.”

Both children are not entirely sure about this, and their choice of words suggests they do not believe PE to actually perform this function, but rather that they believe others have added it to the curriculum, hoping to achieve health benefits. Likewise, mother 1 indicates that she does not believe in health benefits through PE:

“It is too little [PE] to say that it is good for your body or something like that.”

So even though regular exercise benefits health, parents and children alike are skeptical about the role of PE in that respect.

Table 2: Regular weekday activities

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Son 1	PE				Basketball & PE	Basketball	
Son 2	Judo & PE		Soccer		PE	Soccer	
Daughter 3	Icehockey (oct-mar) & PE		Icehockey/ Tennis		PE		Icehockey (oct-mar)
Son 4	PE		Korfball	Korfball & PE		Korfball	
Son 5	Judo	Korfball & PE		Korfball & PE		Korfball	Judo
Daughter 6	Hockey	PE	Hockey	PE	Skateboard	Hockey	
Daughter 7		Korfball & PE		Korfball	PE	Korfball	
Son 8		PE	Hockey		Hockey & PE	Hockey	
Son 9	PE	Chess	Tennis	Tennis	Tennis/ Chess & PE	Tennis/ Chess	

All parents have participated in organized sport during their childhood and adolescence and now also stimulate their children to be active in organized sports. Apart from their belief that sport is simply fun, they give various other reasons to promote organized sport. First of all, playing sport could benefit your health. When asked about whether they believed their family was sporty, parents connected that not only to participation in organized sport, but also to enough PA in general. Sport and health thus appear to be linked. Mother 4 explains that some children are more outgoing and move sufficiently during outdoor play, but for those children that do not, participation in organized sport can provide a healthy dose of exercise:

“It’s in their nature to play outside a lot, and do a lot, and [son of acquaintance] has that slightly less, he needs to be stimulated a bit more [...]. On the one hand that doesn’t matter, but on the other hand, seeing the difference between the children, I think you are healthier for it, and better for it if you move regularly and if you stimulated to do so from home. (I: But

in your opinion that doesn't necessarily have to be in organized sport?) No, [not] if they move enough with outdoor play."

Consequently, sport can add to the amount of movement a child gets in order to reach the NNGB. Children believe that sport in itself is healthy, as illustrated by son 8:

"Especially for the children who don't play sports, they really should play sports, because it's just really fun and it's also really good for you."

This highlights a difference between the dispositions of parents and their children regarding the strength of the connection between sport and health. Children appear to believe in this direct connection more strongly. This could be an effect of the verbal communication between parent and child, transmitting this message, or an effect of the role society gives sport in for example challenging obesity. The interviews suggest the first to be the case, and we have indeed found no direct evidence for the second during the interviews.

In addition to health being a possible reason to stimulate participation in sport, parents also see the development of general motor skills as a reason to promote sports. Mother 3 believes that motor skills are especially important in the younger years:

"When they are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 years old, I check whether she can jump, run, roll, keep up with others, you pay more attention to how that kid develops, whether she grows up healthily. Then you pay more attention to stuff like that and you might play more skip games or whatever to test or to force things."

Similarly to health they believe sport is only necessary to complement the motor skill development during outdoor play if this proves insufficient, as mother 4 has experienced with one of her daughters:

"Then it's good to play a sport, because it can help with motor skills and paying attention to several things at the same time."

Both health and the development of general motor skills might thus be developed through sport if children are not disposed to play outside enough. Parents, however, also see some benefits of organized sport that appear to be more intrinsic and cannot be achieved through other means. Parents indicate that wanting their children to learn social skills is the main reason they promote organized sport. Sport is believed to provide opportunities for development that are lacking during outdoor play or PE. Mother 5 for example explains that her eldest son was introduced to judo so he could work on his confidence. Other parents prefer team sports, as mother 7 does for her only child:

"I think it's important for [daughter 7] to play a team sport, because she well, is an only child, we try to find activities where she can interact with other children."

The interaction with a group in sport is perceived to be distinctly different than interaction with a group during outdoor play, because in sports, you cannot choose the people you play with. It is thus a more intrinsic value of sport compared to sport for health or sport to develop motor skills and the main reason for parents to promote organized sport.

Summarizing it can be said that parents believe active transport and outdoor play are the modes of PA through which sufficient daily movement should be reached. This is important both for health and for general motor development, leading parents to stimulate cycling and outgoing behaviour. For some children, sport can provide an additional opportunity to exercise if they do not exercise enough in daily life. In this way, they can still develop their motor skills and improve their health. This is also believed to be the reason PE is taught at schools, though neither parents nor children appear convinced of its effectiveness in increasing health. The main reason to stimulate participation in organized sport is that parents believe it to be important for social skills.

The subsequent four paragraphs will discuss the results in light of the four different contexts Bernstein has offered. For every context, settings where socialization might occur, such as at home, at school or at the club and the people involved in the socialization process are highlighted. The way socialization occurs and whether this appears to be conscious or not is the central line of the analysis.

3.2 Regulative context

This paragraph discusses socialization in the regulative context. In this context, beliefs about social status, social relationships and what is considered normal behaviour are communicated. With regard to sport, three topics arise: sport participation in general, sport choice and social roles in the sport club. These will be discussed in turn.

When asked about whether they believed their family was sporty, most parents compared themselves to other families they know and reach the conclusion that what they do is not exceptional. Son 8 reacts to his mother's statement that their family is not very sporty by indicating that the family she compares them with is simply very sporty and they are somewhat mediocre. This indicates that children understand sportiness to differ between families. The comparison with other families on the concept of sportiness also suggests that the direct social environment regulates what is regarded to be normal. The families that participated in the study indicated they lived in fairly homogenous neighbourhoods, with families with a high SES, which in their opinion influences how they perceive things. According to the parents, sport activities of peers denote playing sport to be the normal thing to do, as mother 2 explains:

"They see all the other children, who are members of sportclubs and are active, so they want it too."

