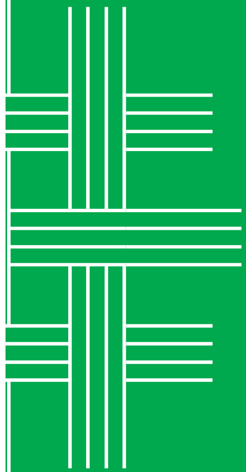


Improving young people's mental health has become a priority for policy-makers in Norway as elsewhere. Children and young people's mental health is viewed as a central part of the social mandate of schools in Norway and school physical education (PE) has been presented as a suitable setting for health (of which mental health is an integral part) promotion. Few studies, however, have explored young people's perceptions and experiences of PE and the possible consequences for their mental health, the departure point for this study. The study approaches the topic sociologically by focusing on the processes through which PE is enacted, viewing PE as interdependent with processes within the life-stage Norwegian youth find themselves inevitably enmeshed in.

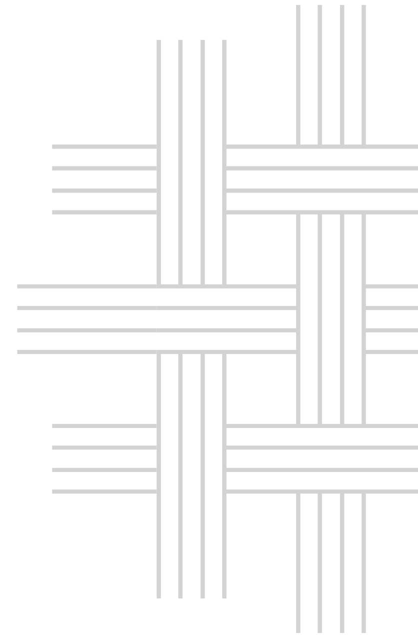
This was a qualitative study involving youngsters from the 10th grade in secondary schools in Norway. The overarching theme to emerge was that PE was valued by the students for what it was not as much as what it was. The appeal of PE often lay in being different and a break from "normal" school lessons and, at the same time, an opportunity for informal social interaction and strengthening social bonds. Enjoyment of PE was perceived as an antidote to their increasingly academic, routinized and performance-oriented school lives. However, processes relating to the organization, delivery and assessment of lessons meant that these benefits were sometimes eroded.

This study sheds light upon social processes that can have consequences for some of the building blocks of mental health among young people such as self-identity, self-esteem and self-worth. Furthermore, the study has highlighted the potentially negative consequences of viewing PE (and physical activity within it) less as "play" and more as "utility". An unintended consequence of this observed drift in a school and PE context may be that it diminishes its potential contribution to mental health.

Inland Norway
University of
Applied Sciences

Linda Røset • Physical Education and mental health: A study of Norwegian 15-year-olds • 2019

Inland Norway
University of
Applied Sciences



Faculty of Education and Pedagogy

Linda Røset

PhD Dissertation

Physical Education and mental health: A study of Norwegian 15-year-olds

PhD Dissertation in Teaching and Teacher Education
2019

Ph.d.-avhandlinger i profesjonsrettede lærerutdanningsfag

Nr. 1 **Irene Trønnes Strøm** – «Jeg er ikke norsk, vet du, jeg er internasjonal».
En etnografisk studie av musikalsk aktørskap blant ungdom i krysskulturelle kontekster

Nr. 2 **James Coburn** – The professional development of English language teachers.
Investigating the design and impact of a national in-service EFL teacher education course

Nr. 3 **Stian Vestby** – Folkelige og distingverte fellesskap.
Gentrifisering av countrykultur i Norge – en festivalstudie

Nr. 4 **Ann Margareth Gustavsen** – Kjønnsforskjeller i sosiale og skolefaglige prestasjoner

Nr. 5 **Camilla Kvaal** – Kryssende musikkopplevelser.
En undersøkelse av samspill i en interkulturell praksis

Nr. 6 **Emmarentia Kirchner** – Motivating and Engaging Readers.
A study of pre-adolescent Namibian primary school readers

Nr. 7 **Gro Løken** – Utsatte grupper og kjønnsforskjeller i spesialundervisning og ordinær opplæring

Nr. 8 **Elin Stengrundet** – Opprørets variasjoner.
Autoritetstematikk i fire dikt av Henrik Wergeland

Nr. 9 **Even Igland Diesen** – «Når vi svinger inn på Macern gjør vi det på ordentlig!»:
En studie i norsk raplyrikk

Nr. 10 **Ellen Nesset Mælan** – Læreres praksis og elevers psykiske helse:
En eksplorerende studie i ungdomsskolen

Nr. 11 **Marit Elise Lyngstad** – English teachers' choices and beliefs about literature in the
Norwegian upper secondary classroom

Nr. 12 **Linda Røset** – Physical education and mental health: A study of Norwegian 15-year-olds

Linda Røset

Physical Education and mental health:

A study of Norwegian 15-year-olds

PhD Dissertation in Teacher and Teacher Education

2019

Faculty of Education and Pedagogy

Inland Norway
University of
Applied Sciences

Printed by: Flisa Trykkeri A/S

Place of publication: Elverum

© The author 2019

This material is protected by copyright law. Without explicit authorisation, reproduction is only allowed in so far it is permitted by law or by agreement with a collecting society.

PhD Thesis in Teaching and Teacher Education no.12

ISBN printed version: 978-82-8380-152-1

ISBN digital version: 978-82-8380-153-8

ISSN printed version: 2464-4390

ISSN printed version: 2464-4404

Sammendrag

Unge menneskers psykiske helse har fått stadig økende oppmerksomhet av politikere og beslutningstakere både i Norge og internasjonalt. Barn og unges psykiske helse er ansett å være en sentral del av den norske skolens mandat, og kroppsøving løftes frem som en arena som kan fremme psykisk (så vel som fysisk) helse. Det finnes imidlertid få studier som har undersøkt ungdommers oppfatninger av og erfaringer med kroppsøvingsfaget, og de mulige konsekvenser disse oppfatningene og erfaringene kan ha for deres psykiske helse. Dette er utgangspunktet for denne studien. Studien har en sosiologisk tilnærming til teamet ved å fokusere på prosessene som utspiller seg i kroppsøving, og ved å se prosessene i kroppsøving i relasjon – i et gjensidig avhengighetsforhold – til andre prosesser i livsfasen som ungdommer befinner seg i.

Det ble gjennomført en kvalitativ datainnsamling med 31 fokusgrupper som involverte 148 tiende trinns elever (15 – 16 år) ved åtte ungdomsskoler i Norge. Det overordnede temaet som vokste frem var at elevene verdsatte kroppsøving like mye for hva det *ikke* er som for hva det faktisk er. Kroppsøving appellerte først og fremst i kraft av å være noe annerledes og en pause *fra* vanlige skoletimer, samtidig som det også ga mulighet til uformelt sosialt samvær og til å styrke sosiale relasjoner. Glede og trivsel i kroppsøving ble – uavhengig av sportslig kompetanse og erfaring – forbundet med forfriskende og befriende opplevelser som en motvekt til et stadig mer akademisk, rutinepreget og prestasjonsorientert skoleliv. Prosesser relatert til organisering og gjennomføring av timen samt læreres vurdering av elevenes kompetanse (også opplevd som verdsetting) la imidlertid en demper på de gode opplevelsene.

Studien viser at de sosiale prosessene som finner sted i kroppsøving kan ha konsekvenser for grunnleggende dimensjoner i unge menneskers psykiske helse som for eksempel identitetsutvikling, selvtillit og opplevelse av egenverd. I den grad kroppsøving kan påvirke unge menneskers habitus (forutsetninger, verdier og handlingsmønstre) og identitetsutvikling (knyttet det å oppleve seg selv som «sporty» eller ikke, for eksempel), kan de sosiale prosessene som utspiller i kroppsøving vise seg å ha langtidskonsekvenser. Studien har også belyst mulige negative konsekvenser av tendensen til å fremheve «nytte-verdien» av kroppsøving (og fysisk aktivitet som en del av dette) fremfor «leken» (Gibson & Malcolm, 2019). En utilsiktet konsekvens av en slik utvikling i skole og kroppsøvingskonteksten kan være at potensialet for å legge til rette for psykisk helse reduseres. På bakgrunn av dette konkluderer studien med at kroppsøving bør forsvares og legitimeres som fysisk rekreasjon som motvekt til den ellers akademiserte og teoretiske skolehverdagen.

Abstract

Improving young people's mental health has become a priority for policy-makers in Norway as elsewhere. Children and young people's mental health is viewed as a central part of the social mandate of schools in Norway and school physical education (PE) has been presented as a suitable setting for mental (as well as physical) health promotion. Few studies, however, have explored young people's perceptions and experiences of PE and the possible consequences for their mental health, the departure point for this study. The study approaches the topic sociologically by focusing on the processes through which PE is enacted, viewing PE as interdependent with processes within the life-stage Norwegian youth find themselves inevitably enmeshed in.

Qualitative data were generated by 31 focus groups involving 148 youngsters from the 10th grade (15–16-year-olds) in eight secondary schools in Norway. The overarching theme to emerge was that PE was valued by the students for what it was *not* as much as what it was. The appeal of PE often lay in being different and a break *from* "normal" school lessons and, at the same time, an opportunity for informal social interaction and strengthening social bonds. Enjoyment of PE – even among those with limited sporting competence – was understood as giving rise to cathartic benefits and as an antidote to their increasingly academic, routinized and performance-oriented school lives. However, processes relating to the organization, delivery and assessment of lessons meant that these benefits were sometimes eroded.

In terms of the overarching research question regarding the consequences of PE for young people's mental health, the study has shown that social processes such as PE can have profound consequences for some of the building blocks of mental health among young people: for example, self-identity, self-esteem and self-worth. Insofar as processes such as PE (and sport, for that matter, in countries such as Norway) can contribute to young people's habituses (their predispositions, values and routine behaviours) and through this their developing identities (as sporty or not, for example), processes such as PE may well have longer term consequences. In the process, the study has highlighted the potentially negative consequences of the trend towards viewing PE (and PA within it) less as "play" and more as "utility" (Gibson & Malcolm, 2019). An unintended consequence of this observed drift in a school and PE context may be that it diminishes its potential contribution to mental health. It is concluded that as far as the mental health of young people is concerned, the best justification for PE becomes physical *recreation* as a solution to (academic) schooling rather than PE as education.

Preface

This dissertation presents one of the three subprojects in the "School, learning and mental health"-study at the Inland University College of Applied Science. This subproject in particular has explored the various processes within and in relation to physical education as perceived by the youngsters themselves along the mental health continuum between negative and positive. I hope, therefore, that this study can shed light on experiences and perceptions that numbers and statistics may possibly not account for.

This study would not have been doable without the schools and, not least, the students involved. I am immensely grateful to the schools and their willingness to take part, but even more thankful to, not to say impressed by, the 10th graders` engagement and reflections. I sincerely hope moving on to upper secondary went well.

Project administrator, Professor Miranda Thurston, has provided invaluable insight, knowledge, reflections and support and always had best practice in the foreground. Professor Ken Green, my main supervisor, has never given up, provided clear advices and directions whenever the PhD student went off on a tangent, meaning, frequently throughout the process. Thank you both, for all the time and effort you have invested in order to keep the project, this thesis (as well as the student) on the "right track". Thorsteinn Sigurjónsson, my co-supervisor, and Hege Eikeland Tjomsland: alongside possessing undisputable professional skills, you both are reflected, empathetic and caring persons.

To all the people at the PhD programme at PROFF, thank you for including me. This has been an educative journey. Ellen, Ingeborg, Patrick, we have been a good team. Being involved with the Phd students at TA and Hamar has made the process a little less lonesome, and considerably more enjoyable.

Last, but certainly not least, to my family: Erik, you are the anchor in my life. Oskar, Jenny and Fredrik, *my* youngsters, I am so proud of you. Thank you so much for enduring. One main lesson learned in this process: Happiness is best when shared (from the movie "Into the wild").

Elverum, Oktober 2019

Linda Røset

Table of contents

Sammendrag i

Abstract ii

Preface iii

Table of contents v

Note on the language x

List of abbreviations xi

1. Introduction 1

1.1 Background to the study 1

1.2 Aim of the study 4

1.3 Defining key terms 5

1.3.1 Defining mental health 5

1.3.2 Defining physical education 6

1.3.3 Defining youth 7

1.3.4 Defining physical activity 8

1.4 Structure and content of the thesis 9

2. Literature review 11

2.1 Introduction 11

2.2 The Norwegian education policy context 11

2.2.1 PE as a curriculum subject 13

2.3 Mental health among youth 16

2.3.1 Young people and mental health in Norway 20

2.4 Education, school and mental health 25

2.5 Young people, PA, PE and mental health 29

2.6 Trends in youth studies 38

2.6.1 Youth transitions 38

3. Adopting a figurational sociological persepctive 41
3.1 Introducing sociology 41
3.2 Figurations (networks of interdependency) 42
3.2.1 Figurations, interdependencies and power relations 45
3.3 Figurational sociology and the sociology of emotions 46
3.3.1 The civilizing process, reason and the emotions 46
3.3.2 Socialization, habitus and the emotions 48
3.3.3 Socialization, parents and the family 49
3.3.4 Socialization and schooling 49
3.3.5 Socialization and informalization 50
3.3.6 Habitus 50
3.3.7 Socialization, habitus and identity 52
3.3.8 The emotions, leisure and sport 53
3.4 Figurational sociology, the emotions and mental health 55
3.5 Established and outsiders 56
3.5.1 Figurational sociology and PE, school and mental health 60
4. Methodology and methods 63
4.1 Research strategy 63
4.1.1 Trustworthiness as a criterion for assessing qualitative research 64
4.1.2 Elias and object–adequacy 65
4.2 Research design 67
4.2.1 The sample 67
4.3 Research methods 68
4.3.1 Observations 68
4.3.2 Focus groups 68
4.3.3 Taking a detour via detachment 71
4.3.4 Reflections upon my involvement 71
4.4 Ethical considerations 72

4.5 The research process 74
4.5.1 Sampling and recruiting 75
4.5.2 The interview guide 78
4.5.3 Piloting focus groups 79
4.6 The observations 80
4.7 The focus groups 81
4.8 Analyzing the data 81
4.8.1 Transcribing the interviews 81
4.8.2 Data analysis 82
4.8.3 Coding 82
5. Findings 87
5.1 Being 15 in Norway 87
5.1.1 Balancing increased freedom alongside responsibilities 87
5.1.2 Perceptions of generational change 89
5.1.3 Perceptions of education and schooling 92
5.1.4 Transitioning through secondary school 94
5.1.5 Perceiving schoolwork as a constraint on leisure 97
5.1.6 Combining school and leisure activities 98
5.1.7 School as an arena for socializing 100
5.1.8 Transitioning through the emotional ups and downs of adolescence 102
5.1.9 Perceptions of the ideal-type Norwegian 15-year-old 106
5.1.10 Internalizing the ideal body 109
5.1.11 Turning ideal-type body images into everyday "body pressure" 109
5.1.12 Perceptions of physically active lives 111
5.1.13 Perceiving pressures and expectations as social constraints 114
5.1.14 Pressure from significant others 115
5.1.15 School and the emotions 116
5.1.16 The consequences of social media 118

5.1.17 Growing up in 21st century Norway ... 120
5.2 Youngsters' perceptions of physical education ... 124
5.2.1 PE as mental refreshment ... 124
5.2.2 Enjoying the physicality of PE ... 125
5.2.3 Contrasting PE with the rest of the school day ... 126
5.2.4 The significance of competence and mastery ... 130
5.2.4 The significance of competition ... 130
5.2.6 The significance of the content and delivery of PE ... 131
5.2.7 PE as an arena for social interaction ... 136
5.2.8 PE as a site for constant comparison ... 139
5.2.9 Assessment, grading and evaluation in PE ... 144
5.2.10 Body image in PE ... 150
5.2.11 The process of othering in PE ... 153
5.2.12 The ostensible purpose of PE ... 176
6. Discussion ... 183
6.1 Relating the findings to existing knowledge ... 183
6.1.1 Being 15 in Norway ... 183
6.1.2 PE and mental health ... 187
6.2 Theorizing young people, PE and mental health from a figurational sociological perspective 197
6.2.1 Young people, PE and mental health and the sociology of emotions ... 197
6.2.2 Figurations and interdependencies ... 198
6.2.3 Power, power relations and power ratios ... 200
6.2.4 Established and outsider relationship ... 201
6.2.5 Involvement–detachment ... 205
6.2.6 Psycho-genesis, socio-genesis and the civilizing process ... 208
6.2.7 Habitus ... 210
7. Conclusion ... 213
7.1 Concluding comments ... 213

7.2 Limitations 217

References 221

Appendices 251

Appendix 1 NSD evaluation 253

Appendix 2 Letter to school leader 255

Appendix 3 Letter to PE teachers 257

Appendix 4 Information letter to students and parents 259

Appendix 5 Project time schedule 261

Appendix 6 Interview guide 263

Appendix 7 Overview of schools and focus groups 265

Note on the language

The following points aims to offer some clarification and orientation to various processes pertaining to the thesis, particularly in respect of language translation issues.

Norwegian legislation and reports are included in the thesis. Where titles have no official English translation, these will be written in Norwegian followed by English translation in brackets. Ungdata, as an example, is a cross-national data collection scheme, designed to conduct youth surveys at the municipal level in Norway. The survey is considered to be the most comprehensive source of information on young people's health and well-being in Norwegian context. Ungdata have no other official name. However, Norwegian Directorates and Ministries *do* have official English titles. These have, therefore, been referenced in English and abbreviated accordingly. (See the following list of abbreviations for further information.)

A number of terms in this thesis appear repeatedly. In order to vary the language physical activity and PA are used somewhat interchangeably. Variations in terms referring to the 15-year-olds will be accounted for in section 1.3.3.

In the Norwegian grading scale, grades are expressed by numbers ranging from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest). Thus, when discussing grades, they will appear as numerals in the text.

During the final stage of writing up the thesis, an article based upon some of the findings relating to social processes within PE and mental health has been published. Hence, some of the material and phrasings appear in similar and recognizable form within this thesis. The article is not used as a reference in the thesis, since the thesis was the original source to the article. It is, however, added to the reference list.

List of abbreviations

MER Ministry of Education and Research [Kunnskapsdepartementet]

MHCS Ministry of Health and Care Services [Helse og omsorgsdepartementet]

NDET Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [Utdanningsdirektoratet]

NESH National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities [Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komité for samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora]

NDH Norwegian Directorate for Health [Helsedirektoratet]

NIPH Norwegian Institute for Public Health [Folkehelseinstituttet]

NOU Norwegian public reports, my translation [Noregs offentlege utreiingar]

NSD Norwegian Centre for Research Data [Norsk senter for forskningsdata]

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PA Physical activity

PE Physical education

WHO World Health Organization

1. Introduction

Research on the various "school effects" on youngsters' development has a fairly extensive history, particularly across the Western world (see, e.g., Scheerens, 2013). One particular aspect of development that has received increasing attention in recent years relates to their mental health and the role of schools therein. Physical activity (PA) has been identified as having a role of mental health promotion, especially within a school context. While research in the broad field of PA and mental health has burgeoned in recent years, the evidence for any causal link remains somewhat elusive. Within the school context, for the most part, this research has concentrated on the effects of PA at school – and within physical education (PE) in particular – on physical markers of health, such as fitness (Klakk et al., 2014; Resaland, Andersen, Mamen, & Anderssen, 2011). Very few studies have looked at PA and PE in relation to mental health. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the possible mechanisms through which mental health-related outcomes might be achieved (Scheerens, 2013).

1.1 Background to the study

The assumed link between PA and mental health is widely reported (Faulkner & Tamminen, 2016; Hallal, Victoria, Azevedo, & Wells, 2006; Stathopoulou, Powers, Berry, Smits, & Otto, 2006), and is reflected in the title of the national recommendations for PA in Norway: "PA has a positive effect on mental health, concentration and learning" (The Norwegian Directorate of Health [NDH], 2014), as well as the *#Ungdomshelsestrategi* [Youth health strategy](Ministry of Health and Care Services [MHCS], 2016, p. 22).

Despite widespread claims regarding the supposedly positive links between PA and mental health and well-being, the evidence remains ambiguous, with few high-quality studies (Biddle & Asare, 2011). A 2013 systematic review, for example, concluded that there was insufficient evidence about the levels or types of PA associated with psychological health (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013). Furthermore, Løhre (2012) has pointed out that the empirical knowledge on interventions intended to promote children's well-being in school is scarce in Norway, as in other European countries. Such findings indicate that any supposed causal relationship between PA and mental health and well-being might not be as straightforward as often assumed. This is not least because PA is a complex multidimensional behaviour – sports, and PA more generally, can vary along a spectrum from highly competitive and performance-

oriented to recreational, from team-organized to individual, from outdoor to indoor environments, from adult-controlled to youth-controlled, and so forth (Green, 2008, 2014). These different forms and contexts are likely to generate differing psychosocial challenges and demands. Research has shown that the "domain" effects (of PE, for example) whether or not mental health is positively influenced and that, furthermore, this varies by gender (McKercher, Schmidt, Sanderson, Dwyer, & Venn, 2012).

Against this backdrop, it is noteworthy that research in Norway on the consequences of PE for mental health is limited, particularly in terms of the ways in which the organization, assessment and social relations – e.g. the interdependencies, between students and between students and staff – might influence mental health. In this regard, several studies have concluded that more research on students' experiences of PE is needed to improve students' experiences of the subject in the future (Casey & Quennerstedt, 2015; Lewis, 2014; Sävfenbom, Haugen, & Bulie, 2015).