All children and most of the parents thus share a disposition to believe that participating in sport is or should be normal. Parents and children realize, however, that this is not the case for everyone. According to mother 7 and several other parents, sport at school can provide opportunities for children who would otherwise not be introduced to sport:

"Look, [daughter 7] already participates in sport, but I think it's good to let children get contact with sport and exercise as much as possible, and hope that something sticks and they'll say let's go to that sport club."

The parents seem to believe upbringing or in other words socialization in the family to be a factor in whether or not being sporty is a conscious effort or simply normal. Mother 6 believes for her, playing sports was never a conscious choice, it was just what was normal:

“At my home, it was always like that... sport was a big part of everyone’s life, plus you don’t know any better . So I think it’s normal, like this.”

In that respect, mother 1 also refers to herself as an example, a role model, of what she would like her children to do. Being active as a parent can make your child to see participation in sport as normal. In addition to exemplary behaviour, some parents explain they have set up rules about sport participation. Mother 7 expresses it thusly:

“It’s not an option not to [play sport], if she says I don’t want to play korfbal, we’ll find something else.”

When these rules are enforced, it could create a feeling of obligation in the children to participate in sport, rather than the routine or passion parents would like it to be. Many parents, on the other hand, indicate they do not have to enforce these rules, because their child simply wants to play sport. Additional stimulation or rules with regard to sport participation are superfluous, since children already perceive sport participation to be normal and they have both a disposition to believe this and to act on their belief.

Even though participating in sport is thus regarded to be normal, Bourdieu suggested that depending on your social environment, certain sports might be perceived to be more appropriate than others. As can be seen in table 1, the children and parents currently play various sports and children have sampled a diverse array of sports at a club before choosing the current sport or sports. All of the children have participated in judo either before their current sport or concurrently. Similarly, parents have often been active in more than one sport during their lifetime. Often played were hockey, tennis and korfbal, where especially the first 2 were perceived to be known as status sports. Consciously, however, neither parents nor children claim to have any beliefs regarding appropriateness of sports based on status. Parents indicate they do not have preferences for specific sports, as long as children enjoy it, which is what mother 1 explains to be the goal in sport participation:

“I really spend a lot of time with [son 1] to find out which sports he likes, [...] but he found it difficult to choose something he really liked.”

Children also perceive enjoyment, rather than appropriateness, as the main reason to play sport, as daughter 7 elaborates on:

“If you play a sport, just keep doing it, and if you like a different sport better, just go play that sport.”

These statements illustrate that parents have transmitted the disposition to believe that sport is fun to their children both by stressing enjoyment and by providing opportunities to try different sports. Looking at reasons to stop playing a particular sport, they accordingly cite not enjoying the sport anymore, either because of things associated with the sport, or problems of social nature such as friends who quit playing. This indicates that finding a sport you like means finding one that you enjoy doing and where you enjoy the company of the people you practice with, rather than one that fits your social status.

Unconsciously, on the other hand, it is likely that appropriateness of specific sports is judged based on the types of sport others in the direct social environment participate in. Children namely find sports in various different ways, primarily to do with others already participating in that sport. Children and parents alike report they joined a sport club because one or both of their parents also played that sport. Mother 3 reports:

“My parents played tennis. Like [daughter 3] plays tennis now because I play it, both my parents played it and then we, my sisters, started as well.”

In addition, when an older sibling plays a sport, this is also a reason to try that sport, as son 8 indicates:

“My brother played hockey and sometimes my father let me join in practice, because he trained him then, and I liked it very much.”

Not only the family influences children in their choice of sports. Some children were introduced to a sport through their friends, accompanying them to a training session or event. Daughter 7 started playing korfbal for that reason:

“I didn’t know what I wanted yet, and a friend already played it, so.”

Despite some children mentioning other motives to join a specific sport club, such as wanting to develop a skill, it thus appears evident that the sporting behaviour of siblings, parents and friends unconsciously influences the belief about appropriate sports.

Even though parents did not verbalize any preferences for their child’s sport participation in terms of social status, they did indicate that some sports were not preferable. Football especially was denoted as a ‘bad’ sport in the sense that parents had the idea that the public watching football games is too negative in its commenting. Several parents indicated they even discouraged their child from playing football at a club. According to the parents, there is a difference in the type of people that watch and play football, and the negative sentiments expressed by the parents suggest they believe these people to have a lower social status than they. This contrasts the claim that parents have no preferences with regard to status, yet simultaneously illustrates the importance parents place in the concept of personality.

This concept of personality in choosing appropriate sports for a child was a common theme with all parents. Mother 9 explains this with regard to individual sports and team sports:

“Some people are more einzelgänger and some are more teamplayers.”

Mother 2 also refers to the “match” between her son’s personality and judo, and mother 6 indicates that she chose hockey because it was the sport most suited to what she wanted. Consciously, parents are thus more concerned with appropriateness of sports based on personality rather than on social status, though unconsciously, parents and children appear influenced in their sport choice by the type of sports others in their direct social environment play.

When the children have chosen a sport, they are fully supported in their choice. Parents report they change meal routines around practices and refrain from planning social events on match days, as mother 6 illustrates:

“The weekend does revolve around sport. So we plan around it. And you always do that, and what you want to do in addition to sport, you plan around it.”

In addition, parents provide logistic support, driving the children to games, and buying the equipment and clothing required. They seem to feel this as an obligation, something you need to do to stimulate your child's sport participation. When asked about what their parents do to help them in their sport, however, none of the children mentioned any of these supportive behaviours. It thus appears that children perceive this type of support as normal. They do on the other hand mention their parents' attendance at matches, where nearly all parents are present if possible to provide emotional support.

Parents thus appear to believe that sport is a commitment, and with their supportive behaviour try to get their children to make this commitment as well. Apart from how parents facilitate commitment to sport, some parents try more specifically to enforce it. Parents 3 and 5 for example have rules about how long a child has to do a sport before he or she is allowed to quit, as mother 3 explains:

“We have certain rules on how long to keep up things, she can't start today and say 'I don't want to go anymore' in 3 weeks.”

Towards the parents, children are thus obligated to give each sport a fair chance by continuing participation for some time. A team sport is perceived to create additional obligations towards teammates to attend training and matches. Three of the mothers feel that their child's activities also create an obligation for them to volunteer for the club, as mother 6 illustrates:

“That's just something of a team or a club, that if you let your children play sport there, you should do something actively for the club as well.”

According to these parents, social convention thus dictates their volunteering for the club, which might also structure their child's beliefs about volunteering. As this was not questioned in the interviews, however, no conclusions can be drawn with regard to volunteer work.

An example of what some parents do for the club is coaching. Mother 6 and father 8 for example are active as coach for their child's team. With regard to appropriate behaviour, coaches and parents are perceived to have a different role when at the sport club and thus a different status. Mainly during matches, when both parents and coaches are present, both parents and children believe that coaches should be left to do their job, and parents should refrain from giving instructions. This illustrates that even within sports, status influences what is believed to be appropriate behaviour.

In general, these Dutch children seem to believe that participation in sport is or should be normal and that every sport is appropriate, as long as you enjoy it. The first statement is agreed upon by the parents, who perceive it to be normal in their social environment and enforce sport participation through rules if required. The sports played by others in the direct social environment seem to unconsciously indicate which sports are appropriate in terms of status. In addition to finding sports that are fun, parents are also conscious of finding a sport that is appropriate for their children in terms of personality, nuancing the second statement that every sport is appropriate as long as it is enjoyable. Their use of the concept of personality, however, suggests that status does play a role in choosing sports. In addition to the obligation parents feel to let their children participate in sports,

they also feel that sport participation itself comes with obligations such as committing yourself to practice and to play matches or to volunteer for the club your child participates in. Within sport clubs, there is also a system of status that places the coach higher than parents and influences what is perceived to be appropriate behaviour. In this context, children and parents believe coaches should be the ones to give instructions regarding play, whereas parents provide emotional support. The following paragraph will discuss socialization in the instructional context, where the coach thus appears to play a large role.

3.3 Instructional context

This paragraph discusses socialization in the instructional context. Here, skills and instructional knowledge are transferred in addition to beliefs about skill and instructional knowledge. In addition to the three main sources of knowledge, namely the coach, the parents and the PE teacher, the concept of learning, which proved central to this type of socialization, is discussed.

Children indicate that the sport club is the greatest source of knowledge about a sport, the coach in particular. Parents agree, comparing the unconscious learning during outdoor play with the more conscious teaching the coaches engage in at the sport club. This might be why mother 2 explains that “at a club, [learning] is more controlled and there is much more knowledge transfer”. Most children believe that the trainer teaches you techniques, mainly by explaining them and sometimes also by performing them. During matches, coaches are also a source of tactical knowledge on how to best play against the opponent. This transfer of knowledge seems to use the restricted code, the terms used in practice and during matches being specific for the sport. This contributes to the conceptualization of a sport. In addition, the practice and matches also teach children the type of behaviour and tactical play that is common in a sport, transferring a disposition to act. Using a restricted code with sport-specific terms, children are able to explain the goals and techniques of different sports and indicate these belong specifically to those sports.

Another source of instructional knowledge are the parents. Some parents watching games also give advice, though not all children hear that. Daughter 6 believes that whether or not a parent gives advice depends on his or her knowledge of the sport, considering her mother does that more often than her father:

“But that’s because my mother plays hockey and my father doesn’t.”

This quote illustrates that you need to know how to use the restricted code that belongs with the sport or, in other words, have knowledge of the sport in order to give instructions, and not all parents have that. This is confirmed by mother 7:

“Perhaps that’s the difference: we don’t play korfbal, so she actually knows it better than we do.”

If knowledgeable parents decide to give instructions, however, children sometimes experience a conflict between what the coaches say and what these parents say, as daughter 7 illustrates about the mother of a teammate:

“Because our coaches want us to play a bit and then fill in positions, but she starts saying ‘fill in the feed position’ immediately, but she doesn’t know what the coaches say.”

Touching on the status difference between coaches and parents discussed previously, children are more inclined to listen to their coach rather than to parents, even if these parents are familiar with the sport.

A second way in which parents might influence their children in the instructional context is by discussing matches at home. More than half of the parents talk about matches with their children, sometimes discussing what went well and what they can improve on. This appears to be a conscious effort to transfer the belief that skill improvement is important. Parents explain that skill and skill improvement as targeted by the coaches is one of the reasons to continue with sport, as mother 9 experiences:

“Then he’ll be the club champion, and he feels like he is a stalwart guy, so I think he will continue to play tennis.”

Regarding the value parents place in sport participation, it is likely they thus transfer this belief consciously and try to stimulate skill development.

In addition to coaches and parents, PE teachers also influence socialization in the instructional context. Most children agree that during PE you learn skills, but also the rules of games and sports. What is being learned, however, seems to depend on the teacher, as daughter 6 perceives a difference between the lessons given by her regular female teacher and her male PE teacher:

“Mr [teacher] does more sports and Ms [teacher] more games and stuff, and sometimes the turn units.”