School PE has long been viewed as an appropriate setting for promoting PA among young people and, as a consequence, their health (Cale, Harris, & Chen, 2014; Green, 2008; Lewis, 2014; Trudeau & Shepard, 2008). In Norway, various regulations reflect claims made for the importance of PE for health (Ministry of Education and Research [MER], 2015; The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training [NDET], 2015). More recently, the *#Ungdomshelse strategi* [Youth health strategy] published by the Ministry of Health and Care Services June 14th 2016, represented a response to research findings suggesting that the mental health of Norwegian youngsters has declined in recent years. The link between PA and mental health, as well as schools potential to ensure PA for all, is emphasized in government policy alongside the belief that because school includes all children and young people it can therefore provide PA and enjoyment as a basis for health and learning (MHCS, 2014, sec. 3.2.1, 2016).

Against that backdrop, this particular study focuses on the processes by which school PE might influence mental health. These processes relate to what is delivered in the name of PE (the content), the way it is delivered (the teaching) and the context in which PE takes place. There may well be some basis for being optimistic about a "PE effect" on youngsters' mental health. It is compulsory for all youngsters in primary and lower secondary schools across Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013) for the best part of a decade during a particularly impressionable life-stage. PE is the only form of PA undertaken by almost all children (McKenzie & Lounsbery, 2009; Trudeau & Shepard, 2008), and because it can target

whole cohorts, PE appears especially well-placed to bring about the kind of "population-level shift" thought to result in the greatest public health gains (van Sluijs & Kriemler, 2016). School PE has come to be viewed, not only as the best setting for health promotion, but also as the most likely effective solution to public health issues related to activity (Green, 2008; Cale & Harris, 2013; Naylor & McKay, 2009; McKenzie & Lounsbery, 2009, 2014). All-in-all, in the world of PE there are probably few ideas which are as widely and uncritically accepted as those that link PA with good health – both physical and mental (Green, 2008; Waddington, Malcolm, & Green, 1997).

In Norway, the range of policies promoting PA in schools as a suitable means of combating various public health "crises", including mental health problems as well as unhealthy lifestyles, is increasing (Committee for Health and Care Services, 2017, p. 1; MHCS, 2017, chap.3.2; MHSC, 2018, chap. 6.3). PA in school is, among other things, advocated for as a strategy to improve pupils` fitness, reduce risk for future cardiovascular disease (MHCS, 2014, para 3.2.1) as well as encouraging leading a healthy lifestyle that is beneficial to mental health (MHCS, 2017, para 3.2).

The revised regulation re-iterated the belief that knowledge about exercise, health and social aspects related to PA make PE potentially crucial in strengthening pupils' self-image and identities (NDET,2015b,"Purpose"). In Norway, currently, a process of developing and renewing the school curriculum is under way, and is due to be implemented by the autumn of 2020. One of the subjects under review is PE. The overall purpose of PE remains the motivation of pupils to enjoy movement and a physically active lifestyle. However, it also proposes that the subject shifts its emphasis away from sports in favour of motion, play and practice. Furthermore, it suggests that the relationship between PA and mental health should be emphasized more (NDET, 2019b, "Renewal"). In this regard, mental health is recognized as being an outcome of complex interrelated societal, social, psychological, biological and genetic factors that are affected by learning and experiences that individuals meet, and are challenged by, in everyday life (MHCS, 2014, chap 9.1.3).

The life-stage of youth is the period in life where most changes occur physically, mentally and socially. Choices made in this period can have great significance for later life (MHCS, 2016, p. 7). The period includes process of transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Schools are an important arena in this transition (Karvonen, Vikat, & Rimpelä, 2005; MHCS, 2016; Sletten, 2015), in which the transition from years of mandatory schooling to self-selected education is

crucial in terms of drop-out and future opportunities (see, e.g., De Ridder et al., 2012, 2013; Sagatun, Heyerdahl, Wentzel-Larsen, & Lien, 2014) which in turn have consequences for various aspects of health. Although the majority of children and young people in Norway are physically active (Bakken, 2019a; Bakken, Frøyland, & Sletten, 2016), findings in national surveys (e.g., Bakken 2019a) suggest that participation in organized sports drops in the years of secondary schooling, with the highest decrease from 9th grade and onwards (Bakken, 2019a) and average levels of PA drops significantly as youngsters get older (Dale et al., 2018; Kolle, Stokke, Hansen, & Anderssen, 2012). Parallel to this, self-reported mental health difficulties increase during years of secondary schooling and peaking in 10th grade (Bakken, 2018, 2019b).

1.2 Aim of the study

The over-arching aim of this study was to explore what contribution, if any, school PE in Norway makes to young people's mental health; put another way, how might PE in Norwegian secondary schools be beneficial or detrimental to youngsters' mental health. Thus, the over-arching research question for the study was: *What, if any, contribution does physical education (PE) in Norway make to young people`s mental health?* More specifically, the study sought to explore the students' perceptions of PE in order to elucidate the social processes (what might be referred to as mechanisms) that might have consequences for their mental health. These processes relate to the organization of PE lessons; the content of PE; the delivery (teaching) of PE; the classroom climate; student-teacher relationships; peer group relationships; assessment and grading; and the relationship between PE and the rest of the school day. In order to fully explore the over-arching research question, the focus of the study was on the perceptions of the young people themselves, which were explored in relation to the following subsidiary research questions:

1. How do the youngsters themselves describe and experience the life-stage they find themselves in?
2. How do the youngsters view PE in relation to the rest of the school day in terms of their mental health?
3. How do the youngsters view their experiences of PE and its possible consequences for their mental health?

1.3 Defining key terms

The key terms used in this study tend to be conceptualized and understood differently according to the disciplines using them. Therefore, key terms as defined for the purpose of this study will be accounted for in this section.

1.3.1 Defining mental health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community" (2018a). Furthermore, a positive conception of mental health is stressed in the WHO's definition of health: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2001). More recently, the WHO has argued that "there is no health without mental health" (WHO, 2018a). The WHO's definition of mental health is a useful starting point for critically considering the concept of mental health – a matter that is of central relevance to a thesis that explores the phenomenon. A central feature of this definition is its outline of a conceptualization of mental health as a positive phenomenon relating to functioning in daily life, in common with other definitions (see for example, Keyes, 2002). Nonetheless, such definitions raise a number of issues that need closer scrutiny especially in relation to methodological and theoretical terms, which are explored further in subsequent chapters.

Historically, the term mental health has tended to be used to refer to mental illness, such as anxiety and depression and mental health problems (that is to say, an absence of mental health) (see e.g., Reneflot et al., 2018). There is an emerging consensus, however, that this usage over-simplifies the construct and allows little room for viewing mental health as a more complex, dynamic and multifaceted construct. Simply put, being happy and satisfied do not necessarily follow from not being anxious or depressed (Reneflot et al., 2018).

Social scientists have argued for some time for a definition of mental health as more than the absence of mental illness (Jahoda, 1958, as cited in Keyes, 2002, p.208). More recently, the term mental health has been extended upwards to incorporate well-being in terms of, for example, happiness and life satisfaction (Carlquist, 2015; Roberts, 2009), as reflected in the WHO's definition above. The introduction of a new concept – well-being – to an already contested field (mental health) has, to some extent, brought further debate and confusion. This

is particularly the case in a Norwegian context where there have been debates about the extent to which there is a word in the Norwegian language that can adequately describe the well-being concept as reflected in the WHO's conceptualization. Currently, the noun "well-being" and the verb "to thrive" or the noun "thriving" are used with much the same meaning, even though the meaning of the former is slightly more expanded than the latter (Ekornes, Hauge, & Lund, 2012; NDH, 2015).

Some have argued that the mental health concept is challenging to use in a well-being context (Carlquist, 2015). Ekornes et al. (2012), for example, found that teachers were reluctant to use the term "mental health" due to the perceived risk of pathologizing their pupils and, therefore, preferred to use the term "well-being" However, well-being is a term that has diverse meanings, is difficult to translate as well as operationalize. This study draws upon Westerhof and Keyes' (2010) two continua model, which conceptualizes mental health in the upward sense (or well-being) as related to but distinct from mental illness. The model can thus be viewed as embracing a broad spectrum of constructs in which mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. This conceptualization draws on *hedonic* (happiness, interest and satisfaction with life) as well as *eudaimonic* (fulfilment and functioning optimally socially) ideas (Keyes, 2002). This study adopts a sociological approach to the study of young people's mental health: More precisely, it draws on the figurational sociology of Elias (1978). Mental health is thus conceptualized in broadly sociological, developmental terms – as inherently relational and dynamic (Malcolm & Gibson, 2018).

The construct of mental health as presented above was operationalized in an open-ended manner to explore with the young people their perceptions of PE in relation to the socialization processes of which they are a part and the consequences therefrom.

1.3.2 Defining physical education

It is conventional to view education in school systems as primarily concerned with the development of the cognitive and intellectual abilities of young people. A more comprehensive conceptualisation would, however, be to view education as "socialisation which takes place in specialised institutions' (Roberts, 2009, p. 74). While, in principle, education (in the more restricted intellectual sense, associated with academic subjects) is distinguishable from training – where people are taught specific task-related skills – in practice, both education and training are features of the socialization process that occurs in educational institutions, such as schools.

Broadly speaking, therefore, PE involves the socialization of young people into sporting and PA skills and cultures.

In this study, PE is conceptualized as a site for socialization experiences (Coakley, 2004) in which the nature of relationships, the teachers' actions and the experience of doing activities can have significant consequences. In this regard, PE, like sport, is, therefore, better conceptualized not as essentially either "good" or "bad" but rather as having the potential to have both positive and negative consequences (Coalter, 2013), including for young people's mental health and sense of self. Characterizing PE by a multi-activity model in which pupils are presented with – and are active participants in – a variety of activities has broad consensus internationally (Standahl, 2016). However, it is recognized that PE is practiced differently across countries and cultural contexts (Aasland, 2019; Standahl, 2016). In Norway, PE is a mandatory curriculum subject in all years of schooling, including upper secondary. In terms of numbers of lessons, PE constitutes the third largest mandatory subject in Norwegian compulsory school (NDET, 2017). Formally, within the Norwegian context, PE is structured according to explicitly formulated competency aims and defined as in the following "PE is a general educative subject that shall inspire to a physically active lifestyle and lifelong joy of movement" (NDET, 2015a, my translation).

1.3.3 Defining youth

In this thesis I will use the term youth – instead of such terms as adolescence – for several reasons. Using adolescence as a synonym for youth is problematic in several respects. In the first instance, while adolescence appears relatively inflexibly rooted in the teenage years (see e.g., Roberts, 2009) trends towards earlier puberty are complicating this simple equation. Nowadays, social scientists tend to view adolescence as an aspect of one particular and very significant life-stage, youth; preferring the term youth to adolescence not merely because of the former's connotations of social construction rather than biological determination but also because while human beings age in chronological and biological terms, the significance of particular points and stages in the ageing process lies in their social significance. Their significance lies, in other words, in what these points and stages are taken to imply about, for example, transitions from home to school to work and, in the process, from childhood to youth to adulthood. The terms childhood, adolescent and youth are, therefore, socially-constructed concepts that, nevertheless, have biological and chronological dimensions. Childhood and adolescence, for example, are biological and chronological in the sense that they refer to a

period when young people have not yet reached full physical, psychological and social maturity. They are social in the sense that they refer to a period before adult status (with all that term implies) is attained. In this regard, childhood and youth are relational – they are only conceivable in relation to other life-stages such as adulthood (Green, 2010). Having advocated for preferring the term youth in this study, the terms young people and youngsters will appear in order to vary the language. Whether reading youth, young people or youngsters it nonetheless refers to the life-stage of the 15-year-olds involved in this study.

1.3.4 Defining physical activity

The term PA tends to be used in two ways in relation to PE. For those concerned with fitness and health, PA is taken to mean "bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that result in energy expenditure" (Malina, Cumming, & Coelho-e-Silva, 2016, p. 377) and is conventionally defined in terms of frequency, duration and intensity (Malina et al., 2016). As complex a behaviour PA is recognized to be, it nevertheless involves being *physically* active. It is worthy keeping in mind, however, that whether intentionally or otherwise, the term PA is often used loosely to imply *participation* and, in particular, participation in less competitive (or, at least, more recreational) sporting activities. The two senses of the term PA are to be found more-or-less explicitly or implicitly in this study. It is important to recognize that "exercise", "training", "PA" and "sport" have different meanings (see, e.g., Green, 2010). Nesti (2016) for example, alludes to this by differentiating between *playing* sport, *doing* exercise and *participating* in physical activity (emphasis in the original). More importantly in this regard, is that the youngsters in this study tended to use the terms interchangeably. This study was not designed in order, for example, to control the dose or intensity of activity nor, for that matter, to identify potential associations (see, e.g., Faulkner & Tamminen, 2016) between the terms. Indeed, the findings suggest that the volume and/or intensity, in quantitative terms, of any participatory bout is of far less importance when considering mental health outcomes than the quality of the experience, irrespective of whether what is being referred to is PA, exercise, sport or physical education (Breistøl, Clench-Aas, Van Roy, & Raanaas, 2017; Dorè, O´Loughin, Schnitzer, Datta, & Fournier,2018; McMahnon et al., 2017).

1.4 Structure and content of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1, the Introduction, is followed by Chapter 2 which reviews relevant quantitative and qualitative literature related to mental health, PA and PE within the age of secondary schooling. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework for this thesis by introducing figurational sociology. Chapter 3 concludes with a brief description of and justification for the inspiration from grounded theory. The methodology and methods are described and presented in Chapter 4. The findings of the study are presented and discussed in Chapter 5, which is divided into two parts. Part one considers the youngsters' perceptions of being 15 (some of them recently turned 16) – including school, wider influences such as social media, and their perceptions of processes related to health and mental health. Part one serves to contextualize the findings in the second part, which provides the main focus of the thesis: the youngsters' perceptions of PE. In Chapter 6, the findings are summarized and theorized. The conclusion to the thesis is provided in Chapter 7 along with an identification of some of the limitations to the study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The background and context to the study is complex, involving as it does the intersection of young people, PE and mental health in their various figurations. The chapter begins with an overview of the education policy context as it relates to these domains in Norway. Next, the subject of mental health is introduced, starting with some central conceptual issues and then moving on to explore trends in youngsters' mental health internationally and in Norway. This section also reviews critically the research evidence on schools and mental health by focusing on social processes relating to young people's interactions with teachers. The third part of the chapter critically reviews research on the relationship between young people's mental health and physical activity in general before focusing in-depth on PE as a specific social context within which mental health has more recently been studied. Taken together these strands provide an account of the contextual background and status of knowledge in this emerging and complex field as well as identifying the gap in the extant knowledge relating to PE and mental health. The chapter concludes with an overview of trends in youth studies in order to provide a bridge to the following theoretical chapter.

2.2 The Norwegian education policy context

The Nordic Education Model has been an integral part of the Norwegian social democratic welfare state for many years, reflecting the view that the state was "the legitimate authority to have responsibility for education as a social good" (Imsen, Blossing, & Moos, 2017, p. 568), balancing social, economic and educational goals alongside an emphasis on participation and equality. Norway continues to have a well-funded education system in which central government lays out the goals and frameworks, with considerable decentralization of decision-making to the local level. The Norwegian school system can be divided into three stages: elementary school (*grunnskole*, ages 6–13), lower secondary school (*ungdomsskole*, ages 13–16), and upper secondary school (*videregående skole*, ages 16–19). Elementary and lower secondary school are mandatory for all children aged 6–16, with all students being offered the opportunity to progress to upper secondary school. Formal grading processes begin in grade 8 (at 13 years of age) at the beginning of lower secondary school. This research project focuses on 15−16-year-olds in grade 10 of lower secondary school, the final year of compulsory

schooling. Responsibility for decision-making in lower secondary schools (ungdomsskole), rests with municipalities (OECD, 2013).

Notwithstanding the limitations of PISA statistics (see, for example, Hopfenbeck et al., 2018; Hovdhaugen, Vibe, & Seland, 2017), the latest statistics (from the 2015 survey) indicate that 15−year-olds in Norway scored above the OECD average in science, mathematics and reading, showing an improving trend on previous years (OECD, 2015b). There remain, however, differences between municipalities and regions although the influence of socioeconomic factors is less than for other OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that a variety of influences on educational attainment lie beyond formal education (Nunn, Johnson, Monro, Bickerstaffe, & Kelsey, 2007), including in Norway. A recent report examining educational outcomes in Norwegian lower secondary schools concluded that although school composition (the varying socioeconomic backgrounds of pupils) explained a large proportion of the differences between schools in terms of pupil attainment, some schools contribute more to learning than others (Steffensen, Ekren, Zachrisen, & Kirkebøen, 2017).

Over the past two decades Norway has not escaped the trend towards performance and accountability in the education system (Leirhaug & Annerstedt, 2016). The Norwegian school reform (entitled *The Knowledge Promotion Reform*) of 2006 introduced new national curricula for all school subjects. These new competency-based curricula placed greater emphasis on basic skills, clear standards for learning, and assessment, especially formative assessment (Tveit, 2014, 2016). During the period of research undertaken for this PhD, education was under further discussion and scrutiny through *The Renewal and Improvement Reform* (MER, 2015; NOU, 2015:8), the aim of which was to improve the content of school subjects to make them more relevant to contemporary and future society. These two reforms have, ostensibly at least, been seen as a necessary part of the process of improving the quality of education. Successive governments have continued to make a positive case for focusing upon assessment – and its corollary grading – as part of wide-scale reform of the school system at both primary and secondary levels (Tveit, 2016). In particular, a shift was made from a perceived over-emphasis on assessment *of* learning to an emphasis upon assessment *for* learning (Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015). In other words, in moving away from *summative* (often formal) assessment against external criteria (examinations, for example), towards *formative* (often informal) assessment of the ongoing performances of students, the aim was to help improve (deep) learning and, in the process, their longer-term performances in summative assessments. More recently, it has become commonplace to refer to the latter – that is, formative assessment – as ‘assessment for

learning' (AfL) (see, for example, Hay, 2006; Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015; López-Pastor, Kirk, Lorente-Catalán, MacPhail, & MacDonald, 2013; Penney, Brooker, Hay, & Gillespie, 2009). At the heart of the more recent policy reform process is the notion that students should be given opportunities to improve their skills before and until a final grade is set. Put another way, grades would be more than a mathematical average of test scores (NDET, 2017, "Improvement"). At the same time, the 2015 policy emphasized that – because they are potentially crucial in determining youngsters' future educational and vocational lives – end grades and examination grades must represent an objective expression of student competency in each subject (MER, 2015, chap 5.2.). In Norway, grades awarded during the latter years of lower secondary school determine whether young people can obtain a place at the upper secondary school of their choice.

2.2.1 PE as a curriculum subject

PE remains a core mandatory subject throughout the 10 years of compulsory schooling (NDET, 2015b). The common practice is to teach boys and girls together at all ages. Teaching hours during grades 8 to 10 are currently 223 hours. The overarching purpose of the subject as set out in the curriculum, KR01-04, is that it "should inspire a physically active lifestyle and lifelong enjoyment of movement" (NDET, 2015a, my translation) as well as generate a sense of mastery, alongside promoting fair play and respect for others. Notions of the subject's contribution to various dimensions of physical (through reference to nutrition, training, ideal body and so on) and mental health (in relation to enjoyment, identity and self-awareness, for example) are also included in the overall purpose for the subject. During grades 8-10, the curriculum is divided into three parts: sports activities (sports, dance and alternative physical activities), outdoor life (competence and skills for being safe in, and valuing nature), and exercise and lifestyle (various activities with an emphasis on pursuing individual interests and mastery as well exploring the health-related dimensions of activities). Level-related competence aims are specified in relation to these three areas. The five basic skills (speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and digital literacy) are also incorporated into the competence aims for the subject (NDET, 2015b).

The 2006 national curriculum made assessment a significant issue for Norwegian PE, in part because it introduced considerable change to the curriculum and assessment requirements (Leirhaug, MacPhail, & Annerstedt, 2016). A greater focus on formative assessment as an educational tool was reflected in the Norwegian government's view that information garnered through assessment should be used by teachers to intervene and provide feedback to students

that would help them develop in PE (Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015). In principle at least, "effective" assessment is meant to be integral to teaching and learning in PE, not least in enabling teachers to reflect upon the content and delivery of the PE curriculum (Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015). According to Leirhaug and MacPhail (2015), the 2006 reform constrained PE teachers to reflect upon and re-consider their practices especially vis-à-vis assessment and grading in PE. In grade 10, students receive an overall achievement mark. In theory, this should include evaluating each student's effort as well as their achieved competency according to the four themes fundamental to PA: fair play and collaboration, physical learning, self-management and accomplishment, as well as the cognitive dimensions in PE (NDET, 2015c, "The nature", my translation). In relation to competency, it is emphasizes that "The individual pupil should not be assessed in relation to other pupils` competency" (NDET, 2015b, chap. 4.1, "Basis for assessment", my translation). "Effort" ("innsats" in Norwegian) connotes a student's commitment to the subject and their exertion in lessons (NDET, 2015b, chap 4.1, "Predispositions and effort"). In this regard, the situation in Norway is similar to that in many other countries in that teachers' judgements regarding student attainment *and* effort have long been a feature of PE (Annerstedt & Larsson, 2010; Vinje, Brattenborg, Aasland, & Aasland, 2019). However, it is the only school subject in the Norwegian curriculum in which effort is specified formally as an integrated part of assessment and grading (NDET, 2015b). According to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2015b), including effort as a part of the assessment should enhance the possibility that all students can obtain a good grade, including those less competent and able in sporting terms. Although seemingly serving a well-intended purpose, evaluating effort has been widely debated in the PE field, given its subjective orientation (see, e.g., Lopez-Pastor et al., 2013; Svennberg, Meckbach, & Redelius, 2014). Little is known, however, about assessment practices in PE in Norway (see, e.g., Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015) in terms of their consequences for students' learning or mental health for that matter.