Daughter 7 and son 8 also perceive this difference between their teachers, and daughter 7 prefers the lesson of the PE teacher:

“You can play more sports, you have more sports, and you can learn a bit better how to play that sport, actually.”

This learning appears to be implicit, however, because the children indicate that apart from generic instructions about rules at the start of a game, little is said about technique or tactics during the PE lessons.

With regard to PE lessons, the parents know little about how they are conducted. Though they have contact with the regular teacher, they do not talk with the teacher assigned specifically for PE. They do value a knowledgeable teacher, who provides many different sports and activities during PE. As father 5 puts it:

“Imagine you have a PE teacher who is crazy about football, so [...] they play football 104 times a year, then I would say that is not proper PE.”

Proper PE thus introduces children to different sport and children mainly learn how to play the sports rather than conscious knowledge about the sport.

When asking about the learning of skills and knowledge, children’s answers suggest they have a varied understanding of the concept ‘learning’. Some children mainly refer to learning rules during PE or knowledge they can in other ways verbalize. Others also refer to more practical knowledge such as

skills as something you can learn. Daughter 6, however, believes any type of learning is minimal during PE:

“You only just do things, you don’t learn very much.”

This suggests that daughter 6 and perhaps also those who only refer to theoretical knowledge of sports believe learning mainly to occur through spoken or written language, similar to how they report to learn in other lessons. Getting better at performing practical tasks is not included in their concept of learning. Another possibility that agrees with the emotional expression daughter 6 displayed when answering these questions, is that she associates sport and PE with fun, whereas learning is not believed to be fun. How these beliefs about the concept of learning have arisen, is not clear, but it clearly affects children’s beliefs about sport-related activities.

In conclusion we can say that the coach is perceived to be the greatest source of knowledge, providing socialization in the instructional context. Children learn techniques during practice and tactics during matches, mainly through verbal instructions and an occasional exemplary performance by the coach. Through the restricted code, they acquire both beliefs about the sport and a disposition to play the sport according to specific principles. In addition to coaches, parents can also provide tactical advice during, but only when they are knowledgeable about the sport i.e. have access to the restricted code. Furthermore, they can help their children with their skill development and tactical insight by discussing played matches at home. Skill development is also perceived to be targeted during PE. This appears to happen somewhat implicitly, though, considering that PE teachers limit their verbal instructions to explaining the rules. Both children and parents value PE lessons with variable content and different sports, which occurs more often with the PE teacher than the regular teacher. The understanding of the concept of ‘learning’, both during PE and during sports, seems to differ between children, but how this has come about remains unknown. In the following paragraph, socialization in sport in the imaginative context will be discussed, where children learn by experimenting with peers.

3.4 Imaginative context

This paragraph deals with socialization in the imaginative context, where children experiment with rules and behaviour and learn through that. We will focus first on what children actually believe and do. The second focus is on the influence parents have in this context.

Most of the children interviewed play outside on a daily basis, both during school breaks and after school. Parents also indicate that their children are fairly outgoing, believing it is in children’s nature to go outside to play without giving it much thought. The peers the interviewed children play with at any moment are usually the same, namely the children from the neighbourhood who often attend the same school. The games children play either during school or after school, however, differ to some extent.

During school breaks, the children play with large groups. They are likely to play sports that accommodate such groups, such as football and a variation on hockey. Two children from different schools explained a game they played regularly during school breaks, called ‘tableing’. Using a ping pong table and a regular sized football, they play a game where they have to bounce the ball on the table and the next person has to bounce it back. Other than it being a game with a bigger ball using hands instead of a bat, the rules bear resemblance to the rules for ping pong. This is an example of

the experimenting children engage in when playing with their peers, but also illustrates how children that have no interaction might eventually play similar variations of a game.

After school, children have somewhat more space and opportunities to play, and what they do outside accordingly varies more than during school breaks. Playgrounds are popular with some of the children, mainly those who enjoy swinging, yet son 4 indicates that playgrounds get old:

“There is a playground up front, but the stupid thing is, when we first came here, we went there quite often, but now we know the playground.”

Some children prefer climbing or jumping on the trampoline, whereas others prefer to play sports. Football is still the most popular sport, reaching the top three for outdoor play of all children. In addition, all children indicate they would like to play their own sport outside, though son 8 for example perceives this to be somewhat difficult:

“Hockey, I think that’s the most fun, but that’s not really practical on the street. (I: No, because the ball will shoot away) Yeah, or you break your stick.”

On the other hand, daughter 6, who also plays hockey, says that according to Teun de Nooijer (former Dutch hockey player), it is good for your skills to practice on the street. One way or the other, all children like to play their own sport outside, if it is possible.

In addition, when playing a sport at a club, children do not only participate in practice and matches, but may also play amongst themselves at the club, as son 8 indicates for example:

“Without a match or practice and then you’ll see a few kids from your own team coming in and you just play ball with them.”

The words ‘play ball’ suggest this activity is perceived as something different than the sport of hockey, touching on children’s conceptualization of sport. During the interview, children were asked to choose sports they had played, either during outdoor play, during the holidays, PE or at a sport club, from a list with 33 items. Daughter 7, about halfway into the exercise, asked:

“Can it also be what you did just for fun and not really for real?”

Hereby it is suggested that for an activity to be regarded as participation in a sport, it has to be ‘real’, from which we might conclude that ‘real’ includes using all the rules of a sport and might also include some form of competition. ‘Real’ sampling of sports is thus only believed to happen at sport clubs, for which the parents provide ample opportunity.

This sampling could also be seen as a way of experimenting, structured by parents, who want their children to find the sport they enjoy most. Parents also influence the choices children have for outdoor play by buying the things to play with. When the children are outside, they have between 15 and 27 objects to play with provided by their parents. Six objects are possessed by all children: a bicycle, ice skates, regular skates, a kite, a football and a water gun. This reflects the popularity of cycling and skating in Dutch culture and football as outdoor play. In addition, all children have items at home from the sports they participate in.

Parents also influence the time children have for outdoor play. On some days, children are unable to play after school, because they have other activities such as organized sport. Son 2 for example does not play outside every day:

"I actually don't do that on Monday, because I just barely have time."

Spare time to play outside is thus limited by the amount of organized sport children participate in, leading mother 3 to comment:

"Not too much, she needs to have time to play as well, a little bit of own spare time, that is also a conscious choice."

In effect, even though parents stimulate their children to participate in organized sport, they are conscious of leaving spare time for the children to engage in play with their friends, transmitting that both modes of PA are important. For children, as discussed earlier, it is a routine to go outside to play, rather than something they consciously choose for.

In summary, we see that children have a disposition to go outside to play. It is communicated as a routine, regarding both the playmates and the games they play. Popular games or sports are the self-invented 'tableing', football and the own sport. When playing this for fun during outdoor play, however, some children perceive the activity to be different from what they would call sport. Parents influence outdoor play after school greatly in terms of available time and equipment. In structuring the activities to have room for both organized sport and outdoor play, they seem to want to transfer that outdoor play is important. The final paragraph will discuss how children learn about emotions and what they convey in the interpersonal context.

3.5 Interpersonal context

This paragraph discusses socialization in the interpersonal context. In this context, children learn about their own emotions and those of others and learn how to regulate their emotions. Though all the contexts overlap to some extent, the interpersonal context shows the greatest overlap with the other socialization contexts. Nevertheless, in this paragraph we discuss those elements that stand apart, focusing both on positive and negative emotions associated with sport.

All parent primarily display positive emotions when it comes to sport. Both children and parents stress that sport should be fun and connect the effects of doing something fun directly with sport. Mother 2 for example experiences happiness when playing sport and tries to explain this to her children as well:

"And just keep saying 'because every time you are done, you're very happy, you feel very happy, simply when you did this and this and this' and to refer to that."

She makes it very explicit, using elaborated code to relate her own experiences and expectations. Some parents, such as mother 2, but also mother 9 believe that the way parents talk about their own sport experiences influences the way children perceive sport:

"Because I've always been positive about that sport, so I think that has always had some effect, I think everything we do is important."

Positive sentiments thus appear to convey the perceived importance of doing something, causing children to feel similarly. Another way parents express this is by being present during a match. Children all enjoy their parents watching their matches, and the frequent eye contact parents mention suggests children are sharing their emotions or looking for approval. A parent's positive response could then strengthen the positive emotions children have or weaken any negative emotions they might experience about what they have done.

The parents themselves also enjoy watching their children play sports very much, but have multiple other reasons to be present during games. Mother 1 for example explains she watches matches to express interest in her son's activities:

"Out of interest, yeah, especially so you can discuss it afterwards, and that you just know what a child has experienced so you can place that, actually."

Most parents believe that expressing interest is important, both to them and to their children. They seem to feel it as an obligation to their children, but one they are quite positive about because they enjoy watching their children. Mother 9 also links this to her own experiences from when she played sports as a child:

"I know of myself that I always enjoyed it when my father or mother was standing next to the hockey field, or the tennis court, you know, it's just nice to feel supported and yeah, I want to be there for that reason."

Parents thus primarily give emotional support during matches, already simply by being there, but also through an approving body language when their children make eye-contact and by cheering them on. All children indicate that their parents mainly give positive feedback and praise, which is also what parents try to do, according to mother 8:

"What I notice is that especially young boys [...] when you just approach them positively, with 'come on, get that ball' and 'that one is yours' you know, you simply notice that they put in more effort."

Parents and children explain they mainly give or receive compliments and perceive this to be a reward in itself. Some perceive the joy of playing is a reward already, such as son 8:

"Most of the time I have a lot of fun, so that is the greatest reward!"

Most parents and children also believe that monetary rewards eventually have an adverse effect on fun for both the continually rewarded child and the other children in the team, though it can also help give a child the confidence or incentive to do something. Son 8 explains this double effect of rewarding:

"On the one hand I think it's good, because he gets more confidence, but on the other hand it's like, it's a game and it's not about getting money for that or candy."

Rewarding behaviour could thus increase the positive emotions, but there could also be a downside when a child does not succeed in getting a reward. Daughter 7 also believes that rewarding will lead to more egocentric behaviour. When playing a teamsport, however, social behaviour is more

important, because that is more fun for everybody. Thus, when a small group of people only play amongst themselves:

“There’s just no fun in it, because you are standing there for nothing, you might as well not be playing.”

Mother 4 agrees that social behaviour is most important in team sports, so a single player should not be rewarded nor punished:

“It’s also important to go for it together and that it then eventually doesn’t matter whether you have a weak player in your team, no, you play for it as a team, and it’s not the case that when you’ve lost that it’s a single person’s fault, no, you lost as a team and you also win as a team, and that’s what I find important.”

These quotes illustrate that children and parents believe rewards always have a downside, if not for the rewarded child, then for other children in the team or the group.

An aspect of sport thus seems to be that all those involved should have fun, making social behaviour important. Children can practice with that at the sport club, but it is also an aspect of PE. The children indicate that PE teachers pay much attention to appropriate social behaviour, such as not skipping ahead in line or bullying. In doing this, they increase the enjoyment for the children.