The tendency for politicians to view PE as at least part of the solution for a range of public health issues, such as "combatting" obesity and inactivity as well as mental health, continues to be debated in Norway and beyond (see, e.g., Evans 2007; Green, 2010; Larsson, 2016; Ommundsen, 2008; Rugseth & Standahl, 2015; Sæle, 2017; Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2008). It is in this context that some researchers conclude that PE has been ascribed a "muddled role" (Gard & Wright, 2014; McKenzie & Lounsberry, 2009, 2014; Sallis et al., 2012).

Norwegian schools' wider responsibilities for health: Mental health and physical activity

Alongside educational curricular reforms there has been a further debate within the Norwegian education (and health) system about the inclusion of 60 minutes of daily PA for children and young people. In fact, this debate can be traced back to a 2003 government policy document (NOU, 2003:16) where it was argued that because PA was related to physical and mental health, movement during the school day should be increased predominantly through increasing the number of PE lessons (chap.1.1). Other national strategies have emphasised the link between PA and health, including mental health, see, for example *#Ungdomshelse 2016-2021* (*National Youth Strategy*). Since 2003, the debate has gained momentum and expanded to consider the inclusion of PA during the school day beyond the PE curriculum, especially because of the putative links to academic achievement. Indeed, there has been an ongoing debate in the Norwegian parliament and media about the mandatory inclusion of 60 minutes of daily PA during the school day for all children and youth (grades 1-10, 6-16 years old) during the period this PhD project took place. A government-commissioned evaluation of the impact of a one-year school-based physical activity intervention (including increased PA and additional PE) on various physical and mental health outcomes as well as academic achievement among students in secondary school was published in April 2019 (Kolle et al., 2019). The results showed no effect on mental health outcomes. At the time of writing, however, the government has decided to make the goal aspirational, giving individual schools the freedom and flexibility to decide when and how to implement 60 minutes of PA into the school day (MHCS, 2018, chap. 6.3).

Children and young people's mental health is viewed as a central part of the social mandate of schools in Norway (Bru, Idsøe, & Øverland, 2016). The core curriculum for primary and secondary education sets out a number of values and principles that relate to all-round development (bildung) and in particular identifies the importance of an inclusive environment and the development of all young people's health and wellbeing as set out in Section 3-1 of the Core curriculum for primary and secondary education (MER, 2017).This commitment has been given further momentum in recent years by the well-documented reciprocal relationship between mental health, learning and academic achievement (see, e.g., Gustafsson et al., 2010). It is no surprise, therefore, that schools have been increasingly identified as appropriate settings for promoting, protecting and supporting young people's mental health in many countries (O'Reilly et al., 2108; Patalay et al., 2017). In fact, the Education Act (1998) (Opplæringslova in Norwegian) explicitly makes the link between the importance of providing a physical and psychosocial working environment that supports learning, health and wellbeing (§9A). PE as a

specific curriculum subject has long been viewed in Norway as a vehicle for students to learn about a variety of health-related concerns and issues (MER, 2015; MHCS, 2016; Vinje, 2016). Gibson and Malcolm (2019) point out the trend has been to view PA less as “play” and more as “utility”. An unintended consequence of this observed drift in a school and PE context may be that it diminishes its potential contribution to mental health.

2.3 Mental health among youth

Policy-makers and practitioners in many countries have expressed concern about the mental health of youth in recent years giving the impression that there is something of a crisis in need of attention (Patalay et al., 2016). In part, this reflects an acknowledgement that adult mental health problems often emerge and develop during youth (WHO, 2018a) and often within the school setting (O’Reilly et al., 2018). In global terms, mental health issues have emerged as the leading cause of psychosocial disability among youth aged 15–19 years (The Lancet, 2017). Recent research, moreover, reveals social inequalities in mental health among youth and the importance of the early childhood environment (Straatmann, et al., 2019). Nonetheless, monitoring trends in youth mental health is difficult for several reasons, all of which need acknowledgement and consideration when trying to sum up the state of mental health among youth as the backdrop to this study. Particularly worthy of note in this regard are the varying conceptualizations of mental health used in youth research. There is some consensus that mental health is best viewed as a complex, multidimensional construct. In this regard, if mental health is conceptualized in terms of mental health *difficulties* (psychological distress, for example, or feeling down or low) or mental *illness* (anxiety and depression, for instance) then differing measurement instruments will be used. The ensuing results require careful interpretation because they reflect differing dimensions of the overall construct “mental health”. This means that, as a construct, its operationalization and measurement are challenging, which in turn creates difficulties when seeking to provide a robust and meaningful overview of the state of mental health among youth.

There has also been debate about the extent to which mental health as a construct incorporates the presence of positive dimensions – often referred to as well-being (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010) – which itself is conceptualized as having social, psychological and emotional dimensions. While tools for the measurement of mental well-being have relatively recently been developed and used (see, e.g., Clarke et al., 2011), the tendency in many surveys has been to

focus on the "deficit" model of mental health. This means that surveys reveal more about the difficulties and challenges that youth report, rather than the affirmative or well-being dimensions of their mental health. This study is based on a conceptualization of mental health as a complex and multidimensional construct that includes both well-being and deficit dimensions. It extends the well-being concept to include constructs such as identity and self-esteem as part of a developing habitus that is inherently relational (Malcolm & Gibson, 2018), as introduced in 1.3.1 and discussed further in the following chapter. Mental health is, therefore, viewed as under development throughout the life-course, reflecting people's interdependence with their social and environmental context (Patel et al., 2018). It is worthy of note, however, that research on mental health has tended to focus upon the negative dimensions of mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression, and stress; that is to say, an absence of affirmative mental "health"). This lends support to the observation made by Stengård and Appelqvist-Schmidlechner (2010) that research on mental health has tended to focus on mental health problems and deficits, which does not give the whole picture of the state of mental health of young people. It might, however, explain why young people's mental health is often seen as sub-optimal. A recent systematic review of research on young people and mental health undertaken by the Norwegian Institute for Public Health (NIPH) came to a similar conclusion (Skogen, Smith, Aarø, Siqveland, & Øverland, 2018).

The challenge of monitoring trends in youth mental health also relates to the question of whether the increases in reported mental health problems reflect a *real* incidence (see, e.g., Bor, Dean, Najman, & Hayatbakhsh, 2014; Collishaw, 2015; Reneflot et al., 2018; von Soest, 2012). Given the increased attention to, and interest in, youngsters' mental health, alongside more openness concerning mental health generally, it seems plausible to suggest that the increases might mirror increased recognition and willingness to report mental health difficulties among young people, and, as a corollary, greater likelihood of disclosing symptoms or difficulties. Some have alluded to the risk of narrowing and even pathologizing the normality of challenges associated with the youth life-stage (Nordtug & Engelsrud, 2016; Patel, 2014) as well as medicalizing what has previously been seen as the ups and downs associated with normal processes of transition through which most young people emerge unscathed (OECD, 2015a; Patel, 2014) and misleadingly treating underlying social problems as illness (Ose & Jensen, 2017). In other words, the concerns expressed in some quarters might be a symptom of "moral panic" (West, 2009, p. 331). The challenge attached to the life-stage that is "the expected time of turmoil" was, according to Arnett (1999) embedded in the balance between the risk that

young people`s problems would go unrecognized due to such expectations on the one hand, and pathologizing difficulties that are normal on the other (p. 324). The relevance and complexity of these issues is important to recognize in the context of reported differences between boys and girls, among other patterns of variability. MacLean, Sweeting, and Hunt (2010) concluded from their qualitative study of 10−, 13− and 15-year-olds in Scotland, that there was a need to highlight "the potentially damaging effects of gender stereotypes which make boys reluctant to seek help for physical and, particularly psychological symptoms, and the misconception that girls are not similarly reluctant to report illness" (p. 597).

A third point of consideration relates to the quite wide variation in research in terms of quality of methods, characteristics of informants and measured outcomes, as well as the countries (and their cultural differences) from which samples are drawn. In particular, the varying ages of sample populations included and the, often limited, analysis of variation within samples in relation to the key variables of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic variables, including level of parental education, can confuse an already complex picture. Notwithstanding these concerns and the complexity of trends, some have concluded that the overall evidence is too consistent to be viewed as other than real. In other words, in the 21st century youth are more likely to experience mental health difficulties in many countries (see, e.g., Bor et al., 2014; Collishaw, 2015). In order to try to make sense of this complexity and provide an overview of trends in youth mental health, the following section draws on survey data relating to youth (especially 15−16-year-olds where available) from several countries, before focusing on Norway.

The latest *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) survey revealed that 29% of 15-year-old-girls and 13% of 15-year-old boys reported "feeling low" more than once a week (as cited by WHO, 2018b). Nonetheless, compelling evidence that mental health among youngsters in the non-clinical population has been deteriorating over time is notable by its absence, or, at the very least, ambiguous. In examining data from three survey cycles of the international HBSC study (compromising a total of 510,876 11–, 13– and 15-year-old children from Europe, North America and Israel), trends in mental health complaints were found to be fairly stable in most countries (Ottová-Jordan et al., 2015). Similar findings were found in a study among 11–16-year-olds in the Netherlands that used the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (Duinhof, Stevens, van Dorsselaer, Monshouwer, & Vollebergh, 2015). This study found that 10–year trends in self-reported emotional and behavioural problems were stable over time, including inequalities in mental health between groups of adolescents, with boys reporting more conduct problems and fewer emotional problems than girls at all time points. Based upon these

findings, Duinhof et al. (2015) pointed to the stability of mental health on a population level as well as the persistence of inequalities in mental health between boys and girls.

Against this picture of stability, some studies have found evidence of a deterioration in child and youth mental health. Bor et al. (2014) conducted a systematic review of population- and community-based studies examining long-term time trends in mental health problems in children and adolescents. Although findings were mixed, five of eight studies reported an increase in internalizing symptoms in adolescent girls (Bor et al., 2014). In another systematic review of epidemiological cross-cohort comparisons of whether the population prevalence of child and adolescent mental health has changed, Collishaw (2015) found that clinical diagnosis and treatment of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders increased over recent decades. In addition, findings suggested substantial secular change in emotional problems and antisocial behaviour in high-income countries. More specifically, self-reported symptoms of depression and anxiety were found among adolescents from the 1980s onwards in countries including Greece, Germany, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, China and New Zealand. While, there was some evidence for increasing social inequalities, particularly in relation to emotional problems, findings of a convergence of gender differences were inconsistent and inconclusive. In explaining his findings, Collishaw (2015) highlighted greater individual vulnerability alongside changes in family life, and broader socioeconomic and cultural influences as relevant influences to explain these trends. Thus, it seems that there are many processes within and beyond school that influence youngsters' mental health (Shucksmith, Spratt, Philip, & McNaughton, 2009).

The worsening mental health of young people is also borne out by Scottish studies from 1987, 1999 and 2006 (Sweeting, Young, & West, 2009) and of English teenagers in 1986 and 2006 (Collishaw, Maughan, Natarajan, & Pickles, 2010) which also point to a substantial increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression. Whereas the study by Sweeting et al. (2009) found increases in mental problems to be evident across all symptoms assessed, Collishaw et al. (2010) found that increases were specific for a subset of factors: worry, irritability, fatigue, and feeling stressed. Nevertheless, all three UK studies point to non-trivial increases in the prevalence of emotional problems for youth. Indeed, levels of these problems almost doubled for Scottish boys and more than doubled for Scottish girls between 1987-2006 (Sweeting et al., 2009). In Collishaw et al.'s (2010) study, twice as many adolescents endorsed five or more symptoms of anxiety or depression in 2006 compared to 1986 (15% vs. 7%). Overall, contemporary international research provides a consistent pattern that suggests there are good

reasons for concern about young people's mental health, and that of girls in particular, even if trends suggest some stability in prevalence rates

Several studies have investigated self-esteem. However, a wide range of terms tends to be used to refer to what amounts to self-esteem, which makes it difficult to draw clear conclusions (see, e.g., Liu, Wu, & Ming, 2015). Nonetheless, self-esteem in an education context seems to be important, especially in relation to grading processes. Fox (1998) defines self-esteem in terms of "the global and relatively stable evaluative construct reflecting the degree to which an individual feels positive about him- or herself" (as cited in Faulkner & Tamminen, 2016, p. 406). Several studies suggest that self-esteem is especially significant for youngsters' mental health as high self-esteem has been associated with emotional stability and adjustment to life demands, including subjective wellbeing, happiness, life satisfaction, resilience to stress, high level of achievement in education as well as healthy behaviours (Fox, 2000; Lindwall & Asci, 2014). High self-esteem is also associated with positive outcomes in various arenas, whilst low self-esteem on the other hand predicts an increased predisposition towards mental health issues (Lindwall & Asci, 2014). There is, nevertheless, evidence to suggest that global self-esteem is susceptible to change during childhood and youth (Lindwall & Asci, 2014), hence the potential significance of the school years. In this respect, self-esteem is considered as an important, not to say crucial, aspect of quality of life and mental health (Fox, 2000).

2.3.1 Young people and mental health in Norway

The annual national survey – *Ungdata* [Youth data] – indicates that most children and young people in Norway thrive, have good physical and mental health and are positive about their own future (Bakken, 2018). Although this is confirmed to a large degree by the most recent release of data (Bakken, 2019b), attention is also drawn to systematic differences in relation to social background, with young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds reporting worse indicators. Bakken (2019b) also points towards the increased prevalence of mental health problems and less future optimism, more screen time and increasing numbers perceiving school as boring. Even though it is recognized that existing data tracking prevalence of mental health disorders and problems among Norwegian children and young people has clear deficiencies (Skogen et al., 2018), national population surveys suggest that approximately 7% of children and youngsters (including preschool and school age) have symptoms compatible with mental disorder at the time of investigation (Reneflot et al., 2018). Figures from the National Centre for Children and Young People's Psychiatry reveal that about 5% of Norwegians aged 0–17

years are treated every year, with an increase in diagnosed depression, anxiety, behavioural disorders and eating disorders amongst girls aged 15–17 years (an increase from 5−7% per year from 2011–2016). Furthermore, the use of anti-depressive medicine has increased by 27–32 % amongst boys aged 10–7-years and by 60% amongst girls aged 15–17-years in the period 2008-2017 (Furu et al., 2018). Nonetheless, this may reflect to some degree shifts in identification, diagnosis and treatment, as well as earlier intervention.

Even though the majority of youngsters in Norway report having good physical and mental health, findings in the 2019 Ungdata survey revealed that 10% of boys and 28% of girls in the 10th grade (15−16-year-olds) reported mental health problems (Bakken, 2019b). Overall, findings from Norwegian studies (Bakken, 2017; Bakken et al., 2016; Bakken 2019b) indicate a relatively stable trend in boys reporting high level of mental problems compared with an increased trend amongst girls. However, alongside the consistent and gradually increasing number of girls reporting mental health problems since beginning of 2010, a similar, but less evident trend is also found amongst boys from 2015 onwards (Bakken, 2019b). The enduring differences between boys and girls alongside the apparent increase in mental health problems among girls is, nevertheless, worthy of note.

The picture that may be emerging is one of increases in various indicators of mental health difficulties with some stabilization in recent years. Von Soest and Wichstrøm (2014), for example, compared rates of youth-reported symptoms of depression in Norway over a time period of 20 years. They found that there was a substantial increase in both male and female adolescent depression symptom scores during the 1990s, but no significant change between 2002 and 2010. A more recent study, using data from the Norwegian HBSC study, found that psychological health complaints had increased during a 20–year period in which older girls (16 years) witnessed a greater increase over time relative to younger girls and boys (Potrebny et al., 2019). All-in-all, there is evidence to support the view that the mental health of youngsters in Norway, as elsewhere in high-income countries, has deteriorated in recent years but these declines may have stabilized, although the picture among girls seems to consistently show a worsening trend. Overall, young people's mental health might be said to be sub-optimal, especially in some social groups, something which has been highlighted by the OECD (2017).

The increasing trend in self-reported mental health difficulties might seem somewhat paradoxical given that the vast majority of youngsters report satisfaction with life, having friends, good relationships with parents and family, as well as with teachers and school

(Bakken, 2018; Sletten & Bakken, 2016). One might reasonably expect the prevalence of such characteristics to imply a trend "upwards" in mental health. Yet the evidence suggests that interwoven with their broad satisfaction with life are a number of pressures that can have negative consequences for youngsters' mental health. This cautions against creating dichotomies and points towards the need for more complex and nuanced ways of understanding young people's lives in which there is both continuity alongside change.

In this vein, Sletten (2015) noted that the growing concern about youth mental health is twofold. On the one hand, there is growing concern regarding the "good girl syndrome" – a generation of girls who have the resources and capabilities (and who are also known, therefore, as resourceful girls), who are stressed as a result of perceived pressures to perform both in school and leisure time while, at the same time, exercising and maintaining an appealing look while being socially active. Put another way, factors previously perceived as serving to prevent mental health difficulties, such as performing well in school and engaging in active leisure, can be a cause of reported increases in mental difficulties – and even diagnosed mental illness – when they are seen as interdependent and cumulative. On the other hand, the likelihood of struggling with diverse mental health difficulties when coming from a poorer socio-economic background remains consistent. Sletten and Bakken (2016) support Sletten (2015) observation that not only are those "traditionally" perceived to be more vulnerable more exposed than others, they are so to a much larger extent.

Eriksen, Sletten, Bakken, and von Soest' s (2017) report emphasized youngsters' views of their appearance and their bodies as a considerable source of stress. Analysis of data from the *Ung i Oslo* [Young in Oslo] survey revealed that while a majority of youngsters reported that they were satisfied with their appearance, a considerable minority were not. More boys than girls were satisfied with their looks, whilst the proportion of girls reporting they were not satisfied was more than double the proportion of boys. The latter lends support to the findings in a qualitative study undertaken by Strandbu and Kvalem (2014). Nevertheless, Eriksen et al. (2017) concluded that pressures related to body and appearance were less prominent and clear to the youngsters than that of school pressures. Nonetheless, it is likely that social processes within school give rise to contexts within which concerns relating to body and appearance are manifest, especially, for example, during PE.

Concern with body image among 15−16-year-olds is not a phenomenon specific to Norway and has been documented in many other countries, with girls generally being more vulnerable to

pressure to conform to cultural ideals endorsed in the media than their male counterparts (see for example, Lawler & Nixon, 2011). Wichstrøm and von Soest (2016) found evidence to suggest that there was a particularly strong effect of body satisfaction on self-esteem throughout youth and early adulthood (13–26-years) and that the prospective contribution from body satisfaction to self-esteem was *equally* strong among females and males. In addition, their findings suggest that the relationship between body satisfaction and self-esteem explained 4–6 times as much of the variance in self-esteem among youth (13–21 years). In short, at a life-stage in which bodily changes can be rapid and adult body ideals become increasingly relevant for upward social comparison, the existing research lends support to the contention that youth is a period of potential vulnerability in mental health terms. The results underscore the significance of body satisfaction as a source of global self-esteem, particularly among young people.

The role of social media – as well as that of the digital environment more broadly – in respect of young people's mental health, especially as it relates to mental health, self-esteem and body image, has only relatively recently emerged as a focus for research. In a relatively short space of time, social media has become ubiquitous, especially in the lives of young people (Booker, Kelly, & Sacker, 2018). For example, in the UK 70% of 12–15-year-olds have a social media profile (House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, 2019), with 94.8% of 15-year-olds using social media before and after school (Frith, 2017). Increasingly it seems, significant proportions of young people live out much of their lives online (OECD, 2017). There are similar trends in Norway, with time spent on screen-based activities having increased considerably over the last three to four years among the young. A recent survey reported that 66% of Norwegian 10th graders spent more than three hours a day on screen-based activities (Bakken, 2019b). While online gaming has become an increasingly prominent arena for social interaction and communication with friends, social media use is the main driver of this increasing trend, amongst girls in secondary school in particular (Norwegian Media Authority, 2018). Furthermore, international evidence indicates that young people are increasingly turning to social media for health-related information on body image, physical activity and diet and nutrition (Goodyear, Armour, & Wood, 2018; Wiklund, Jonsson, Coe, & Wiklund, 2019), which can be important signifiers of youth identities (West, 2009).

There is, however, relatively little robust research on the consequences of social media use for young people's mental health especially in terms of teasing out "cause" from "effect". In reality, social media use is but one aspect – although an expanding one for many youngsters – of their

increasingly interconnected and complex lives. As the report from the UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee (2019) states, "Generally, social media was not the root cause of the risk but helped to facilitate it, while also providing the opportunity for a large degree of amplification" (p.3). Although the negative aspects of social media used have tended to be reported, it can also have positive mental health consequences for young people (Allen, Ryan, Gray, McInerney, & Waters, 2014) and these can vary across different social groups and over time. For example, studies suggest that how young people use social media – that is to say, for what purposes – seems to be related to the consequences for their mental health. A critical review of research on the question of the extent to which use of social network sites enhances of undermines subjective wellbeing (Verduyn, Ybarra, Résibois, Jonides, & Krossl, 2017) concluded that it is dependent on whether it is used actively or passively, with the latter likely to have more negative consequences than the former because it gave rise to social comparisons and feelings of envy. Active use, on the other hand was likely to give rise to feelings of social connectedness through the generation of social capital. An early systematic review concluded that processes of comparison during social media use were an aspect of identity formation relating to perceived attractiveness and social approval and could therefore have negative consequences (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014). Among Norwegian youth, there is some evidence to suggest that those youngsters who have most trouble coping with pressure are those who spend a lot of time on social media (Bakken, Sletten, & Eriksen, 2018). Furthermore, the more time youngsters spent on social media, the higher the perceived pressure. Associations between social media and body pressure were found to be slightly stronger than associations with pressures related to school and sports. However, Eriksen et al. (2017) found that young people did not perceive social media to be a source of stress when discussing various sources of stress and pressures. Frith (2017) found that young people valued the social benefits from social media such as talking to friends online, expressing themselves and having the opportunity to be creative.