Even though children and parents believe sport should be fun, sometimes children do not experience a match as fun, perhaps when they have lost or when they felt the opponent or the referee did not play or judge fairly. Son 4 for example recalls a match where the referee was biased and he was angry:

“I just don’t like it. So when the referee is unfair, I will play unfair as well!”

His mother responds:

“But that doesn’t make much sense, dear, we already discussed that [...] That the referee was biased, of course you can say that, but in the end it’s about whether you played a fun game, and also when you have lost you can have played a very enjoyable match.”

This conversation exemplifies that parents discuss negative emotions about sport with their children, trying to tone it down and stress the importance of positive emotions. Winning, however, leads to more positive emotions, so children enjoy winning more than they enjoy losing, even though most children and parents do not believe winning to be most important. Some children, on the other hand, do seem to believe winning has more value and leads to more approval. Daughter 3, for example, indicates she plays a good game when she wins, but mother 3 responds:

“I think that when I see you really tried, we really don’t mind if it didn’t go to well, then perhaps the other one was really, I don’t know, better, and that’s fine as well. As long as she shows that she, that she really goes for it.”

Parents thus stress that fun and perseverance are more important than winning. With regard to rewards in the form of compliments, all parents indicate they mainly praise their children for working hard, rather than for winning. Having fun and putting in effort are valued high by the parents, and for

most children this has led to the disposition to believe that a good game is one where you give it your all, independent of results. Unconsciously, however, the way parents respond when a child has won or lost could create the impression that winning is important, thus causing some children to believe this.

In the interpersonal context, positive emotions are perceived to be more valuable than negative emotions. Positive emotions conveyed by parents about their own sport experiences but also about the performance of their children is perceived to strongly influence how children think about sport. More specifically, through an elaborated code parents convey that having fun and trying hard is more important than winning. Even though negative emotions are occasionally experienced in sport, for example when a match is lost, parents talk with their children and remind them that having fun and trying hard are the things that matter, making it easier to cope with losing. On a larger scale, children and parents believe sport should be fun for all those involved, not just themselves. Social behaviour where everyone is included is valued highly, which is why children and parents do not appreciate material rewards for single players. Social behaviour is also targeted by PE teachers, making sure children play by the rules.

4. Discussion

In this chapter, we will discuss the results in order to answer the research questions. The first question about whether the sports habitus influences the perceived connection between PA, sport and health will be addressed in the first paragraph. The second and third paragraphs discuss the perceived influence of parents and other social agents on the children's sports habitus. Then, some limitations of our research will be addressed and recommendations will be given for future research.

4.1 Purpose of sport participation

Regarding an active lifestyle and the relation between sport and health, one of the purposes of this study was to examine this relation. In contrast with Wheeler (2012), health was not one of the primary reasons for parents to stimulate their children to participate in sports. Though parents agreed that organized sport is a mode of PA and can contribute to a lifestyle with sufficient PA, they would only consider sport for health if a child is not very outgoing and does not move sufficiently during everyday life. Most children, on the other hand, believe sport and health are intrinsically linked as well, not just through PA. This contrasts the findings of Stuij (2013) who found that mainly children from low SES families directly connected sport participation with health. If these children are to embody the belief that sport and health are intrinsically linked, making it part of their habitus, that could indicate a generational shift in the perception of sport and health. With this young generation being increasingly overweight (Schönbeck et al., 2011), it gives good hope that this pattern might be changed.

Regarding changing patterns, most interviewees believe PE is given to promote an active lifestyle and to introduce children to various sports, hoping 'something sticks'. When looking at the formal requirements for PE, both the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and introducing sports are mentioned as goals for PE, in addition to enhancing the social development of children (Bax, 2010). Not all three goals are regarded to be equally important, however. Most PE teachers indicate that introduction to sports is less important than promoting an active lifestyle and the personal and social development of children (Bax, 2010). Parents and children, by contrast, seem to be skeptical about the role of PE in

improving health. In addition, rather than looking at PE for developing personal and social skills, parents indicate they stimulate their children to participate in organized sport for exactly this reason. They perceive the social skills and personal development required in sport to be distinctly different from that in school or during outdoor play. Bailey (2006) has indeed found that sport can contribute to this development, but also that PE serves a similar function. Nonetheless, it is possible that parents are referring to skills that do not overlap in PE and organized sport. This question, however, remains unanswered.

In all, where children perceive sport to be healthy no matter what other exercise people might get, parents believe sport mainly to be healthy as a supplement to an inadequate amount of daily PA. Even though PE teachers believe their lessons to help create a healthy lifestyle as well, parents and children are skeptical about their success and mainly perceive PE to be simply for fun and to learn about different sports. The added value of organized sport participation, so the parents believe, lies in the opportunities it offers to further develop social and personal skills in ways not offered in for example school and outdoor play.

4.2 Parents

The second aim of this research is to contribute to the theoretical knowledge about the socialization process, using the concepts of Bernstein and Bourdieu. This paragraph discusses the findings with respect to parents, the main investigated social agent in our study. We will illuminate the dispositions parents seem to express most strongly, explain how they attempt to transfer these and how successful they appear to have been. In addition, we will compare the parental behaviour with regard to sport and PA with behaviour associated with healthy eating (Gevers et al., submitted), which is the other side of the coin in reducing obesity.