Social media has accelerated the ease and extent to which comparisons can be made within and beyond peer groups, especially viz-à-viz desirable youth identities (West, 2009), comparison with peers (i.e self-evaluation according to others` opinion and social position within peer group) being especially salient for young people (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1998; Perloff, 2014; Steinberg & Morris, 2001; West, 2009). Processes of comparison in the process of identity formation have been specifically studied in relation to Instagram (Hilmarsen & Arnseth, 2017) among youth in a Norwegian context. Time spent on social media and mobile

phones increases up to the age of 17 years of age (Norwegian Media Authority, 2018), the latter years of this period being a key period of identity formation. Yang, Holden, Carter, and Webb (2018) concluded that different types of online social comparison have different consequences for young people's identity development, which they related to the degree of introspection that comparison might give rise to. A cross-national study concluded that social media use, the internalization of social ideals and poor mental health might vary in relation to cultural norms (Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas, & Fisette, 2017; de Lenne, Vandenbosch, Eggermont, Karsay, & Trekels, 2018). While the internalizing of social ideals relating to body image have long been an aspect of gender stereotyping especially among girls (Dittmar, 2009; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Knauss, Paxton, & Alsaker, 2008; Perloff, 2014), young people's use of social media has introduced additional dynamics into various processes. Some studies have linked this aspect of social media use to various dimensions of girls' mental health, such as low self-esteem and depressed mood (Blomfield, Neira, & Barber, 2013), especially to "body-esteem" (Alm & Låftman, 2018; British Youth Council, 2017; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013). What is of relevance to this study is the lengthening chains of interdependency generated through young people's social media use, especially in relation to their school lives, and especially within the social context of PE within which movement, bodies and appearance are foregrounded.

2.4 Education, school and mental health

Young people in many Western countries today spend longer in education than hitherto (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Evidence suggests that schools exert powerful influences not only on young people's educational life chances, but also on their mental health. Consequently, schools have been targeted as key settings for promoting health, including mental health (Cefai & Cavioni, 2015; Glazzard, 2018). The OECD (2017) report on the wellbeing of 15-year-olds, highlights the stress associated with schooling in a context of tests and grading. Thus, it is increasingly recognized that experiences at school influence every aspect of development during youth, including mental health (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that youngsters reporting poor health (both physically and mentally) have a higher risk of dropping-out from upper secondary school (Holen, Waakataar, & Sagatun, 2018; Sagatun et al., 2014). In this section, two dimensions of schooling and their consequences for mental health are explored in some detail, primarily because research suggests they are most strongly related to mental health and have relevance in the PE setting: first, social relations within school and,

second, the performance culture in schools in which there is a particular focus on grading and assessment.

Almost three decades ago, Rutter (1991) drew attention to the role of schools in providing social experiences, alongside their ostensible academic role. Put another way, schools are best viewed as "arenas of sustained interactions" (Green, Poland, & Rootman, 2000, p. 15). Subsequently, social relations and affiliation, often referred to as "school connectedness", have been recognized as important for young people's mental health (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). A number of correlational studies in several countries have revealed associations between mental health and school climate (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018; Kidger, Araya, Donovan, & Gunnell, 2012). The terms classroom and school climate tend to be used to refer to the "norms, expectations and beliefs that contribute to creating a psychosocial environment that determines the extent to which people feel physically, emotionally and socially safe" (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018, p. 122). Riekie, Aldridge, and Afari (2017) found evidence to support findings from an earlier study (Aldridge et al., 2016) suggesting that schools promoting positive interactions between students and, as a corollary, enabling and supporting peer relationships promoted what they referred to as "resilience", which in turn had positive consequences for students' sense of well-being. Some have found that school climate was more highly associated with girls' mental health (Suldo, McMahan, Chappell, & Loker, 2012). School climate – especially within PE, remains relatively under-theorised, however.

Educational research includes an extensive body of literature on teacher–student relations and the implications for students' mental health (De Wit, Karioja, Rye, & Shain, 2011; Suldo et al., 2012). There is evidence to suggest that positive teacher–student relations influence students' emotional wellbeing (García-Moya, Brooks, Morgan, & Moreno, 2015) irrespective of age, gender, country and perceived performance at school. In addition, positive teacher-student relationships have been found to protect young people (13–18 years) to varying degrees against depression and misconduct, as well as moderate aspects of parent–youth relationships (Wang, Brinkworth, & Eccles, 2013). The OECD (2017) report on the well-being of 15-year-olds concludes that teachers are central to creating the conditions for young people's sense of well-being.

Some research on teacher–student relations suggests a positive relationship between students feeling they have a voice and wellbeing (Anderson & Graham, 2016). Barile et al. (2012) emphasized the interdependent relationship between students having a voice, the likelihood of

good relationships and potential positive academic outcome. Findings also indicated the reverse consequence in terms of reduced self-esteem and increased symptoms of depression if teacher student relationships were perceived as negative (De Wit et al., 2011). In a Norwegian study of 15-year-old students exploring "meaningful" experiences in PE, the authors concluded that involving students in curriculum-making processes contributed to their sense of empowerment. (Walseth, Engebretsen, & Elvebakk, 2018). While not linking their findings directly to understanding processes of mental health development, listening to young people and enabling their greater involvement in various ways may well contribute to their perceptions of feeling valued within lessons.

Taken together, this research serves to reinforce the relevance of interdependencies within the school context to understanding the consequences for all aspects of mental health, whether directly through increased self-esteem or indirectly through academic achievement. Furthermore, outcomes are seemingly reciprocally related. Nordfjæran, Flemmen, and Dahl (2012), for example, observed that thriving in school was strongly and inversely associated with mental distress across gender, yet somewhat stronger among females. This finding is of relevance given that Bakken (2018, 2019b) reported an increasing tendency among Norwegian youth for fewer to thrive in school than previous years, alongside being bored in school and dreading going to school. Nonetheless, compared with students in many other countries, the wellbeing of young people in the Norwegian secondary school system is high (Bakken, 2018; NDET, 2018b). The recognition that fewer report that they thrive in school, however, warrants sensitivity towards the observation made by Cefai and Carvioni (2015), namely the tension-balance between schools being directed towards a narrow view of education (in terms of investing more in what is measured by PISA, for example) and social, emotional and cultural education (which might be perceived as being secondary to the former).

In recent years, however, increased pressures associated with an expansion of testing and expectations regarding higher education and future employment have become notable features of school-related mental health issues among young people (Eriksen et al., 2017) and "for a significant minority, school is a major source of stress" (West, 2009, p. 239), a point made more recently by the OECD (2017). Internationally, increasing proportions of youngsters reporting stress in relation to their school lives have been documented (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Nielsen & Lagermann, 2017; Pyhältö, Soini, & Pietarinen, 2010; Sotardi, 2017; Sweeting, West, Young, & Der, 2010). Lillejord, Børte, Ruud, and Morgan (2017) undertook a rapid review of research to investigate the development of school-related stress by comparing findings from

studies across several countries. The levels of reported school-related stress were found to be stable between 1994–2010. However, girls tended to report more stress than boys as well as having more psychosomatic health-problems related to school-stress. Östberg et al.'s (2015) mixed method study with 14–15-year-olds found that girls reported higher frequencies of perceived stress, which was mostly connected to school performance (e.g. marks obtained, working hard, and worries about the future). Similarly, Wiklund, Malmgren-Olsson, Öhman, Bergström, and Fjellman-Wiklund`s (2012) study of 16–18-year-olds in northern Sweden found higher levels of girls reporting sadness and anxiety compared to boys. Furthermore, the experience of high pressure and demand from school was the most prominent indicator for reporting mental and subjective health complaints and correlated strongly with reported health complaints and anxiety.

The report *Stress and pressure among young people: Experiences, causes and prevalence of mental health problems* (Eriksen et al., 2017) utilized evidence from six focus group interviews involving 29 girls and boys in Year 10 from two parts of Oslo (Norway) alongside data from the survey *Ung i Oslo* [Young in Oslo]. Findings related to perceived school stress, peaked towards the end of 10th grade and the end of upper secondary school (aged 16−19-years-old). School stress included demands from school and/or self-induced demands relating to the current school situation and future education. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between school stress and depressive symptoms. Notably, Eriksen et al. (2017) detected a clear gender difference, with girls reporting being considerably more troubled by stress than boys. Such findings have been supported by those from other studies in Norway (Aanesen, Meland, & Torp, 2017).

While it is well-documented that academic achievement and mental health are reciprocally related (Gustafsson et al., 2010; Jamal et al. 2013), a performance-oriented cultural context of expectations from others and oneself can have a variety of unintended consequences for young people and how they view themselves. Låftman, Alquist, and Östberg's (2013) qualitative study of 8th grade students in a high-performing school in Sweden (n=49) found that the youngsters' own high standards of what they regarded as high-performing culture were a significant source of stress, particularly among girls. Striving for high marks in anticipation of their futures appeared key to the youngsters' self-esteem and self-identities, with girls in particular tending to drive up stress levels by talking to each other about pressure at school while comparing themselves with their peers. In sum, there is evidence to suggest that increased workload and

pressures to perform in school is a partial explanation for mental health problems among youngsters, and girls especially (Banks & Smyth, 2015; OECD, 2017).

Stress linked to school work and performance tends to be gendered (in so far as there tends to be a higher prevalence among girls) and is reported as having negative consequences for mental health (Bakken, 2018; Eriksen, et al., 2017; Hagquist, 2010; Lillejordet et al., 2017; West & Sweeting, 2003). Furthermore, stress linked to school seems to increase with age (Eriksen, et al., 2017; Lillejordet et al., 2017; Nielsen & Lagermann, 2017), and even more so from 8th to 10th grade in Norway compared to other countries (Ruud, 2018). Recently, in Norway, the gender gap in relation to academic achievement and attainment has received increased attention. Borgonovi, Ferrera, and Magnhnoui (2018) reviewed the existing evidence on gender gaps in education and found evidence to suggest that Norway had one of the largest gender gaps in percentage of all-round low achievers among 15-year-olds. Nonetheless, boys aged 15 are less likely than girls to expect to obtain high levels of qualifications and more likely than girls to expect to obtain very poor qualifications (Borgonovi et al., 2018). In addition, boys in secondary school appear to put less effort than girls in their studies, to report that they put less effort and to believe that trying hard in school does not matter.

2.5 Young people, PA, PE and mental health

The focus on PE as a context for promoting and protecting mental health rests, at least to some extent, on its contribution to young people's physical activity participation during the school day. Yet the emphasis on physical activity within and beyond PE by policy makers in Norway as elsewhere (see, e.g., Reis et al., 2016), is illustrative of a widespread ideological belief in the power of PA to solve a range of youth problems – including mental health issues – rather than strong evidence. A similar "evangelical" case has been made for the role of sport over the past 10 years or more (see, for example, Coalter, 2007). Horrell, Sproule, and Gray (2012) have argued that arguments that focus on using PE and physical activity tend to obscure the complexity of addressing mental and physical health. In order to provide a platform for understanding how PE via PA might be linked to mental health, this section starts by examining the international evidence relating to PA and mental health. The focus then shifts to reviewing the research pertaining specifically to PE and mental health. As a background to this discussion, it should be noted, however, that there are social inequalities in sports participation (Andersen & Bakken, 2019), levels of physical activity (Johnsen, Toftager, Melkevik, Holstein, &

Rasmussen, 2017; Kay, 2016) and mental health (Straatmann et al., 2019) among youth in Norway as elsewhere.

Young people, PA and mental health

The physical health and fitness benefits of regular physical activity among youth have been well-documented (see, e.g., Strong et al., 2005; Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010; Poitras et al., 2016), generating consistent evidence on which the international recommendation for 60 minutes of daily PA at a moderate to vigorous level are based. The evidence relating to the benefits of PA for mental health is, however, more ambiguous and less well-documented. In part, this relates to a range of methodological issues: how to define, conceptualise and measure mental health; whether objective or subjective measures of physical activity are used; the varied age-groups studied between and within studies; the inclusion of either clinical, at risk, or non-clinical participants; and whether the goal was therapeutic, preventive or promotive; and, whether a cross-sectional or longitudinal study design had been used. All these issues make the synthesis of individual studies in a systematic review and meta-analysis problematic and the resulting conclusions often ambivalent about putative relationships.

The origins of relating PA to mental health can be traced to a paper published in 1999, in which Fox argued that the existing body of research suggested that moderate, regular exercise should be considered a viable means of treating depression and anxiety and improving mental health among adults. Since then, several systematic reviews have focused on children and youth some of which indicate small but significant effects of PA on some mental health outcomes (Ahn & Fedwa, 2011; Larun, Nordheim, Ekeland, Hagen, & Heian, 2006). In 2011, Biddle and Asare's (2011) synthesis of research on the relationship between PA and depression, anxiety, self-esteem and cognitive functioning among children and adolescents noted that most studies were methodologically weak. Nonetheless, they concluded cautiously that there was a consistent association although effects were small to moderate. In an updated review of reviews, Biddle, Ciaccioni, Thomas, and Vergeer (2019) noted that while there had been substantial growth of published research within this field since 2011 they concluded that many of the methodological problems with studies remained. Nonetheless, they supported the earlier conclusion from Beauchamp, Puternam, and Lubans (2018) that "the scientific evidence suggests that regular physical activity protects against deficits in mental health and supports cognitive function" (p. 544). With regard to cognition in particular, a recent systematic review of randomized controlled trials cautiously concluded that "given the large number of null and favourable

results for cognitive function, we suggest that PA would not impede cognitive function and should be promoted to support it" (Gunnell et al., 2019, p. 124). Given that PA has also been linked with academic achievement (see, e.g., Booth et al., 2014; Rasberry et al., 2011; Van Dijk, De Groot, Savelberg, Van Acker, & Kirschner, 2014) the evidence relating to cognition, in particular, has some traction within an educational context.

In terms of other specific mental health outcomes, a recent systematic review concluded that there was some evidence for the link with prevention of depression, depressive symptoms and physical self-concept – a sub-domain of self-esteem (Dale, Vanderloo, Moore, & Faulkner, 2019). Importantly, however, this study concluded that stronger effects were revealed in child and youth populations with clinical diagnoses. Stronger effects in clinical populations and moderate to insignificant effects in non-clinical populations have also been found (Carter, Morres, Meade, & Callaghan, 2016). However, Kuiper, Broer, and der Wouden (2018) found that physically active Dutch youth had fewer psychosocial problems. However, findings from different individual studies continue to provide somewhat conflicting results. For example, using data from a school-based survey completed by 11,110 adolescents from 10 European countries, McMahon et al. (2017) examined associations between physical activity/sport and mental health measures. Consistent with Janssen and LeBlanc's (2010) observation, they found that while at least one hour of daily PA is recommended for optimal *physical* health and development in children and adolescents, there was no evidence for the benefit of daily PA in terms of *mental* health. A recent longitudinal study of Norwegian youth concluded that changes in objectively measured physical activity was unrelated to changes in mental distress (Opdal et al., 2019), consistent with an earlier similar study of Dutch youth in relation to self-esteem (Van Dijk, Savelberg, Verboon, Kirschner, & De Groot, 2016).

What this brief review indicates is that methodological and conceptual challenges endure, which, with the exception of, perhaps, cognition, means that the relationship between physical activity and mental health remains unproven. Viewing mental health as a multidimensional, complex and dynamic construct – that is to say, as under development, especially during the period of youth – helps explain much of the difficulty associated with researching its relationship with physical activity. Biddle et al. (2019) have also underscored the need for research that better understands the context within which PA takes place. A growing body of evidence suggests that the mental health benefits of PA may be partly accounted for by the social interactions involved, hence the particular interest in sport and team games. Eime et al.'s (2013) systematic review focused on the psychological and social benefits of participation in

sport for children and adolescents. The most commonly reported benefits were improved self-esteem associated with social interaction alongside fewer depressive symptoms. There were also differences in the reported health outcomes associated with different contexts of participation: team sports were more associated with such outcomes than individual activities. Since that time, further international studies have concluded that the context is associated with various mental health outcomes. Participation in sports clubs has been found to be beneficial, for example Kleppang, Hartz, Thurston, and Hagquist (2018) and McMahon et al. (2017) found that participation in sport (team or individual) conferred an additional benefit beyond that provided by the activity alone. A Canadian study (Dorè, O´Loughin, Beauchamp, Martineau, & Fournier, 2016) found youth participating in team sports were found to have better mental health than those engaging with physical activity individually (age group 16–24). More recently, Dorè et al. (2018) found no evidence to support the claim that increasing PA volume was beneficial but PA undertaken in informal groups and a team sport setting was more beneficial to promote mental health and prevent depressive symptoms (mean age 18.5 years). A further dimension of context that has recently been investigated is participation in non-competitive and competitive sport environment. A cross-sectional study of mental health problems among Norwegian (aged 13–22 years) found that those participating in either non-competitive or competitive sports reported fewer total symptoms and being less affected by problems in their everyday life compared to those not participating in sports and, furthermore team sports were associated with fewer mental health problems (Breistøl et al., 2017). Lillejord, Vågan, Johansson, Børte, & Ruud (2016) concluded that the most consistent findings indicate that there are other aspects of PA than PA itself that influence mental health, namely, the context wherein it takes place and the social relationships therein. While these studies indicate the potential relevance of studying the social context, these quantitative studies tend to have the same limitations as those identified above.

Notwithstanding the limitations identified above relating to the evidence, the putative role of regular PA for supporting mental health and cognitive functioning lends support for implementing PA in the everyday school context (Bangsbo et al., 2016; Beauchamp et al., 2018) and, thus, provides a justification for PA that relates to schools' core "business", that is to say, learning (Naylor & McKay, 2009). Many studies, including systematic reviews, however, tend to conclude that more research is needed if causality is to be inferred with more confidence. Nonetheless, the evidence on quantity and intensity of physical activity, seems not to apply so readily to mental health. At the same time, it highlights the potential significance of studying

the social context of PA for mental health. In this regard, there has been an increased interest in using qualitative research to explore social processes that might shed light on contextual mechanisms, which is the departure point for this study. PE remains the compulsory curriculum domain in Norway within which PA takes place but has only relatively recently been researched in terms of being a context with possible implications for mental health.

Young people, PE and mental health

Both within and beyond Norway, PE has been extensively studied. In order to make sense of and present this body of knowledge as a platform for the current research, this section draws together empirical research that specifically relates to PE as experienced by young people, especially during the lower secondary school years. While the dynamics of teaching and learning in PE lessons are relevant, this section focuses on research that has explored young people's perceptions of what it is like to participate as a young person – to varying degrees and in varying ways – in PE lessons, especially with regard to their mental health, as broadly conceptualized. In other words, the direct interest is not so much on young people's learning, but rather on the consequences for them of being a part of secondary socialization processes, which can have both negative and positive consequences for one's sense of "self". It is recognized, however, that processes of learning are also a part of these processes, a matter that is discussed later in the thesis.

As a curriculum subject, PE differs from many others in terms of the social dynamics of lessons and the circumstances they create, the kinds of competence required on the part of pupils, and the visibility of performance and bodily movement (often in competitive arenas), among many other things. It seems likely, therefore, that PE might function as an enclave wherein young people's mental health might be enhanced and/or undermined. Research to date lends support to this hypothesis by identifying a number of stressors, barriers and challenges (Paechter, 2003; Ridgers, Stratton, Fairclough, & Twisk, 2007; Tudor, Sarkar, & Spray, 2019; Wiltshire, Lee, & Evans, 2017), as well as recognizing that PE can also be intrinsically and extrinsically enjoyable to young people in multiple ways, such as social interaction, fun, challenge and motor competence (Beni, Fletcher, & Ni Chróiní, 2017; Lewis, 2014), although experiences are often patterned along gender (Nielsen & Thing, 2019) and ethnic (Thorjussen & Sisjord, 2018) lines. With regard to gender in particular – which has been fairly extensively researched in recent years – girls tend to have more negative experiences, although this is contingent on other lesson content and dynamics (Martins et al., 2018). Some students can also struggle to feel included

during PE (Nielsen & Thing, 2019). With regard to the various dimensions of mental health discussed above, PE has been shown to be a site for identity formation relating to views about oneself, especially in relation to gendered notions of sporting competence (Metcalfe, 2018). However, relatively few studies have explored how social processes in PE are linked to outcomes, such as enjoyment or feelings of stress, or for that matter how they contribute to sporting identity formation. This is especially the case in terms of researching young people's perceptions, are can shed light on the subjective reality of their PE experiences.