Similar to the findings of Stuij (2013) all interviewed parents prefer their children to participate in organized sport in addition to unorganized play. Comparable to Wheeler's (2012) interviewees, parents explain that participation in organized sport is regarded to be normal. They are thus disposed to believe that sport should be normal for their children. Even though they indicate that peers who participate in sport make it seem normal for their children to participate in sports, parents also seem to consciously try to steer their children towards organized sport. Some do this through role modeling, whilst others explain they have specific rules regarding participation in organized sports: children are obliged to participate. This practice of setting rules bears resemblance to one of the parenting practices seen in stimulating healthy eating (Gevers et al., submitted). Similar to how parents might set rules about the number of snacks children are allowed to eat, parents set rules about the number of sports a child should participate in. This relates both to the preference for organized sport, which sets a minimum of one sport, and to the time investment parents are willing to make, leading to a maximum. Despite children thus being obliged to participate in organized sport, they do not seem to feel it as an obligation, but rather as a routine or even a passion. Parents thus seem successful in transferring the disposition to believe that sport should be normal.

Stuij (2013) found that children from families with high SES learn about the appropriateness of a sport based on their family's capital through their parents. The present study shows that children often base their sport choice on the sport participation of parents, siblings or peers from a similar social standing, suggesting appropriateness is indeed taught through the family, but also through the greater social network. Nevertheless, parents and children do not seem to be conscious of these

preferences for sports. Parents indicate they are more interested in finding a sport that matches their child's personality, stimulating them to sample a variety of sports. Another explanation for the greater variety of sports that parents unconsciously seem to find appropriate is that preferences of high SES families such as interviewed in this study have come to include this greater variety of sports. Stempel (2005) refers to these families as cultural omnivores, suggesting that parents have the luxury of picking a suitable sport for their child from a greater range of sports, without losing status. That also allows them to let their child pick the sport they want to play, because chances are slim he or she will pick a sport that is not appropriate.

Concurrently, involving children in choosing the sport they want to participate in seems to heighten their commitment to the sport. According to the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), in allowing children to decide which sport they want to play, the need for autonomy is satisfied, leading to intrinsic motivation for the activity. This increases the chance they will continue in sport participation (Jõesaar & Hein, 2011), which is also a goal of the parents. By involving their children in choosing the sport they want to play, parents thus keep participation in sport voluntary, similar to the findings of Wheeler (2012), but also increase motivation for the sport. Comparing this practice with the parenting practices surrounding healthy eating (Gevers et al., submitted), they again seem very similar. Involving children in choosing sports seems just as effective as involving children in food purchasing to increase their motivation for preferred behaviour. In the fields of healthy eating and PA, or energy-related behaviour, allowing children to sample and keeping the commitment voluntary thus seems to be the key in stimulating continued commitment to their choice.

Voluntary commitment thus stimulates continued participation because children have indicated they want to participate in a sport rather than being forced to participate in a sport. For parents, their children's participation in sport seems to lead to some obligations, such as investing time and money and showing other supportive behaviour, that parents are happy to comply with. Some parents also support their children's activities by volunteering for the sport club, which was not found by Wheeler (2012). Some of these parents had previous experience in the sport, whereas others did not. This suggests there might also be a socialization process the other way around, from child to parent (Dorsch, Smith & McDonough, 2009). Parents thus start to become involved in their children's sport rather than the other way around. Cuskelly & Harrington (1997) refer to this type of volunteers as 'role dependees' who feel obligated to volunteer because their family is active at the sport club. This sentiment was also expressed by the parents and might explain a part of why parents volunteer, yet Cuskelly & Harrington (1997) also mention that specifically volunteers in the role dependees category were likely to give many other reasons to be involved as well. What is clear is that not only children participate in a sport club, but parents are likely to be active as well.

Perhaps the most strongly expressed belief of both children and parents is that sport should be fun and enjoyable. Keeping commitment voluntary seems to increase the likelihood that children continue to enjoy a sport, but parents also consciously stress positive emotions surrounding sport participation. During matches, parents are primarily positive, giving praise and compliments and cheering their children on. Additionally, parents stress that hard work is more important than winning. Winning is perceived to be more fun, but with stimulating their children to work hard during every match rather than to win every match, negative emotions are believed to be less strong when children do not succeed in winning. Even though most children seem to have internalized this belief, some have not. Possibly their parent's body language or behaviour when a child has won or lost

expresses they find winning important, which conflicts with what they say. Another possibility is that the parents think the statement 'hard work is more important than winning' is socially desirable, causing them to share this sentiment rather than their actual belief. Regarding the witnessed discussions during the interviews, however, it seems more likely that the way parents act does not always conform to what they believe, sending conflicting messages to their children.

Rewarding behaviour, to continue with, is another way parents can use to show what they believe is important. For these parents, rewarding consists of giving compliments and praise rather than material rewards, comparable to the findings of Wheeler (2012), but contrasting those of Gevers et al. (submitted). Some parents are conscious not to give material rewards, believing it to have adverse effects on social behaviour, yet others have not given it much thought but simply perceive it to be normal only to give praise. This is reflected in the beliefs the children express, indicating parents are successful in transferring their dispositions to their children. Interestingly, some parents and children also believe material rewarding to have an effect on motivation, primarily by directing motivation towards getting the reward rather than towards playing the game. These suspicions that rewards influence motivation are congruent with the findings of Deci, Koestner and Ryan (1999), who found that rewarding with praise rather than with material rewards keeps intrinsic motivation higher. This illustrates yet another type of parental behaviour that increases the probability of continuation, but raises the question whether parents are equally successful in the domain of healthy eating as in the domain of sport participation.