Research in Scandinavia indicates that PE tends to be dominated by activities and values from competitive sports (Nyberg & Larsson, 2014; Redelius, Fagrell, & Larsson, 2009; Säfvenbom et al., 2015) and consequently, some students come to dislike PE and consider PA and sport as not for them. Whether or not young people in secondary school like PE, however, seems to shift, for example, in relation to moving through school and in relation to gender. Moen, Westlie, Bjørke, and Brattli (2018), for example, found decreasing proportions of young people (both boys and girls) liking PE from 5th grade (primary school) to 10th grade (from 70% to 40% of girls). On the other hand, for example, Lagestad's (2017) mixed methods study of predictors of enjoyment in PE among students (aged 14 to 19) found that enjoyment increased among girls during high school, paralleling increases in perceived autonomy. Similar findings have been reported beyond Scandinavia. In the US (Bernstein, Phillips, & Silverman, 2011) and England (Smith & St. Pierre, 2009) enjoyment of PE was found to relate to skill-level and degree of inclusion. However, dichotomous thinking relating to competition – as either liked or disliked, fun or not fun enjoyable or not – tends to simplify a more complex phenomenon. For example, a qualitative study in the US found that skill-level was an important factor in competitive activities in PE classes and the extent to which they were viewed as fun, with those less-skilled likely to have more negative experiences, although still able to enjoy the sociability of such activities (Bernstein et al., 2011). This study also found that how the competitive activity was structured influenced the degree to which it was experienced as fun. Similarly, in a study of "disengaged" girls aged 12–13 years in Scotland (Mitchell, Inchley, Fleming, & Currie 2015) concluded that what appears to be more important than the activities undertaken are perceptions of competence and the psychosocial environment in which they are delivered.

These findings are, at least to some extent, consistent with Evans' (2004) argument, that the widespread use of competitive elements, such as in team games, in PE serves to exclude rather than include some students. Given the importance to young people of sociability during PE (Smith & Parr, 2007), this might not be straightforwardly the case; rather, how competition is

presented to young people might be more or less exclusionary depending on the level and kind of skills required to participate. This underscores the potential value of research that focuses on understanding the process of PE practice and its dynamic interweaving sub-practices, especially when relating young people's experiences to their feelings and various other dimensions of mental health. While the significance of social relations in school settings for young people's mental health has been recognised (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010), Barker, Wallhead, and Quennerstedt (2017) observe in relation to PE that "the nature of interactions occurring during lessons has until recently escaped sustained empirical attention." (p.274). The research reported in this thesis goes some way to addressing this gap with specific regard to social interactions – processes – and young people's mental health.

Competence – in relation to skills and notions of being viewed as able or not able (including being assessed and graded) – has a fairly extensive history in research in PE (see, e.g., Evans, 2004; Evans & Penney, 2008; Hay & Macdonald, 2010; Redelius et al., 2009). In a recent Norwegian context, for example, Aasland, Walseth, and Engelsrud (2019) concluded that among high school students being an "able student" was found to require the attainment of specific scores on tests and exhibit skills in traditional ball games. In addition, student potential for learning and improvement was found to be given relatively scant attention. Not only does this study indicate that static conceptualizations of being "able" or "less able" tend to be dominant among Norwegian PE teachers, relatively little has changed since Evans (2004) argued that if PE was to become more inclusive based on principles of equity then accomplishment or completion of tasks should be an ongoing process.

The notion of enjoyment, having fun and liking PE are likely to be in tension with feelings of stress or even feeling uncomfortable and apprehensive in lessons. While stress in school is increasingly well-documented as having consequences for young people young people's mental health, there is a dearth of research in relation to PE. A recent qualitative study from the UK involving secondary school young people (Tudor et al., 2019) found that a variety of situations were experienced as stressful and potentially threatening and frustrating that related to the social, organizational and performance-oriented climate. That some students perceive situations in PE as threatening to themselves has been reported by Lyngstad, Hagen, and Aune (2016). They identified what they called "hiding techniques", such as "kidding around" when situations became difficult or embarrassing, as well as being rough, noisy and violent in order to hide a lack of skills and feigning injury or illness in order to avoid getting involved.

The general school assessment and grading context has been linked to stress (Eriksen et al., 2017). An overview of the international literature on assessment in PE concluded that particular dimensions of PE (such as motor skills, fitness, team games) were assessed more often than others (López-Pastor et al., 2013). While there has been some research on students' views of PE grading as an aspect of the educational process (see, e.g., Redelius & Hay, 2012), little is known about the consequences of these processes in PE for students' mental health. During the final years of compulsory schooling young people experience many social, familial, as well as educational pressures, of which assessment and grading forms an increasingly important part. It may be the case that the greater emphasis on AfL (as introduced in 2.2) in PE (Tolgfors, 2018) offers the potential for less stressful learning environments to be developed than hitherto. Leirhaug (2016), however, found that PE teachers conveyed very varied understandings and enactments of AfL and a general need for enhancing assessment literacy has been identified (Leirhaug et al.,2016; Svennberg, Meckbach, & Redelius, 2018). Nonetheless, research suggests that dynamics within PE lessons generate processes of comparison which convey messages – formal and informal – which are perceived by students as saying something about their abilities and worth (Hilland, Ridgers, Stratton, Knowles, & Fairclough, 2016).

One aspect of assessment and grading in PE that is particularly pertinent to the Norwegian context, is the emphasis given to the role of "effort". Research has revealed that this criterion tends to be interpreted by teachers as "working hard", having the "right" attitude, showing a willingness to try and do their best and thus be rewarded (Redelius et al., 2009; Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2008). A recent study by Aasland and Engelsrud (2017) concluded that teachers give apparent accomplishment, that is to say, visible bodily activity, primacy when assessing effort, neglecting other ways in which it might be shown, such as co-operative processes relating to students working together.

Some light has been shed on how the social dynamics of everyday PE might be experienced in terms of "othering", that is to say, being labelled through words and actions as "other than the norm" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 26), the result of which is varying degrees of marginalization. Within and beyond PE, the concept has most often been applied to the study of gender (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001) fatness (Wright, 2009) and ethnicity (Fitzpatrick, 2013) as well as the intersection between them. (Flintoff, Fitzgerald, & Scraton, 2008; Thorjussen & Sisjord, 2018). Nielsen, Ottesen, and Thing (2016) have revealed the role of PE in sustaining and perpetuating othering processes in relation to inclusion. Othering has also been applied to explain how such processes undermine group connectedness and social inclusion in the classroom (Nielsen &

Thing, 2019). In a context where sport has high value (such as the PE class), young people may find themselves having to navigate power relations in order to establish themselves within the dominant social group.

A final dimension of PE practice that warrants attention for the purposes of understanding its consequences for young people's mental health is that of the body. The increased focus on bodily appearance among young people has been well-documented in recent years both as a general phenomenon (Harris, Cale, Duncombe, & Musson, 2018; Trekels, Karsay, Eggermont, & Vandenbosch, 2018) as well as specifically within a PE context (Walseth, Aartun, & Engelsrud, 2017; Webb, Quennerstedt, & Öhman, 2008). There are some very specific aspects of PE that contribute to feeling uncomfortable about revealing one's body in front of others such as during showering and changing clothes (Frydendal & Thing, 2019), during which feelings of "embarrassment" and "self-consciousness" can be evoked (Elliott & Hoyle, 2014). Beyond this specific situation, the social dynamics of PE lessons themselves put young people's bodies centre stage, unlike other curriculum subjects (Kerner, Haerens & Kirk, 2018). During PE, young people reveal their capabilities relating to various skills, movements and games through their bodies, which often involve processes of being judged in respect of physical appearance as well as competence. This has been found to be especially the case for girls in a coeducational context (O'Donovan & Kirk, 2008), where girls may feel increased self-consciousness about their bodies (Dwyer et al., 2006) with a greater likelihood of internalizing views relating to self-esteem (Cribb & Haase, 2016). This that is relevant to the Norwegian context given the co-educational nature of PE. Nonetheless, the extent to which this undermines their participation given the pressures to be active and competent is unclear (Evans, 2006). So too are the consequences for young people's emerging identities as physically active and attractive young people. However, research suggests that young people do not want to stand out in PE for what they see as the wrong reasons, such as being bigger than others (Wiltshire et al., 2017). The question remains, however, whether PE processes restrict or allow young people to overcome predominant social norms (Metcalfe, 2018). Again, this is pertinent to the Norwegian context where girls participate in a par with boys at most ages (Green, Thurston, & Johansen, 2019).

2.6 Trends in youth studies

Heath, Brooks, Cleaver, and Ireland (2009) refer to youth studies as "a broad church"(p.9) covering research traditions from a wide range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. Historically, one of the predominant perspectives has been developmental psychology and this is especially the case with regard to mental health, not least because of the relevance of complex psychosocial processes (Thapar, Collishaw, Pine, & Thapar, 2012) which are generally accepted as laying the foundation for future mental health (Gore et al., 2011; Kieling et al., 2011). Developmental psychologists have tended to characterize adolescence as a period of personal crisis, emotional turbulence and rebelliousness (Hall, 1904) a period of "storm and stress" (Arnett, 1999). The emphasis on "adolescence" as a chronological and biological life-stage driven by "puberty" has underpinned this approach to varying degrees. Steinberg and Morris (2001), for example, have argued that research in the 1980s and 1990s tended to be pre-occupied with adolescents' problem behavior. Yet the majority of teenagers tend to "weather the challenges of the period without developing significant social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties" (Steinberg & Morris, 2001, p. 85)

2.6.1 Youth transitions

Individual and cultural variation in young people's trajectories points towards the need for a more complex understanding of this period. There is, for example, an increasing tendency towards interdisciplinary pluralism within the field of youth research (Heath et al., 2009), not least because there is a general recognition that "the psychological and social changes that occur during the teenage years have roots in biological change" (Roberts, 2009, p. 3). Indeed, the significance of young people's contexts and, more specifically, their interdependencies with others in their figurations, has become a focus of youth research in recent years. Reflecting this trend, this study adopts a sociological perspective in order to focus on what sociologists refer to as the life-stage of youth (Roberts, 2009, p 3). It is worth noting, however, that rapidly changing societies have given rise to a shift in focus towards the fragmented and individualized ways young people construct their identities in the twenty-first century global north (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006).

Given this societal context, young people's lives are generally viewed as having changed significantly, not least in relation to education (Wyn, 2009). The normativity of staying longer in education has extended the period of reaching full adulthood (Heinz, 2009). As a

consequence, young people's transitions to adulthood have changed from being characterized by "clear routes" marked by step-wise progression to adulthood in an age-sequence (i.e. school–work–marriage), towards youngsters being constrained to coordinate multiple and increasingly self-directed transitions with uncertain outcomes (Heinz, 2009). Contemporary youth transitions are thus neither linear nor emergent (Heinz, 2009; Wyn & Woodward, 2006). Rather, Heinz (2009) argues, they are "contingent and linked to complex interactions between individual decisions, opportunity structures, and social pathways with more or less institutionalized guidelines and regulations" (p. 4). As the traditional links between the family, school and work have seemingly weakened and young people's journeys into adulthood come to involve a considerably wider variety of routes, Furlong and Cartmel (2007) point to the growing tendency for young people to view their own route as unique and needing to be dealt with by themselves, as individuals, rather than as members of a collectivity, such as young working-class males.

In considering the more fluid, individualized and fragmented transitions experienced by contemporary youth some, such as Furlong, Woodman, and Wyn (2011), have argued that it is increasingly difficult to identify clear markers or end points in the process of becoming an adult, making the notion of transitions outdated. Roberts (2007), on the other hand, argues that even if contemporary youth transitions are more complicated, even disordered, they nevertheless constitute new patterns of transition rather than no transitions at all. Indeed, contemporary youth simply accept their circumstances as normal, having no personal experience of the prior conditions to which some, such as sociologists of youth, make reference. In other words, research and explanations related to being a youngster in today's world need to accept as a starting point that youngsters' perceptions and experiences of growing up – and, in the case of the present study, "being 15 and experiencing PE in Norway" – might not mirror those of youngsters from previous generations. Hence the need for contemporary research based on a sociological perspective.

3. Adopting a figurational sociological persepctive

In this chapter, I will outline the theoretical underpinning for the study. Within a broader sociological perspective, the study will adopt a particular sociological approach; namely, that of figurational sociology.

3.1 Introducing sociology

In simple terms, sociology "is the study of society or societies" (Roberts, 2012, p. 2). Societies can be great or small and anything in between. A society might, for example, mean global society, an individual country or a smaller unit therein, such as a school or even a class within a school (Roberts, 2012). In studying societies, all sociological theories tend to grapple with the same issue. Prominent among these are the "nature" of society and the relationship between social "structure" and social "agency". Since Durkheim (1893), sociologists have insisted on the *reality* of society (*sui generis*) as more than merely the sum of its parts and have taken as axiomatic the notion of social structures. This has resulted in ongoing debate around the idea of "structural determinism": i.e. whether society *makes* people rather than people making themselves. This is the so-called "structure–agency" debate underpinning the "twin sociologies" of social structure and social action or agency.

For sociologists, the structures that make up society exist before we enter the world (e.g. the family, school, sports clubs) and these structures remain there, beyond us, as we enter each life-stage (Roberts, 2012). Our experiences in these institutions – and the networks of interdependence they constitute – impress themselves upon our minds, making us feel constrained to act in particular ways. This is the nature of interdependency and the structural element of social existence. Individuals have little or no impact upon those structures. In practice, most people play no part in building the macro-systems within which they live. On this view, people's lives are at least constrained (even governed) by the "structure" of society, and sociology *cannot*, therefore, be reduced to individual psychology, notwithstanding the appearance of agency.

The twin sociologies of social structure (in which society is viewed as an external reality with an independent existence shaping individuals' lives) and social action (wherein society is merely created and maintained by the actions of individuals and the relationships that they form with others) represents a dichotomous distinction that many have challenged and some sought

to resolve conceptually. Anthony Giddens, for example, has claimed that structure and agency each presume the other and are embedded in each other. This he termed the process of "structuration". Perhaps the most compelling attempt to bridge the structure–agency divide, however, comes in the form of the uses of the concept of habitus by both Bourdieu (Jenkins, 1992; Roberts 2012) and Elias (Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, & Emirbayer, 2012) and the networks or figurations in which these emerge and develop (Elias, 1978). Thus, in order to overcome the dichotomy inherent in use of the terms "individual" and "society", this study adopts Norbert Elias' figurational or processual sociology (Roberts, 2009; van Krieken, 1998).

3.2 Figurations (networks of interdependency)

The figuration, as a structure of mutually oriented and (inter-)dependent people (van Krieken, 1998), is the core concept in figurational sociology. Thus, the underpinning ontological assumption or premise in figurational sociology is *interdependency* (Murphy, 2019). In figurational sociology, societies amount to groups or networks of interdependent people, and the relationship between individuals and society is conceptualized in terms of individuals or groups bonded into their surrounding, constantly changing, networks (Roberts, 2009; van Krieken, 1998). In this regard, it is only in their relationships with each other – in more or less complex social figurations characterized by shorter or longer, more or less dense "chains of interdependency" – that individuals exist (van Krieken, 2014). For Elias and figurationalists, people exist only as pluralities, only in figurations, since "they are more or less dependent on each other first by nature and then through social learning, through education, socialization and socially generated reciprocal needs" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 56). In other words, rather than conceptualizing people as essentially "autonomous" individuals, acting independently in relation to something external to them, called "society", Elias stressed that a person's identity as a unique individual only exists within and through networks of *interdependent* people. For figurationalists, therefore, it is only within a web of social relationships and within networks of interdependencies with one's family, school, class, gender, and friendship networks (and, by extension, sports clubs) and so on that an individual can become a human being (van Krieken, 1998).

In *What is Sociology*, Elias (1978) illustrates the customary way of understanding society in the so-called "common-sense model", which he perceived to dominate people's experience of their own (or any other individual's) relationship to society. In short, the individual, "me", is located

in the middle *surrounded* by social structures or objects such as family, school, industry and state *over and above* “me”, the individual ego. This way of viewing the relationship between individuals and society was, according to Elias (1978, p. 14), “naively egocentric”. Rather than Rather than viewing society as made up of structures external to people, Elias offered an alternative model intended to provide what he viewed as a more realistic portrayal of society: one in which people are oriented towards and linked with each other in many diverse ways (Elias, 1978). Moreover, people are oriented towards and linked with each other through more or less unstable balances of power. On this view, people make up webs of interdependence or figurations of many kinds – such as countries, towns, families, schools, friendship groups and sports clubs – and personhood is best understood when being aware of oneself as “a human being *among* other human beings” (Elias, 1978, p. 15; emphasis added).

In order to illustrate social arrangements (figurations) as networks or mesh of connections, Abram de Swann (2001) introduced lines (varying in thickness and depth of shade) to represent the different connections. Occasional associations are linked with grey lines whilst more regular contacts are linked by bolder connecting lines. Furthermore, the linking lines are directional, implying relative balances of power inherent in interdependent relations between two or more people (de Swaan, 2001) A school, for example, can be viewed as an interconnected network of relations, wherein light grey lines are taken to indicate the many relatively superficial relationships between, for example, pupils in the school. The interconnections between friendship groups or even classmates, on the other hand, are represented by bolder and thicker lines reflecting the greater, more intense interaction and interdependence therein. It is important to note that, in this model, it is people who are the junctions of networks and some occupy a more central position at the nodes where numerous links converge. One pupil or friend in a friendship network may, for instance, be more central and influential in that network than others. A teacher may act as a nodal point in a similar way favouring, for example, some pupils over others.

Figurations are relatively independent of the specific individuals forming them (and, as a consequence, are *experienced* as being “over and above”) but not of people as such. In other words, even though individual members of a particular network or figuration (e.g. pupils and teachers in a school) might come and go, the figuration of the particular school and schools as an institution continues to exist. This is what Roberts (2016) means when he says “The society precedes each actor” (p. 2). From this perspective, schools are examples of figurations

constituted of acting human beings in the form of school leaders, teachers, pupils and so forth. Pupils outgrow secondary school and leave, only to be replaced by new pupils, and the school lives on as a school figuration; to quote Elias and Dunning (2008): "individuals always come in figurations and figurations are always formed by individuals" (p. 197).

The social constraints – that are an inevitable feature of interdependency ties – are built into societies and "the development of all human individuals from infancy to whatever their society regarded as adulthood" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 106). As societies develop, any single individual will be interdependent, however fleetingly, with ever-larger circles of people, lengthening the chains of interdependencies. As figurations are formed by individuals, the constraints seemingly exerted by social institutions such as schools are, in fact, exerted by people (Elias, 1978). In other words, what we attempt to conceptualize as social forces are in fact forces exerted by people over one another and over themselves (Elias, 1978) within figurations or networks. This may mean that the very same people who feel themselves constrained are, at one and the same time, constraining others by exercising pressure on them while feeling pressured themselves (Goudsblom, 1977, p. 131). While youngsters, for example, feel constrained by their parents, teachers and friends they are, at the same time, inevitably endeavouring to constrain the thoughts and deeds of each of these groups and, in particular, their friends and peers. Thus, constraint is not simply linear. While constraining his or her pupils to behave in particular ways, that teacher is him- or herself constrained by the expectations and behaviours of those same students. An example is found in teachers feeling constrained by curriculum policy regarding PA recommendations while endeavouring to ensure that their students achieve good academic grades.

Another feature of figurations is that they are continually in flux, in terms of undergoing changes of one kind or another. Viewing social life as not only relational but also processual and developmental is, according to Elias, a central sociological principle. In fact, it is to be viewed as the very "stuff" of historical change as changes in social reality are changes in the way people are bonded to each other: "The 'circumstances' which change are not something which comes upon men [sic] from 'outside'; they are relationships between people themselves" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 62). Changes in the way people are bonded to each other (e.g. friend to friend, student to teacher) are the very reasons why people's behaviours, their consciousness, and their personality structures as a whole develop. Considering the network of interdependencies individuals exist within, and the changes therein, is necessary even when

understanding individual experience as "even what an individual feels to be 'inner life' is stamped by the historicity of his or her relationships" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 62). The philosophies and practices of PE teachers, for example, will bear the hallmarks of their own socialization into, first, sport and then PE teaching (Green, 2008). Thus, current social relations and structures can best be understood by considering longer-term social processes.

3.2.1 Figurations, interdependencies and power relations

For figurationalists, the interdependent and constraining character of the relationships between members of a network, such as a school, classroom, sports club or friendship group, means that such relationships are inevitably characterized by power balances of one sort or another. Although power is a central concept within sociology it is difficult to define precisely, not least because it takes many different forms (Roberts, 2009). For figurationalists, nevertheless, power is not merely the resources (e.g. money, authority, emotion) a person utilises in order to get what s/he wants (including the ability to change how things are, or not to change things, when a person or group could effect change) (Roberts, 2009). Rather than being understood as "an amulet possessed by one person and not by another" (Elias, 1978, p. 74) – and which persons, groups or institutions possess to a greater or lesser degree – power is more adequately conceptualised as a "structural characteristic of human relationships" (Elias, 1978, p. 74) and specifically human interdependencies. Put another way, power needs to be conceived in terms of power *relations*, with shifting balances of tensions between individuals and social units, in other words, power *balances* and power *ratios*.

By thinking in terms of power *relations* and power *balances*, the reciprocal workings of power become more visible, because the pressures exerted from one on another recoil on the former as pressures or constraints of the less powerful to the more powerful (van Krieken, 1998). Put differently, power-balances are founded in interdependencies but are only applicable to the internal dynamics of that relationship without any capacity to transform it (van Krieken, 1998, p. 64). This point can be illustrated with reference to the relation between teachers and pupils. At first glance, power in the classroom is a zero-sum relationship: teachers have all the power and their pupils none. However, because pupils fulfil particular functions and needs for their teachers (e.g. teachers may want their pupils to be "busy, happy, good" [Placek, 1983]), students inevitably hold degrees of influence or power over their teachers. Thus, power is not merely a "one-way street" (Elias, 1978, p. 74).

An underlying principle to follow from societies being composed of human beings who engage in intentional actions, (in other words, various interdependencies that are also power relations), is that the outcome of these intentional actions is often *unplanned* or *unintended.* Put in a practical, relevant perspective, planned actions, whether in the form of government decisions – or a teacher's decision regarding content and organization – may not have the presumed consequences upon youngsters' behaviour, for example. The social processes giving rise to unplanned consequences can be seen as "flowing from the intermeshing of the actions of numerous people" (Elias, 1978, p. 146), and lead to developments that were not intended or implemented by any one individual.

For figurationalists, because human beings are thinking, feeling creatures, social bonds are inevitably, emotional bonds (Elias, 1978, p. 137). Thus, a feature of interdependencies (and the associated power relations) is emotion.

3.3 Figurational sociology and the sociology of emotions

Elias (1987) conceived of the emotions as somatic, feeling-related sensations. What he referred to as "the deeply rooted emotional need of every human being for the society of other human beings" (Elias, 1978, p. 136) has never disappeared. Thus, Elias regarded such sensations as social barometers that connect the body to society insofar as human emotional expression is a central aspect of social life (van Krieken, 2014): emotions are the hinges between our biological nature and sociality (Elias, 1987). This is because individual emotions and thoughts are significantly shaped by the varying ways in which humans are linked together in webs of interdependencies (Elias & Dunning, 2008). Thus, Elias (1987) emphasized the need to explore the links or hinges, connecting aspects of humans perceived as bodies (i.e. nature) with other aspects perceived as disembodied (i.e. non-nature); in other words, the need to transcend the image of a dual world. Thus, in dealing with subjectivities such as perceptions and experiences embedded in webs of personal relationships, emotions and emotional bonds inevitably play a part.

3.3.1 The civilizing process, reason and the emotions

Rational action, according to Weber (Roberts, 2009, p. 228), is *calculative* behaviour geared to achieving a desired outcome (e.g. obtaining a good grade in PE). For figurationalists, however, in order to understand why people think and act as they do one needs to appreciate that thought

and behaviour tends to reflect the impact of emotion as well as reason. A blend of emotional involvement and "reasoned" detachment is present in virtually all human behaviour and human relationships. Indeed, people's passions frequently impact more substantially on their thoughts and behaviours than abstract reasoning and reflection. The learned restraint, or modifying, of these spontaneous desires and emotional needs is what Elias conceptualized as something akin to "rationality".

This learned self-restraint is one dimension of what Elias referred to as a "civilizing process". Elias (1956) argued that western societies have become more civilized in the sense that external controls over individuals have been replaced by internal controls of emotions and actions (Roberts, 2009). In the process of civilization, biological instincts that were drivers in "subhuman" societies, while still present, are greatly modified by learning, experience and processes of sublimation (Elias, 1956). The internalized tendency to subject the emotions to reflection and deliberation – in other words, management – resembles what Weber calls "reason". As Wouters (1989) observes:

> Emotions are both ingredients and instruments for managing life, a management that predominantly consists of subjecting emotions here and now to emotions in the future. One's pattern of behaviour can therefore be conceived of as the result of a process of checking emotions – the individual civilizing of emotions … This individual civilizing process is more or less attuned to the dominant code of behaviour and feeling in a society – to its level and pattern of civilization. (p. 26)

Put another way, while emotions and desires are socially constituted as seemingly spontaneous, in reality human desires (like aggression) need to be restrained in relation to the demands of social life (van Krieken, 1998): "this learned self-regulation takes the form of a tension balance between emotional impulses and emotion controlling counter-impulses" (Wouters, 1989, p. 10). In this regard, Hochschild (1998) – one of the earliest and most influential sociologists of the emotions – took the view that the self is subject to a profoundly social influence. Because the web of relationships and interdependencies within which people are located have become increasingly complex and dense in contemporary societies and people's relationship to their emotions, what it means to be a "person", has been affected.

In the process of civilizing, the management of emotions has been (and still is) crucial in the representation of social identity; not least because, in revealing "the true feelings of the person concerned", "affective outbursts" have the potential to be damaging to one's position (Elias, as

cited in van Krieken, 1998, pp. 88–89). Insofar as they might be interpreted as a sign of weakness, the need for individuals to attune their actions according to others and become less "prisoners of their passions" became more pressing. This self-regulation was necessary as "the social existence of the individual who gives way to spontaneous impulses and emotions is threatened and the social advantage of those who able to moderate their affects is greater" (van Krieken, 2014, p. 9). Finding a balance between the free expression of one's true emotions and its management in the calculated pursuit of long-term ends has led to the promotion of "observation of self and others" – a "specific form of self-observation" that results in a kind of "self-discipline in social life" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 90). In other words, there has been a gradual transformation of personality structure, an intensifying constraint towards self-constraint, in which the regulation of the human body, as well as our impulses, passions and desires undergoes a civilizing process (van Krieken, 1990/2003).

3.3.2 Socialization, habitus and the emotions

In terms of the emotions, figurational sociology takes as its starting point that "human beings are born with very little natural self-regulation" (Elias, 1987, p. 345). Their natural or unlearned forms of steering conduct are – or rather, have *become* – subordinated to learned forms. In other words, human emotions are merged learned and unlearned processes (Elias, 1987) – youngsters *learn* and subsequently *internalize* degrees of control over their emotions: "in order to become fully functioning human beings, they have to learn to regulate themselves according to the *social habitus*, i.e. the learned social standards of controlling one's drives and emotions" (Wouters, 1989, p. 10). This is "the relationship between psychic and social life" (van Krieken, 1998, pp. 127–128).

A point to be made here is that the feeling component of emotions is accessible because humans (as opposed to animals) are able to verbalize their feelings. Put another way, humans are capable of communicating feelings to each other through talking (Elias, 1987). Humans are, through their ability to learn, adapt and verbalize, capable of showing on their outside a more or less calculated expression of what they are inside (Elias, 1987, p. 361). This implies that feelings, as such, can serve, or rather be expressed, according to the function emotions have within the context of a person's relationship with other persons.

Thus, socialization "is about learning how to behave in a context appropriate way" and involves "a person gaining a confident sense of who they are" (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2014, p. 72). Learning

to behave in a context appropriate way, thus includes learning to express feelings according to context.

3.3.3 Socialization, parents and the family

Primary socialization (learning how to become accepted and acceptable members of a group or groups) in the family is where the emotional life of children starts out. It is in the family where children begin to learn how, when and where to repress or control their innermost feelings and inclinations. Put another way, it is through "love and learn" relationships with other persons young children become functioning human beings (Elias1987, p. 346). Thus, Elias (1939/1994) views childhood as the primary site for the process of "civilizing" emotions and behaviours. Childhood is, he suggests, "the main social arena in which the development of a particular personality structure [or habitus] takes place" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 155).

The process of socialization involves parents channelling their children's drives and emotions into ways that optimise a blend of spontaneous (or involved) and reflexive (detached) behaviour – a kind of "spontaneity that does not harm the children nor anyone else" (Wouters, 1989, p. 17). Family is the main site "in which the individual lives during his/her more impressionable phase, during childhood and youth" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 156) imprinting itself upon their unfolding personalities. Consequently, parents are seen as "the primary agents of [social] conditioning" (p. 155). Put another way, the relations between adults, particularly parents, and children are among the most significant patterns of social relation in civilizing processes.

3.3.4 Socialization and schooling

"Personality structures" or habitus (see below) continue to develop throughout childhood and youth in response to changing circumstances and relationships and so school functions as a site of secondary socialization. Although it is conventional to view education in school systems as specifically concerned with the development of the cognitive and intellectual abilities of young people, a more comprehensive and, therefore, adequate conceptualisation would be socialisation "in specialised institutions" (Roberts, 2009, p. 74) which inculcates (or, at least, attempts to do so) the norms of expected conduct among young people: "Secondary schools are sites of academic instruction but also contexts of socioemotional development", within which "the intertwining of these two functions has consequences for adolescents' future health and education" (Crosnoe, Benner, & Schneider, 2012, p. 150). School PE is one dimension of the

secondary socializing role of schools. In broad terms, *physical* education involves the socialization of young people into sporting and PA skills and cultures.

3.3.5 Socialization and informalization

As the characters of childhood and adults experience change, there is a democratization of the relations between adult and children and decline in inequality between them. As the social expectations of children became more complex, the ritualized expressions of respect for adult authority declined, taking the form of what Elias referred to as an informalization of relations between parents and children. The changing authority relations, he claimed, "demand of a parent a relatively very high degree of self-control" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 157). This high degree of self-control rebounds, in turn, to impose a high degree of self-restraint on children. In education, too, this development can be observed: behavioural and emotional alternatives for children have increased (Wouters, 1989).

The informalization process thus means that the relevance of an established code of behaviour declines. This inevitably brings with it a widespread feeling of uncertainty to many people who are caught up in the turmoil of change (van Krieken, 1998, p. 115) associated with the life-stage of youth. Hence, an increase in individual freedom – as an outcome of informalization – is actually greater demand for self-compulsion and self-management (van Krieken, 1998, p. 115). This increase in individual freedom as an outcome of releasing individuals from former authoritative structural constraints (such as families) enables individuals to gain control over their own biographies, was introduced to sociology by Ulrich Beck (1992) as "individualization". Aspects of individualization include a heightened awareness of the self and acceptance of personal responsibility for one's current position and future (Roberts, 2009, p. 131). However, by emphasizing self-discipline in favour of individualism, Elias underpinned what he viewed as crucial in social science, namely the requirements of living as a part of group (van Krieken, 1998). For figurationalists, it is in and through relations with others – particularly in the form of primary and secondary socialization – that people develop what he termed "habitus" or "second nature" and a sense of themselves as individuals within various groups.

3.3.6 Habitus

Elias conceived of the habitus as "the durable and generalized disposition that suffuses a person's action throughout an entire domain of life or, in the extreme instance, throughout all of life – in which case the term comes to mean the whole manner, turn, cast, or mold of the

personality" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 47). On this view, "the real forces which govern us" (p. 47) are our habits or habitus and it is because we tend not to be aware of the ways in which our seemingly free choices are influenced by our deep-seated predispositions (or second nature) that "the choices involved seem to be made naturally" (Tolonen, 2005, p. 356). Thus, the "second nature" of habitus amounts to socially developed orientations, inclinations and dispositions so deeply-embedded in people's values, attitudes and behaviours that they are experienced as "if they were rooted in nature" (van Krieken, 2014).

Elias, like Bourdieu (see, e.g., Paulle et al., 2012), rejected the idea that one could distinguish between *society* and *the individual*. For Elias, in particular, people need to be understood as social to their very core (van Krieken, 1998, p. 6). For both Elias and Bourdieu, the concept that brought structure and agency together was "habitus". Habitus allowed Elias to escape the subject–object dichotomy and to get beyond the myth of the "self-contained knowing subject" (Paulle et al., 2012, p. 71).[1] Habitus brings structure and agency together (we make choices in the context of our predispositions, embedded via socialisation) in the form of (pre)dispositions, ways of thinking, feeling and acting – "largely beyond consciousness" (Roberts, 2016, p. 134) – which enables us to act routinely without much if any thought or calculation. It is in this way that the habitus – as the mental dwelling in which people live (Roberts, 2016) – represents what comes to be viewed as the structural element of the classic "structure-agency" model: as an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control" (Elias, 2012, p. 406). For figurationalists, where people acquire similar habituses (e.g. PE teachers) we can talk of a group habitus or group consciousness.

The formation of habitus is, for Elias, a continuous process which begins at birth and continues throughout a person's childhood and youth: "the web of social relations in which the individual lives during his more impressionable phase, during childhood and youth, which imprints itself upon his unfolding personality" (van Krieken, 1998, p.156). Thus, Elias recognized habitus as having a historical character (van Krieken, 1998, p.154), put differently, habitus can/will *develop* but always from *foundations* laid early on during childhood and youth (see Elias): i.e. acquired through social experience (and, in particular, socialization and teaching).

[1] Habitus is one of Bourdieu`s key concepts, but as pointed out by Paulle et al (2012), Elias was working extensively with habitus long before Bourdieu had ever heard of the term. Nevertheless, the idea was crucial to both thinkers.

Although initially developed in childhood and youth, habitus never ceases entirely to be affected by changing relations with others throughout life. The process of psychological development and transformation, what Elias (1978) called *psychogenesis*, can only be properly understood in relation to changes in surrounding social relations – *sociogenesis* in Eliasian terms. In other words, psychogenesis is the change in personality structures, or habitus, which accompany and underlie social changes (van Krieken, 1998). Nevertheless, and despite the fact that socialization is a lifelong process in which peers become increasingly prominent, the significance of early life experiences (and those within the family, in particular) cannot be underestimated. While socialization does not end with adulthood, later stages of the socialization process inevitably build in some way or other upon the foundations laid early on (Roberts, 2009). Thus, the significance of early life socialization lies in the often profound impact it has on people's predispositions or habitus. According to Elias the key to understanding what society is lies in the grasp of the "historicity of each individual, the phenomenon of growing up to adulthood" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 154). Our understanding of habitus and the person need to be stretched over the whole period of an individual's biography rather than being conceptualized as an individual incorporation of temporal dimension.

In the present study, young people's habituses are expressed, among other things, in their predispositions towards PE and the activities that constitute it alongside their perceptions of what it means for aspects of their mental health.

3.3.7 Socialization, habitus and identity

Identity refers to an individual's sense of self, and also to how the person is identified by others. Roberts (2009) reminds us that sociologists have treated this as contingent ever since the time of Charles Horton Cooley and George Mead. Theories about "identity" are extensive. It is accepted that to some extent identities have always been situation specific (Roberts, 2009). In modern societies, nevertheless, it is said that there is disjuncture between "surface me" and my sense of the "real" underlying me. Some sociologists argue that in late or postmodern societies

life has become so fluid and fragmented that we are liable to lose any sense of who we really are, with the consequence that identities are now subject to constant revision and can even be changed and chosen deliberately then advertised to others by wearing the appropriate clothing (Roberts, 2009). Moreover, and following on from this, the self is said to have derivatives: a desired self – how I would like to be – and a presented self (Goffman, 1959) – how I try to

appear to others – in addition to the sense of the real underlying me (Roberts, 2009, p. 251). The notion of the presented self (Goffmann, 1959) – that is, how I try to appear to others – compared individuals in everyday situations, face-to-face interactions to actors in a theatre, playing different roles in order to try to control or influence the impression others, the audience, receive of the situation. People behaved differently depending on whether they were visible to the public or not (Goffman, 1959; Roberts, 2009).

More recently, Jacobsen and Kristiansen (2011) have illustrated how Goffman's understanding of the self has inspired social scientists in studying the construction of identity on the internet, also referred to as "the virtual self". In short, the internet – in the form, for example, of social media or blogs – provides a unique platform and opportunity to decide and select what is presented to others, as opposite to real life. From a figurational perspective, van Krieken (1998) emphasizes the importance of seeing the increasing organization of social interaction around computers and the internet as particular social figurations based on changing patterns and lengthening chains of interdependency. Computer-mediated communication and social interaction can thus be seen as "constructing a corresponding '[inter]net habitus' among increasing numbers of people around the globe" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 173).

Given that the people in this study are young people that are tending to experience increasing degrees of independence, it is reasonable to assume that changes in relationships are of particular importance during the life-stage of youth, affecting their behaviours, their consciousness and their personality structures. This involves acknowledging that they are best viewed as being in an especially impressionable phase wherein they are likely to be more affected than adults by changing relations and interdependencies.

3.3.8 The emotions, leisure and sport

In *Quest for Excitement*, Elias and Dunning (2008) argue that leisure and sport in highly industrialized societies serves to provide "excitement in unexciting societies" (p. 23). More specifically, the quest for excitement found in sport and leisure complements the control and

restraint of overt emotionality in the ordinary, day-to-day lives of people. In effect, sport and leisure allow for a "civilized" balance between pleasure and restraint and one cannot be understood without the other (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 47). In ordinary life, displays of high excitement are regarded as abnormal and socially unacceptable. Consequently, preserving an even control of drives, affects and emotions is likely to raise stress-tensions in a person. Thus,

participation in leisure activities such as sports and games provide outlets for emotions, impulses and tensions. In doing so, they "form an enclave for the socially approved arousal of moderate excitement behaviour in public" (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 46). In other words, an opportunity for authentic, more intuitive rather than rationalised behaviours. In this regard, Elias and Dunning (2008) speak of the cathartic effect[2] of leisure-time activities which embody and epitomize a "controlled decontrolling of the emotions" (p. 27). Leisure-time arenas open up the possibility of arousing emotional excitement and counterbalance the stifling effects of the routinized organization of social relations in contemporary societies.

This "controlled decontrolling of emotions" is, of course, applicable to the whole range of leisure activities, not only sport. Video-gaming, pop concerts, sports spectating and playing games or sport all have in common what Elias and Dunning refer to as "mimetic": they are relatively less controlled displays of the kinds of intense emotion no longer visible in much of everyday life and, in that regard, are imitations of real-life situations that arouse a variety of emotions but without the risks attached to the real thing (van Krieken, 1998, p. 146). Elias and Dunning (2008, p. 70) suggest that activities of a mimetic type give rise to an enjoyable tension-excitement. Enjoyment gained from leisure, they suggest, represents a much more complex, much less purely biological phenomenon than other more elementary needs such as hunger thirst and sex. As social relations have developed to be increasingly civilized, with declining relevance of established code of behaviour, yet greater demand for self-compulsion and self-management in order to behave "correctly" within the web of actions, the pleasurable satisfaction associated with simpler and more spontaneous forms of conduct are lost (van Krieken, 1998, p. 145). One solution to the latter is sport.

For many people in contemporary society everyday life can be pretty routine, even monotonous. Leisure-time activities provide, if only briefly, an upsurge of strong pleasurable feelings which attend to be lacking in the ordinary routines of everyday life in contemporary societies. Hence, the essence of the potentially cathartic effect of leisure-time activities, such as sport and physical recreation to be found in the restoration of normal mental "tonus" (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 71) – in other words, the normal state of being slightly tense. In addition, pleasurable excitement can be enjoyed without its socially and personally dangerous potential

[2] The concept of "catharsis", invented by Aristotle, derived from the medical concept used in connection of cleansing the body of harmful substances. Aristotle suggested that music and tragedy had a similar effect through a "movement of the soul" (see Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 49).

consequences. That it is often enjoyed in the company of others enhances the enjoyment. The controlled de-controlling of emotions experienced in sport and leisure were held to have a curative, cathartic effect by serving as an antidote to the kinds of stress-tensions liable to be produced by the pervasiveness of restraint in everyday life (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 27).

Adopting such a perspective led Elias and Dunning (2008) to observe that sociological studies of sport had tended to focus upon the physical aspects of health almost exclusively, what they refer to as "lower level of health". They claimed that too little attention has been paid to the functions of sport for the restoration and maintenance of our "higher-level [mental] health" and the fact that sport can provide a specific type of emotional refreshment; not least because it has the potential to loosen the armour of affective restraint. It is important to recognize, however, that such benefits may not be readily accessible to all social groups. In short, not least because of the possession by individuals and groups of sporting habituses and associated sporting capitals, it may be that some (youngsters as well as adults) groups of people fit better and others fit less well or not at all into the established order and its set roles. People who, in other words, find themselves more-or-less established in sporting networks or, for that matter, on the outside of the kinds of networks that might facilitate these cathartic benefits. As we shall see, this applies to young people in school PE in particular.

3.4 Figurational sociology, the emotions and mental health

For figurational sociologists, the need for a "controlled de-controlling of the emotions" in people's lives is a complex phenomenon related to the public and even the private level of emotional discipline and circumspection required in more differentiated and complex societies. This phenomenon, the need for stirring up of strong emotions, does in reality encompass physiological, psychological and sociological aspects that are inseparable and interdependent – and necessitates being conceived as such (Elias & Dunning, 2008). Neglect of this emotional need, however complex it may be, may be "one of the main gaps in present approaches to problems of mental health" (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 70). More precisely, if neglected or devalued, pressure both of social constraints and of built-in self-controls upon individuals, in order to ensure a functioning society, might become so strong that the negative consequences outweigh its positive function (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 93). Hence, there needs to be a tension-balance between emotional control and emotional stimulation.

As illustrated in the previous paragraphs relationships, rather interdependencies, matter for all aspects of human beings, and will be further illustrated through the concept of established and outsiders.

3.5 Established and outsiders

Elias and Scotson's study of Winston Parva in the UK – and the relations between three different communities therein (a middle-class, a respectable working-class and a working-class community) – suggested a theory of group relations and of the mechanisms[3] of authority and stigma which Elias felt could be applied to a variety of social contexts. Noting that there was a similarity to "the pattern of stigmatization used by high power groups in relation to their outsider groups all over the world…in spite of all the cultural differences" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 149), Elias and Scotson (1994) suggested that the dynamics of established–outsider relations possessed four specific characteristics. First, the status distinctions between established and outsider groups were rooted in an uneven balance of power between them. Second, group power differentials generated a polar contrast between group charisma and group stigma and a particular socio-dynamics of stigmatization. This meant that while both groups might display a similar range of behaviours, the established group's greater internal social cohesion and control (e.g. over flows of communication) enabled it to organize its public image in terms of its best members, and to construct the identity of the outsiders in terms of worst members. Third, it was difficult for members of the outsider group to resist internalizing the negative characteristics attributed to it by the established. Members of the outsider group emotionally experienced their power inferiority as a sign of human inferiority and incorporated the stigmatizing judgements of the established group into their own personality structures. Fourth, the shared history of the established group formed the basis of a relatively collective "we" identity, in which the role of gossip was considered as a mean of collective social control – achieved by organizing their relations around supporting forms of gossip, referred to as "praise gossip", to reinforce their social cohesion and encouraging the stigmatizing views of outsiders by "blame gossip". Established groups tend to be characterized by greater social cohesion. In addition, established–outsider dynamics operated, according to Elias and Scotson, outside the conscious control of the participants (van Krieken, 1998, p. 153).