As discussed in the paragraph about the purpose of sport, parents see both sport and outdoor play as important. This is the reason they consciously plan spare time for their children, as Stuij (2013) has also found. With regard to outdoor play, parents mainly perceive it to be important for health, both bodily and emotionally. Much attention has been paid to the positive effects of exercise on emotions (e.g. Leith & Taylor, 1990; Rendi, Szabo, Szabó, Velencei & Kovács, 2008), and concurrently, some parents also use exercise to influence emotions. Using sport for emotional regulation seems to bear some resemblance to emotional feeding (Gevers et al., submitted), but rather than prescribing specific activities, children can choose what they want to do themselves. Intrinsic motivation for the activity is thus likely to stay high (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition to choices in the direct environment, such as various playgrounds, children also have choices with regard to equipment. Two parents specifically mention making sure equipment is available as a conscious strategy to stimulate their children to play and availability of equipment is indeed positively associated with participation in sport (Timperio et al., 2013). Similar to availability of healthy foods (Gevers et al., submitted), availability of sporting gear and equipment thus increases the likelihood that children show preferred behaviour.

4.3 Social agents

Meanwhile, children are not only influenced by their parents at home, but also by siblings, peers, by their teacher during PE and by their coach at the sport club. This paragraph discusses perceived socialization by these agents, thereby contributing to the theoretical knowledge about the socialization process.

As expected, children appear to perceive their older siblings as role models regarding the specific sports they participate in. Many children are drawn to sports older siblings already play. This could be because older siblings play sport-related games with them outside, as some of our interviewees do

with their younger siblings, but it is also possible they come in contact with these sports because they have to accompany their older siblings to the sport club, as parents indicate. Both reasons confirm that participation of siblings is exemplary to the children. Additionally, the habitus of siblings is presumably somewhat similar, making it likely that siblings strengthen what is expressed by the parents. Contrary to Côté (1999), we have not found evidence for siblings as role models with regard to work ethics, such as working hard for a sport. These beliefs were mainly expressed by parents and transferred to the children. This difference might be explained by the fact that the interviewed athletes in Côté's study were 18 years of age and asked for a retrospective analysis, whereas the interviewed children were 9 or 10 and reported mainly about the present day. It is possible the interviewed children do not yet realize the influence of their siblings, but only will do so in hindsight when they are older.

In addition to siblings, peers are also suggested to play a primarily unconscious role in sport socialization. Firstly, coming from families with often similar backgrounds, peers also express that sport participation is normal and show which sports are appropriate. On the other hand, children are also likely to play with peers who have somewhat different backgrounds, not directly introduced through their parents' social network but encountered at school, at the club or in the neighbourhood. Together, they construct preferences about what games to play, such as football or 'tableing', experiment with rules and new games and decide what is popular and what is not. Apparently, not only the parents shape children's socialization through their social and cultural capital, but children also have their own social capital in terms of friends and cultural capital in terms of popular culture that together may shape children's own socialization (Chin & Phillips, 2004). Peers thus seem to be very important in sport socialization, but the results suggest children and some parents are not aware of this.

As Stuij (2013) already indicated, the PE teacher is not perceived to be a major source of sport-specific knowledge for children with a high SES. In promoting a healthy lifestyle and teaching children social behaviour, the two other goals of PE, parents also believed PE teachers had a very limited influence. Children on the other hand perceived social behaviour to be the main focus of PE teachers based on their comments during class. Opposing the PE teacher is the coach at the sport club, who is believed to be the primary agent in teaching sport-specific knowledge and skills. Coaches seem to transfer values and behavioural patterns that are specific for the sport both through talking and behaviour. Children and parents appear to see the coach as the authority, having a higher status than parents during matches, which causes them to believe parents should refrain from giving instructions during matches.

4.4 Limitations of the study

This paragraph discusses some limitations of the current study. To begin with, only parents from high SES families responded to the informative letter used to recruit participants. Though this has led to a wealth of new information, Bourdieu (1978) specifically theorizes the sports habitus differs in families with a different amount of economic, cultural and social capital, which has been confirmed by Stuij (2013). The results of this research can thus not be generalized to include low SES families.

Secondly, even though as researchers we are expected to be objective and not introduce any bias during interviews, we cannot help but be influenced by our own habitus. Despite efforts to maintain a neutral pose during questions about for example rewarding behaviour or the role of parents and

coaches during matches, our own dispositions will likely have tainted the way we posed the questions and hence might have influenced the answers. Additionally, we have an understanding of concepts such as sport or learning that might not be shared by our interviewees but that have shaped our questions and exercises and shaped the responses. Specifically the conceptualization of sport seemed to differ greatly among our group of children and parents, some including chess as a sport whereas others did not, or including only activities that lead to competition as sports. We have, to the best of our abilities, aimed to acknowledge these differences in conceptualization while searching for generalities, but such cannot be done completely objectively.

4.5 Recommendations for future research

The current study has answered some questions, but raised others too. These need to be addressed in future research. Firstly, future research ought to include families with a low SES, allowing for comparison with high SES families. In assessing differences in dispositions to believe and to act, it could lead to more effective policy with regard to sport and health, directed more specifically at different groups. Furthermore, as discussed previously, there was no consensus about what constitutes a sport. It would be interesting to investigate which activities parents and children include in the concept of sport and how this in turn influences their behaviour. This is a more narrow focus on the sports habitus, but one that appears crucial to fully understand differences between people.

In addition to addressing limitations, future research should also investigate some of the unexpected findings. The case of volunteering, where parents seem to be influenced by their children rather than the other way around, and the children's shaping of their own socialization through their social and cultural capital separately from their families, seem to contrast the reproduction of habitus as theorized by Bourdieu (1978). Investigating these processes could sharpen the theory about habitus and possibly inspire new theories about socialization. Moreover, this study suggests that much of the socialization in sport takes place on match days. Following families on such days, documenting what parents and children say, do, or otherwise express, should prove insightful and would help in describing the socialization in more detail.

5. References

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