[3] The use of terms like "mechanisms" or "traps" are meant to indicate the compelling force of compulsion on the individuals which form them (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 172).

Elias pointed to a tendency to discuss the problem of social stigmatization as it were simply a question of people showing individually a pronounced dislike of other people as individuals, conventionally classified as prejudice; that means perceiving only at an individual level something that cannot be understood without perceiving it at the same time at the group level. One group can effectively stigmatize another only as long as it is well established in positions of power from which the stigmatized group is excluded. As soon as the unevenness of power diminishes the former outsider groups tend to retaliate, resorting to counter stigmatization. Mechanisms of stigmatization require a closer look at the part played by a person's image of her/his group's standing among others and, therefore, of her/his own standing as a member of this group. Participation in a group's superiority is the reward for submitting to group-specific norms. Should a member of an established group be suspected of breaking the norms and taboos of their own group, by having contact with outsiders for example, their own status within the established group might be threatened. Elias suggests that a person's self-identity and self-image are inescapably connected with the "'we' and 'they' relationships of one's group, and with one's position within those units of which one speaks as 'we' and 'they'" (Elias, 1978, p. 128). Thus, a person's "we-image" and "we-ideal" forms as much part of a person's self-image and self-ideal as the image and ideal of him/herself as the unique person to which s/he refers to as "I".

Group power differentials generate what Elias and Scotson (1994) referred to as the particular socio-dynamics of stigmatization, whereby members of established groups project a public image based upon their best members or best behaviours and, correspondingly, construct the identity of the outsiders in terms of their worst members and worst behaviours (van Krieken, 1998). On this view, it becomes difficult for members of an outsider group, such as non-sporty or unfit youngsters in the present study, to resist internalizing the negative characteristics attributed to them by the established group. Members of the outsider group are said to experience their power inferiority emotionally and interpret it as a sign of human inferiority – subsequently incorporating the stigmatizing judgements of the established group into their own personality structures – developing, for instance, a minority identity.

"Stigma", or stigmatization, is a Greek term referring to bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier (Goffmann, 1963, p. 1). It was Erving Goffmann who introduced the concept of stigma into sociology (Roberts, 2009, p. 279). He suggested three differing types of stigma: physical differences (i.e. various physical deformities), perceived character deficiencies (i.e weak will, domineering or unnatural passions

and dishonesty typically inferred from known record of mental disorders, addiction and unemployment) and tribal stigma of race, nation and religion (Goffmann, 1963, p. 4). In short, stigma is any attribute (physical, psychological or social), which is likely to disqualify a person from full social acceptance in a particular milieu. Stigma can be very difficult to conceal, and if hidden, those concerned have to live with, and to manage, potentially discreditable identities (Roberts, 2009, p. 279).

Sociologists are interested in stigma because the concept can assist in identifying the boundaries of what is considered normal and acceptable, and because large sections of the population have to manage potentially discreditable identities (Roberts, 2009, p. 279). Thus, stigma refers to often identifiable characteristics deemed anomic, repulsive or unacceptable according to existing norms. This latter point is addressed by Goffmann (1963) who argues that it seems generally true that members of a social category may strongly support a standard of judgement that they and others agree does not directly apply to them. The issue of stigma, he claimed, only arises "where there is some expectations on all sides that those in any given category should not only support a particular norm but also realize it" (p. 6). This suggests, and supports Elias' observation that in order to stigmatize, there have to be some positioned to stigmatize, established, and others to be stigmatized, outsiders. Put another way, an interdependent relationship between those categorized as "good" and those categorized as "bad". Furthermore, what can be perceived as internalizing the negative characteristics when being in an "outsider" position is recognizable when Goffmann (1963) talks about, "the standards he has incorporated from wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failings, inevitably causing him…to agree that he falls short of what he really ought to be" (p. 7).

There exist a range of terms stigmatizing other groups. The ability of particular comments and observations to "bite" requires, first, the recipient to be aware of and sensitive to the humiliation intended and, second, that the user is part of a powerful, established group. The recipient, the member of an outsider group, can thus be shamed because s/he does not match up to the norms of the superior group. In Eliasian terms, this represents a highly uneven balance of power as the outsider groups are unable to retaliate with equivalent stigmatizing term for the established group. They are, in other words, unable to successfully stigmatize and shame members of the established group. Stigmatizing terms have no sting when used from an outsider's position. Should they begin to bite it is a sign that the balance of power is changing (Elias, 1994, p. xxv). In this regard, Elias and Scotson reminded us that if a group is given a bad name, it is likely to live up to it. In trying to be "somebody" rather than "nobody" – by practicing behaviours

intended to force the more established groups to pay attention to them (for worse if not better) – such outsider groups tend to reproduce the very situation from which they might be trying to escape (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 120).

Elias viewed stigmatization as being misleadingly addressed as a phenomenon at an individual level, that it is rooted in unevenness in power, and that one`s own standing within a group as well as the groups' standing in relation to another group determines whether mechanisms of stigmatization stings. He refers to the use of stigmatizing terms, especially related to categorizing by evident symptoms, like skin colour, as concealing what it really is about, namely the manner of bonding. Furthermore, he talks about the intention to shame, and its consequences for the self – image and identity of the ones being shamed. This summary needs to be complemented by recognizing other sociologists work on similar concepts.

A term increasingly commonplace in sociology that in some ways brings together notions of established–outsiders and stigmatization. The "other" is typically defined as people and groups that are marginalized and treated as "other than the norm" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 26). Sociologists have applied the concept of the other and othering in understanding how various groups are identified: e.g. ethnic minorities and other such seemingly marginalized if not excluded groups. Othering distances the labellers from the labelled, and portrays the other differently from the ways the group would otherwise identify itself (Roberts, 2009, p. 190). Othering is a process whereby established or insider groups seek to other the outsiders (typically minorities of one kind or another) on the grounds that their way of life (culture) and beliefs are fundamentally different from the established or insider groups. Othering is a function of social interaction and is mediated via discourses (ideologically value-laden ways of communicating) that lead to judgments regarding the alleged inferiority and/or superiority of "in-groups" and "out-groups", of us and them (Dervin, 2015).

In explaining the mechanisms of shame and embarrassment, Charles Horton Cooley coined the phrase "The looking glass self" – the idea that our images of ourselves, our personalities, are maintained through the real and imagined judgements of others. For Cooley (1922), shame and pride both arose from seeing oneself from the point of view of the other. In his discussion of what he called the "self-sentiments", he mentioned pride and shame as two of the emotions possible. But his concept "the looking-glass self", which implies the social nature of the self, refers directly and exclusively to pride and shame. Cooley saw self-monitoring in three steps: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgment of that

appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. (as cited in Scheff, 2003, pp. 242–245).

For his part, G.H. Mead adopted Cooley's concept by introducing "significant others" as a key concept in his theory of the mind. Significant others are other people whose views matter to us: it makes a difference to us whether or not we have their approval. They will usually be parents, teachers, friends and work colleagues. Mead believed that the views of all significant others become merged in a generalized other and internalized in a subject's mind. This enables us to see ourselves as others see us, and anticipate their reactions to how we might behave in the future. This is, according to Mead, how the "self", our self-awareness, is created. Thus, self is not pre-social but is actually a social product (Roberts, 2009, p. 257). Put in Eliasan terms: A member's self-image and self-respect are linked to what other members of the group think of him/her (Elias & Scotson, 1994) and manifests itself in the ways in which outsiders internalized the inferiority imposed by those established in any social network.

3.5.1 Figurational sociology and PE, school and mental health

A sociological perspective systematically examines the mental health trajectories that arise from the psycho-social consequences of social conditions/arrangements in flux (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2014). Young people's *developing* mental health statuses are embedded within social institutions – settled or routine patterns of behaviour and associated culture, or way of life, that is viewed as performing a specific role (e.g. the family, the school) and that usually contains a number of interrelated/interdependent roles (Roberts, 2009). These social institutions (such as schools) can have a greater or lesser impact upon aspects of young people's mental health (such as identity, self-esteem, social bonds – attachment to significant others – and sense of belonging).

Up to this point, I have sought to establish that young people need to be seen and understood "in the round", that is, as interdependent people involved in a variety of networks (not merely families and schools but also friendship groups, sports clubs and so forth) with people (not simply parents and teachers but also friends, peers and sports coaches) that impact upon their experiences of PE and sport. I have endeavoured to show that even individual young people are to be understood as a process; as Elias (1978) put it: "he [sic] not only goes through a process, he *is* a process" (p. 118).

The theoretical concepts presented here are intended to throw light, from a figurational sociological perspective, on the ways in which young people growing up in contemporary societies are embedded in a web of social relations and interdependencies (figurations) in school, in which power is a key dynamic. Situating young people within networks of interdependent relations (within and beyond school) highlights the importance of social processes of human interaction in the generation of "personal capital" and identity. In particular, these processes contribute to mental health development, including the generation of distress and vulnerabilities, facilitating as they do the internalization of knowledge and beliefs about the self, socially constructed and continuously developing throughout the process of growing up to adulthood and the interdependencies therein.

Before proceeding to Chapter 4 "Methodology and methods", a brief account for the proposed *inspiration* from grounded theory, as presented by Charmaz, needs to be accounted for. Charmaz (2014) emphasized the processual characteristic of doing research "Even the most regimented process may contain surprises because the present arises from the past but is never quite the same" (p. 17). This point made by Charmaz is parallel to Elias` notion, as presented earlier in this chapter, namely that life is inherently processual and that outcomes might be unplanned or unintentional. Similar to Elias, Charmaz (2014) recognizes that we are a part of the world we study and the data we collect lead us to construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices. Hence, any theoretical rendering offers an interpretive portrayal of the studied world rather than an exact picture of it. Baur and Ernst (2011) point out that Elias believed sociology should be an open–ended project and can be linked to grounded theory (p. 119).

However, undertaking a grounded theory study, was for various reasons not applicable to this particular study. These are mainly concerned with the requirement to conduct research according to the implications and demonstrated usefulness of the planned investigation that at the outset are the very reason for getting funding as well as ethical approval. In other words, reasonably tightly defined research questions and a defined research process had to be accounted for prior to the data collection. Second, there are practical difficulties with pure grounded theory connected to carrying out analysis for one interview before proceeding to the next. As will be further outlined in the next chapter, gaining access to schools and youngsters required strict planning and research schedule – making it difficult, not to say, unrealistic to do the study according to holistic grounded theory. This implies that by claiming to be *inspired* by grounded theory, it is in the sense that the study was initiated based on general concepts that

gave a loose structures to the interests that guided the research topic. These interests are best viewed as points of departure to formulate interview questions, with an emphasis on the intention to remain as open as possible to whatever emerged throughout the research process. Put another way, in addition to starting with an interest in youngster`s perceptions on the life stage they were in order to explore concepts such as identity, self-image, perceived advantages and difficulties with a particular emphasis on their perception of PE in relation to their mental health, I pursued other topics that the youngsters revealed as important..

Hence, claiming that methods are inspired by grounded theory more accurately implies that theory and concepts are grounded in data. Or, put another way, it implies “an inductive approach”, as noted by Bryman (2016, p. 568).

4. Methodology and methods

This was a qualitative study. The data were generated through focus groups with 10th graders from eight schools from the eastern and western regions of Norway. This chapter outlines the qualitative research strategy and research design before discussing the method in some detail. An account is also provided of the recruitment of students involved, as well as how the research process translated into practice. The process of analyzing the data and reflections upon findings are presented in concluding the chapter.

4.1 Research strategy

The study adopted a qualitative research strategy and in order to answer the research questions a qualitative method was employed. Thagaard (2009) observes that qualitative approaches are relevant when the aim is to gain insight into and knowledge about social phenomena. Roberts (2009) points out that qualitative approaches are especially effective when the aim is to "identify processes that account for how variables are related to one another" (p. 222). In this regard, the aim of this study was to provide knowledge about how 15–year-old Norwegians experienced PE in relation, among other things, to those experiences that might have implications for their mental health. In this manner, undertaking a qualitative approach was considered appropriate in order to provide the youngsters with opportunity to talk about "their own lives on their own terms" (Heath et al., 2009, p. 80).

The qualitative research strategy employed in this study was broadly inductivist, interpretivist and constructionist (Bryman, 2016). It was inductivist insofar as it took as its starting point the conviction that theory can be generated out of empirical research. However, it is conventional to conceive the relationship between theory and empirical as reciprocal, that is each building upon the other in an iterative process. It is interpretivist insofar as the epistemological position is one of understanding the social world through an examination of the interpretation of their world by participants. Put another way, it requires the researcher to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2016). Interpretations, nevertheless, must always remain tentative and subject to revision (Roberts, 2009). The process of understanding and interpreting social phenomena is not undertaken by individuals in isolation from each other (Bryman, 2016). On the contrary, it is something that occurs in interaction and discussion with others. Accordingly, knowledge exists neither internally in the individual nor externally in the world beyond the individual thinking and feeling person but rather is generated in the relations

between individuals and their social worlds (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015); in other words, their figurations or networks. This constitutes the third feature of a qualitative research strategy is concerned with an ontological position described as constructivist. Thus, adopting a constructivist position implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than a phenomenon to be found “out there” and separate from those involved in its construction (Bryman, 2016). In short, social (empirical) facts are only able to confront us as an external force only insofar people keep believing and acting in ways that sustain that “reality” (Roberts, 2009).

Nevertheless, the framework for the collection and analysis of the data generated needs to reflect decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process in order to assess the qualitative research. However, since qualitative researchers do not use instruments with established metrics regarding validity – that is, concerns with the adequacy of measures, and reliability – qualitative research is assessed on a criterion of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness concerns how qualitative researchers establish that the findings from the study are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable (Olivia, 2017).

4.1.1 Trustworthiness as a criterion for assessing qualitative research

The first aspect of trustworthiness, credibility, takes into consideration that there can be multiple accounts of social reality rather than an absolute truth (Bryman, 2016). Hence, it is the feasibility or credibility of the account that a researcher arrives at that determines its acceptability to others (Bryman, 2016). The second aspect of trustworthiness is transferability: whether the findings are likely to apply to other contexts. Qualitative findings tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of social world being studied, and transferability is, according to Bryman (2016), best ensured by giving rich accounts for the details of a culture, providing thick descriptions in order for others to make judgements about the possible transferability of findings. Dependability questions whether the findings are likely to apply at other times and is best ensured by keeping complete records of all phases of the research process. This way people beyond the research context will be able to establish how far proper procedures have been followed. Recognizing that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, the last aspect of trustworthiness, confirmability concerns with whether the researcher has allowed his or her values to intrude to a high degree to ensure that “ the researcher can be shown to have acted in good faith” (Bryman, 2016, p. 49).

Summarizing the abovementioned criteria it is important to note that researchers can rarely answer a straight forward “yes” or “no” when being confronted with questions whether their findings are true (Malterud, 2012). Malterud’s (2012) observation resonates with Elias’ (1956) criterion of “object–adequacy” or “reality congruence” and the problem of involvement and detachment, which is presented as a complimentary alternative to the criterion of trustworthiness as described above.

4.1.2 Elias and object–adequacy

Elias (1956) asserted that knowledge available to members of any given society builds upon and advances previous generations’ attempts to comprehend the world around them (van Krieken, 1998). In other words, knowledge is processual and develops over time. Therefore, rather than engaging in argument about “truth” or “falsity” and whether results of enquiries are an ultimate and final truth, results of enquiries should be assessed according to whether they are an advance in relation to existing funds of knowledge in their field (Elias, 1956). This criteria of advancing knowledge and understanding – also referred to as the “survival value” of results – is congruent with the principle of object–adequacy (van Krieken, 1998).

Qualitative research has been criticized for being unduly subjective, inasmuch as findings can rely too much upon the researchers’ values and attitudes, not to say biases, and upon the personal relationships that frequently occur between the researcher and the people studied (Bryman, 2016). According to Elias (van Krieken, 1998), a measure of involvement in own research and theorizing is inevitable as social scientists are part of their own object of scientific study, namely society. Inevitably, therefore, social scientific knowledge develops within the society it is a part of, and not independently of it. Thus, sociological thought moves constantly between a position of social and emotional involvement in the topics of study and degrees of detachment from them (van Krieken, 1998). The notion that social scientific knowledge develops within and not independently from the society it is a part of and further that sociological thought constantly moves between involvement and detachment, constitute the two features of scientific advance from a Eliasian perspective (van Krieken, 1998). More precisely, the attainment of *relative* autonomy in relation to the specific human groups engaged in the production of scientific knowledge and the balance between “involvement” and “detachment” (van Krieken, 1998).

The first feature, relative autonomy, is related to the notion that in contradistinction to natural science claims to be dealing with "objects", social sciences deal with objects that are also subjects. That is to say, researchers are themselves part of what they study, namely human society (Elias, 1956, p. 234). They are "involved". Hence, scientists can never achieve *absolute* autonomy from their social location (van Krieken, 1998) – they can never be completely "detached". Rather, the aim of social scientific analysis is to gain workable knowledge about the social world with a measure of detachment, by observing it from the outside. Elias made the point that insight into the relative autonomy and immanent dynamics of a figuration is impossible for the people who form that figuration as long as they are totally involved and entangled in the altercations and conflicts stemming from their interdependencies. To acquire insight into human figurations, it is necessary to achieve considerable intellectual detachment from the figuration of which one is a member, "from its tendencies to change, its inevitability and from the forces which interlocking but opposing groups exert over each other" (Elias, 1978, p. 165). This is what Elias considered to be the ultimate task for social scientists.

Sociological analysis moves, therefore, constantly between the two poles of involvement, the researchers' subjective experiences of the world, and detachment, the attempt to transcend that experience to gain objective, scientific perspective (van Krieken, 1998, p. 71). Put another way, and consistent with relational and processual thinking, social scientists constantly move between these poles; they are, in other words, not mutually exclusive. In order for researchers to develop object adequate knowledge of the phenomena being studied they must, however, "establish in the work the undisputed dominance of detachment" (Elias, 1956, p. 15) by undertaking a detour via detachment. Nonetheless, all scientific endeavour is characterized by the permanent tension between the reality of the socially constructed nature of all knowledge and the possibility of a responsiveness to the observation and analysis of an ever-changing surrounding world (van Krieken, 1998, p. 144). All-in-all, a figurational sociological approach to research opposes what it views as the false dichotomies between concepts such as true and false by seeking to establish correspondence between human knowledge and the world of experience (van Krieken, 1998) in reality-congruent research.

Having said something about the reasons for adopting a qualitative research strategy towards this project, and the criterion of trustworthiness which in this study is related to Elias` criterion of object-adequacy, there are two other key areas that need to be addressed. These involve decisions about the framework for the collection and analysis of the data – the research design – and decisions about the technique for collecting data – the research method.

4.2 Research design

The study had a cross-sectional design entailing interviewing a large number of youngsters around a single point in time. As indicated above, this was a study of 15–16-year-olds in the 10th grade of secondary school in Norway. Their perceptions and experiences provided insight into school PE as a process, replete with a variety of meanings and motivations (Roberts, 2009). Notably, the youngsters provided insights into PE as a process, within the wider process of the life-stage of youth.

4.2.1 The sample

Ten secondary schools (13–16-year-olds in school grades 8–10) were recruited to the overall study of which this study was a part. The sample of schools was not viewed as strictly representative but illustrative of the types of schools found in Norway, as they represent diversity with regard to school size and mix of students. Insofar as all schools had a 10th grade of boys and girls, all of whom were subject to the Norwegian national curriculum, including PE lessons, the schools could be considered reasonably typical of schools that include a secondary phase in the state sector in Norway. Thus, although the schools cannot, strictly speaking, be considered – either independently or in aggregate – representative, insofar as individually and collectively they share many of the characteristics of other such schools in Norway, they can be considered "typical" in Bryman`s (2016) terms. Schools from western and eastern part of Norway were selected as they are contrasting in terms of geography, urban-rural, social and health differences of the populations, hence create diversity in the sample.

Youngsters in 10th grade in all 10 secondary schools recruited were at the outset considered relevant to the research questions. Eventually, eight schools agreed to take part. A total of 31 focus groups, involving 148 youngsters (68 girls and 80 boys) from the 10th grade in eight secondary schools located in the west and east of Norway were involved in the study. Process for sampling and recruiting are considered below in "Research methods".

Students in the 10th grade, aged 15–16 years, were targeted because they were deemed to be in a position to reflect upon their experiences of both secondary schooling more broadly and PE in particular (as well as their leisure sport lifestyles) across all almost all of lower secondary school. Thus, they were able to reflect upon changes and developments over their lower-secondary school lives, particular in relation to PE. As well as being both involved (i.e. still at school) and relatively detached (i.e. in a position to reflect upon their school lives), the 15–16-

year-olds were the oldest in the school which, it was anticipated, might make them feel more personally secure in the focus groups, thereby facilitating the generation of suitably rich data.

In the above sections I have endeavoured to outline the thinking behind the framework for the generation of data. In the next section, the research methods will be described.

4.3 Research methods

The main research tool was the focus groups. These were, however, supplemented by observations conducted prior to the focus groups. The reasons for supplementing the group interviews with observations will be elaborated upon before the main research tool is discussed.

4.3.1 Observations

Before the focus groups took place, PE lessons were observed in each school involved in the project. The aim was to gain access to real life action and behaviours as recommended by Malterud (2012) without being interpreted by the participants in the focus groups. Observing some of the behaviours, such as the multidimensional social interactions with others, and getting a sense of something akin to the climate in PE from a detached position was perceived to be useful on the grounds that what people say may differ from what they do (Roberts, 2009) and this might inform the focus group process.

The observations were also used in order that I might familiarize myself with how PE was practiced in the different schools: i.e. the activities that took place and how activities were organized, as well as the context in which they occurred (Ottesen, 2013). In addition, the observations appeared to result in a measure of familiarity with and acceptance of me as researcher when the focus groups themselves took place. Thus, one aim of the observations was to establish a role as what Thagaard (2009) refers to as an “accepted outsider”.

4.3.2 Focus groups

Focus groups were selected as the research method for the study for several reasons. First, the characteristics of focus groups were considered appropriate for the purpose of exploring processes and interdependencies, as outlined in Chapter 3. In addition to discussing the specific themes of research interest, the aim was to stimulate interaction within and between the members of each group in order, among other things, to identify areas of agreement and

disagreement (Bryman, 2016; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013; Kvale & Brinkman, 2015; Roberts, 2009). In this regard, Malterud (2012) describes focus groups as especially relevant when the purpose is to explore phenomena that involves mutual experiences, attitudes or views in an environment where many people interact. This was in keeping with the aim of exploring the 10th graders perceptions of and experiences in PE.

The second reason for the use of focus groups was related to the age group under scrutiny. Young people can be reticent to talk with an interviewer because their relationship with adults can be characterized by tight hierarchical patterns of engagement (Enright & O`Sullivan, 2013) or by the need to mark increased independence as. In this regard, The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (NESH) (2016) suggests that 15-year-olds are more mature and tend to be more questioning of adult authority and are, therefore, more likely to engage in lively and informative discussion in the focus group situation. Focus groups were also considered appropriate due to the fact that Norwegian youngsters are accustomed to working in groups – groups are a natural setting in the everyday life of schools. In addition, the development of a positive attitude toward interviews is made more likely where youngsters are accompanied by their friends (Hastie & Hay, 2012).

The third reason for the use of focus groups was that by introducing a group setting, the interviewer interferes less in the privacy of the participants (Nielsen & Thing, 2013; Heath et al., 2009). This may be perceived as less threatening in the interview setting and, because it is less intimidatory the participants may be encouraged to challenge each other in a manner unlikely to occur in an one- to- one adult youngster interview (Cohen et al., 2013; Heath et al., 2009).

In addition, focus groups provide an opportunity to facilitate a large amount of discussion around topics (Morgan, 1998). This is perceived to be beneficial due to the potential to bring forth material that would not have come out in either participants' own causal conversations oreven in response to the researcher`s preconceived questions. The latter include interest in how individual thoughts and behaviours are subject to and even the product of group influence. In this regard, Bryman (2016) argues that it is the possibility for studying the processes whereby meaning is collectively constructed within each session that constitutes the major reason for conducting focus group research – thereby gaining an understanding of the complexities of social processes and dynamics in schools and in PE within the group of 10th graders from different secondary schools.

Focus groups are not without limitations, however. One of the potential disadvantages is that the researcher (the moderator) may have less control over the proceedings, and the potential advantage of interaction may turn into a limitation if the researcher is not aware of the risk of what Bryman (2016) presents as possible group effects. It may, for example, be that particular views come to dominate the group situation. This may lead to people with dissenting voices becoming reluctant to articulate these in the group setting, with the unintended consequence that a perfectly legitimate perspective held by just one or two individuals may be suppressed (Bryman, 2016; Cohen et al., 2013; Thagaard, 2009). Thus, the potential for peers to provide social support, may in some situations lead to group members being influenced by each other and seeking to impress their peer group (Hastie & Hay, 2012). Hence the risk of what Wibeck (2010) describes as the development of "group-thinking" – the emergence of a norm for what is considered as acceptable thinking: a "right way" of thinking. Bryman (2016) also reminds us of the necessity for the moderator to be sensitive to and prepared to handle situations where discomfort among participants might arise occasioned, for example, when participants may not be comfortable in each other's presence, when intimate details are revealed or when participants are likely to disagree profoundly with each other.

The recognition that the knowledge produced in focus groups would depend upon the social interaction within the groups, warranted consideration of the construction of groups that facilitated the best climate for interactions (Cohen et al., 2013; Morgan, 1988). Put another way, the importance of composing groups that ensured that the participants in each group all would have something to say about the topic and would feel comfortable saying it to each other (Morgan, 1988). Moreover, it was equally important to consider the moderator as inevitably being a part of the focus group, within the network of interdependent people, and might act as a nodal point (see de Swann, 2001) by posing questions and managing the settings amplified the importance of gaining some experience to be better prepared for unexpected contingencies

that could arise in the course of focus groups. Thus, to address the issue of choosing between mixing and separating groups (i.e. by gender), ensure that questions and language were clear as well as practice moderating skills, it was deemed necessary to conduct pilot interviews; in other words, some pre-test focus groups to gain insight into what might or might not work when it came to real life practice (Morgan, 1988). These are discussed a little later.

Stewart, Shadamasami, and Rook (2007) noted that conducting focus groups tends to be more about practice than theory. This called for reflection on practical and ethical considerations

during all phases of the research process. The reflections that follow constitute a part of my "detour via detachment" as introduced earlier in this chapter. I will also discuss ethical dimensions related to conducting research in schools and with youngsters more specifically.

4.3.3 Taking a detour via detachment

In the previous sections the rationale for studying 10th graders and utilizing focus groups as a research tool were discussed. In terms of involvement and detachment, it could be argued that the 10th graders represented an age group of which the researcher was not a part of, hence facilitating detachment. On the other hand, this could also mean that the youngsters would not accept that an adult could understand their situation (Thagaard, 2009). In this regard, Heath et al. (2009) remind us that adult researchers cannot claim any privileged insight into the nature of what is to be young today by the virtue of having once been young themselves. That said, even when detachment in terms of the age-gap is evident, the researcher should be attentive to the tension between distance and empathy with participants. However, the risk of being too involved as a consequence of empathizing with and becoming closer to some participants more than others may be reduced by utilizing focus groups as opposed to individual interviews, insofar as the former are, as previously mentioned, to a greater extent under the control of the participants. Furthermore, by using the PE teachers as key informants, I did not influence the recruitment of informants directly, which could be considered to strengthen the position of detachment.

Another way of addressing the above-mentioned position of an adult researcher is through Elias' notion that a part of mind becomes prejudiced through experience, but it is essential to keep another part open to observe and judge with (van Krieken, 1998). Put another way, to control prejudices and keep the mind open, in order to balancing between involvement and detachment, the researcher should gain insight into and strive for sensitivity about his or her prejudices and subjectivity, in relation to the project – also defined as reflexivity. In order to reflect upon the latter, the next section will be written in the first person.

4.3.4 Reflections upon my involvement

My former experiences with schools were from the perspective of a pupil and student as well, in adulthood, as a mother. On the one hand, these personal experiences could be helpful when trying to understand the contexts and experiences that members in focus groups described. On the other hand, I would potentially identify more with those presenting experiences I could

relate to, either as former pupil or as a mother. Hence, I was aware of the risk of being able to see through the eyes of some more than others as noted by Bryman (2016) and, as discussed above, strived to ensure relative detachment or, more precisely, an appropriate blend of involvement-detachment. I have no formal competence in teaching, which could have been a strength, both in terms of not being prejudiced through experience and in terms of the youngsters having been more forthright in their answers and discussions as they perceived me to be more neutral as independent researcher. The latter was noted by Lewis (2014) in her qualitative study of PE. However, in terms of entering a new field of inquiry it is likely that I, as a moderator, chose to follow up on dimensions that a researcher with PE background would not have followed up, and vice versa. Put differently, while being less in risk of being blinded by presumptions and experience, hence observing to confirm these – I nevertheless was in risk of not grasping phenomena associated with being experienced within the field, as outlined by Malterud (2011).

In addition, my background as physiotherapist working with vocational rehabilitation has provided me with knowledge and experience in interacting and communicating with people representing various age groups, various backgrounds and various life situations. Thus, I believe that my background and experience enabled me to practice ethically sound research and to meet the challenges that occurred when utilizing a flexible method that focus groups are considered and proved to be. Even when participants were young people. As noted by Heath et al. (2009): " Being an obvious outsider in relation to youth culture and experience may allow the researcher to get away with naïve questionings which would have be considered strange if coming from someone of a shared age" (p. 14). Furthermore, the key to good interview-based research is, by some, linked to the art of listening. As the intention was to give voice to the youngsters and avoiding forcing an adult perspective on them I believe that the youngsters participating in focus groups did perceive my desire to listen to be genuine (Heath et al., 2009).

The fact that the study took place in schools warranted practical and ethical reflections regarding conducting research in schools.

4.4 Ethical considerations

While school is mandatory for young people, NSD (2018) states that a request to participate should be directed in a manner that the persons asked do not feel any pressure to participate. This includes the necessity of emphasizing that whether youngsters want to participate in the

study or not will not affect their relation with school. Brenner (2006) reminded researchers of the probability that researchers often are seen to work from positions of relative power. It was reasonable to assume that the position of power might have been perceived even more evident when permission to conduct research was given by significant persons in schools. This presumed position of power amplified the importance of providing sufficient information about the project and obtain informed consent of the participants to conduct ethical research (Bryman, 2016; NESH, 2016; NSD, 2018; Thagaard, 2009).

Approaching young people in schools meant involving their parents as well. While youngsters themselves can volunteer to participate or not in a study such as this, parents must also give their consent when participants are minors (NESH, 2016). Another ethical issue was the need to ensure that young people's willingness to participate (or, for that matter, parents inclinations to consent to their child's involvement) should not be a result of external pressure (NESH, 2016). External pressure may occur as a result of the researcher being present or other authoritarian adults like teachers being present when the initial request is made. In order to reduce the risk that students might feel pressured to participate, emphasis was placed on the fact that children and young people have rights, including the right to participate in research, or not (Backe-Hansen, 2009; NESH, 2016).

In addition to the considerations as outlined above, emphasis was also placed on providing information about confidentiality including de-identifying and anonymizing the data as well as not passing on information that can identify the individuals. As participation was voluntary, information that they could withdraw from the study any time, in accordance with "respect for individuals (5 - 18)" provided by NESH (2016) was also included

This section has sought to provide a description and explanation for the choices made with regard to research strategy, research design, the population and age group of interest as well as choice of research tools followed by reflections upon ethics in general and in relation to doing research in schools and with youngsters.

Bryman (2016) describes social research as less smooth than the accounts of research processes in relevant texts. He poses the question: "if social research is messy, why do we invariably not get a sense of that when we read reports of research in books and academic journals?" (p. 13) – the ups and downs of research tend not to feature in the template of describing research process and findings. Bryman further argues that although we can attempt to formulate general

principles for conducting social research, we have to recognize that things do not always go entirely according to plan. The next section focuses upon how the research was conducted. In other words, how the plan translated into practice.

4.5 The research process

Before contacting the schools in order to gain access to both PE teachers as key informants and 10th graders as informants, the project had to be registered and approved by NSD. Approval was granted on 23rd August 2016 (see Appendix 1) and the process of contacting schools commenced.

As described in the previous section, 10 secondary schools were recruited to the overall study. A letter including the description and aim of the project as well as request for contact information to PE teachers in the 10th grade was sent out to the head teachers at all 10 schools by mid-October 2016 (see Appendix 2). Unsurprisingly, perhaps it was necessary to chase some schools' responses by follow-up phone calls, emails and texts. By mid-January 2017, eight schools had confirmed they were willing to participate and had forwarded contact information to relevant key informants.

Between mid-October 2016 and mid-January 2017, the PE teachers were provided with any necessary information they required regarding the formation of groups and conduct of observations and focus groups. In accordance with the necessity of fostering a good relation with teachers as they were key informants and to reduce the probability of intruding and minimalizing disruption to the school operation, I met with PE teachers that expressed a need to discuss the process and project personally, whilst some preferred contact by phone and email as and when necessary. The topics the teachers typically wanted to discuss included the recruitment of participants, the formation of groups, the risk of stigmatizing and reasons for including some and excluding others. It also became evident that engaging in the project was not necessarily a choice of their own, indicating that they felt obliged to engage as the head teacher had asked them to.

The process of contacting schools and meeting with the PE teachers was time-consuming. In order to be perceived as trustworthy and to motivate the teachers to be involved in the study, the time and effort spent was considered both necessary and valuable. The meetings and discussions that took place provided me with information, impressions and knowledge that are

not formally included in the thesis. Nevertheless, in accordance with my conviction that observation could be utilized to familiarize with a field, these meetings and dialogues were considered as serving a similar purpose. That said, it is equally important to acknowledge that these experiences constituted a part of my understanding in the research process, hence requiring ongoing reflections with regard to involvement and detachment. Having gained access to schools and 10th grade classes in eight schools, the process of sampling and recruiting could be initiated.

4.5.1 Sampling and recruiting

In order to ensure that those sampled are appropriate in terms of the over-arching research questions of the study, it is common to sample participants in a strategic way, using a purposive sampling strategy (Bryman, 2016); in other words, bringing together a group that is similar in what are believed to be significant ways (Roberts, 2009). In this regard, it recommended to consult particular people (the aforementioned key informants) that can assist in considerations regarding what mix of youngsters that might be the most appropriate for the task in hand (Bryman, 2016; Thagaard, 2009). At the outset, all 10th graders in the eight schools were considered as potential participants, and relevant for illuminating the research question in this study. In this vein, PE teachers served as key informants as they knew the students sufficiently well to form a judgement on what formation of groups and mixture of youngsters would be most appropriate and most acceptable for the youngsters participating. Numerous considerations had to be taken in the process of recruiting and forming groups. These were considerations revolving composition of groups with regard to characteristics and gender, size of groups and number of groups.

Given that part of the intention in the project was to consider whether differences exist in perceptions and experiences between young people who were physically active in leisure time– and those who were not, it was considered relevant to divide participants into groups based upon their leisure-time activities. This is in line with what Nielsen and Thing (2013) refer to as getting the essential characteristics in relation to the problem presented. A potential advantage of such an approach was that they would raise different perspectives based on the homogeneity in the group, and, as a positive consequence, would feel more secure thereby avoiding unwanted "group effects". A potential risk, on the other hand, was that of stigmatizing – a risk that was of concern for some key informants. Moreover, it could be the case that categorizing the pupils would prove not to have a relevance to the issue at all, and that separating them on such a

criterion would lead them to think or reflect in a particular way. In practice, this would mean that presumptions may be proved wrong and influence the research process and findings negatively. Mixing characteristics in a group was considered as this potentially could be even more optimal than dividing into more "ideal type" groups as far as the interaction between the different perspectives were concerned (Nielsen & Thing, 2013). All that said, the most prominent consideration when addressing the challenge of forming groups was to ensure that the participants in each group would feel comfortable (Morgan, 1988).

This led to a request to the PE teachers to form groups (see Appendix 3). More precisely they were asked to recruit students that, to the best of their knowledge, could be identified as being "sporty" or "non-sporty". Sporty was defined as youngsters who participated in sport or physical recreation in their leisure time regularly: i.e. a minimum four times a week. Non-sporty was defined as either not participating in sports or physical recreation in leisure time at all or rarely (i.e. once a month or less). The definitions represent contrasting ends of the activity scale as the purpose was to explore the potential differences. Nevertheless, as indicated above – the most important consideration was that the students recruited would feel safe and confident in the group setting, and this was made explicit in the request to the PE teachers. Hence, PE teachers were provided with a degree of flexibility when forming groups.

The request sent out to the PE teachers also entailed a proposed date for confirming that focus groups had been formed. This was considered relevant for two particular reasons: first, to keep the teachers engaged and to commit them to the task of recruiting. Second, to get an overview over students that were sampled and willing to participate. Consents were sent out in February 2017 to the schools to be signed by parents and students in prior to focus group interviews (see Appendix 4).

In terms of constructing groups, it was also necessary to consider whether groups should be segmented by gender or mixed. The possibility to segment by gender was considered advantageous for several reasons. First, in order to avoid what Malterud (2012) terms as a "peacock effect", reducing the possibility that participants would seek to impress each other. Second, to reflect the research that shows that girls and boys both perform and perceive PE in different ways, and that these differences potentially would be more visible if boys and girls not are able to moderate or influence each other`s views. A third reason followed from the argument regarding friendship groups, as it was considered most likely that boys and girls spend

time (i.e. organized leisure-time activities such as football), within gendered groups. Finally, this approach accorded with the recommendations of the PE teachers.

Ideally, the aim was to recruit four groups of between four and six students, in line with recommendations regarding the optimal size for focus groups for stimulating of discussion in literature (Bryman, 2016; Morgan 1988). Barbour (2007) proposes a maximum of eight participants whilst Peek and Fothergill (2009) advocate that groups of three to five participants ran more smoothly than the larger group interviews. In this study, smaller groups were considered advantageous for two particular reasons. First, to ensure a sympathetic group setting facilitating the likelihood that the participants would be provided with opportunity to talk (see Morgan, 1988). Second, to reduce the risk that the moderator would lose control and be able to be in position to sense and handle unforeseen situations that might arise. Having advocated that the aim was to recruit groups of four to six participants, the teachers were asked to recruit between four and eight participants per group. The strategy for over recruitment was intended to cater for the probability of "no shows"; students that agree to participate but fail to turn up (Bryman, 2016; Malterud, 2012). Having outlined the characteristics of the focus groups, the number of groups needs accounting for.

Bryman (2016) emphasizes that focus groups are time consuming from arranging through to transcribing. There is a balance between conducting too few focus groups, as the responses could be are particular to those few groups and, at the opposite end of the scale, too many groups resulting in repetition of data generating little new material, in other words arriving at the point where data saturation most likely has been reached (Bryman, 2016). Nonetheless, and as noted by Kitzinger (1994), a large number of groups can be preferred, not because of concerns about the representativeness of views, but in order to capture a diversity of perspectives.

The likelihood that data saturation would be reached before the conduction of the requested number of group interviews were completed was reflected upon. Nevertheless, there would be several reasons for continuing beyond that stage and complete all the scheduled interviews. First, because the schools had agreed to take part, and accordingly invested time and effort in forming groups and arrange for interviews to be conducted, it was deemed a courtesy to complete the process as planned. Second, logistical challenges needed to be minimized and in order to adapt to the schools' time schedules – as well as committing them to follow up on agreements – dates for observations and focus groups had to be set as soon as possible. Put another way; it was necessary to form a project time schedule (see Appendix 5). Third, it was

considered ethically correct to ensure that the youngsters that were willing to participate would be given the opportunity to be heard. Bringing data collection to halt at one point could imply that some voices, those already heard, were considered more valuable than others, namely those who did not get the opportunity to speak. Final reason refers to the argument for choosing focus groups as main research tool. The operation of social interaction and its forms and impacts is what distinguishes focus groups from individual interviews (Bryman, 2016), in other words, the complexity and the potential diversity that could emerge as a consequence of interaction would make it difficult to anticipate what the next group is going to say.

Bryman (2016) asserts that there is no single way for considering the set of questions that should be addressed during each focus group. The process of developing an interview guide will be outlined next.

4.5.2 The interview guide

A general approach to questioning is fairly common in focus group interviews as it allows the researcher to navigate the channel between, on the one side, addressing the research questions and ensuring comparability between sessions and, on the other side, allowing participants to raise issues they see as significant and in their own terms (Bryman, 2016). In order to have a list of specific topics to be covered but provide the participants a great deal of leeway in how to reply, a rather open-ended approach employing a "topic guide", each with several questions, was considered to be a fruitful strategy when constructing the interview guide (Bryman,2016; Morgan 1998).

The interview guide (see Appendix 6) was initially developed on the basis of the research aim of the study in conjunction with the existing literature reviewed. It was developed to allow the youngsters to raise issues they saw as significant within four themes – and, preferably in their own terms. The main themes covered were: being 15–years-old, perceptions of and experiences in PE, and perceptions of health, especially mental health. The aim was to explore and gain knowledge about the wider social context, potentially illuminating processes beyond the PE setting which may affect their perceptions and experiences of PE context. The structure had three purposes: first, to ensure that all themes were covered in all focus groups. Second, to ensure a "back-up" if the focus group haltered and moderator would need to interfere more than planned. Third, to assist in leading the discussion back to relevant topics if necessary. Another way of addressing this structure is to facilitate what Bryman (2016) refers to as "straddling two

positions" (p.509): allowing discussion to flow freely – yet intervening to bring out especially salient issues, particularly when group participants do not do so. Follow-up questions were used to go into greater depth as and when desirable and encourage students to elaborate upon their initial answers. For example, "Can you give me an example of…?" or "Could you say something more about that?"

In the next section, I consider how participants for piloting the study were sampled alongside experiences from the pilot interviews. The interview guide was slightly revised according to feedback and experience from these pilot focus groups.

4.5.3 Piloting focus groups

Pilot focus groups were undertaken within two different contexts. First, by interviewing two 14–years-old girls in order to pilot the questions with teenagers close to the "target group". This was in line with Kreuger's (1998) advice for first-timers on conducting focus groups with a few groups with few people. The interview took place in a group room at the University College. Second, by interviewing in a "realistic setting" with three groups of 15-years-olds, two girls' groups and one boys group, in a school located in the neighbouring municipality. This experience was particularly useful as the process entailed contacting the head teacher, requesting forming of groups and chasing consents. The focus groups were carried out in a group room at the school during the school day. A co-supervisor participated as assistant moderator to take notes and give feedback on moderating style and skills as well as making judgement about whether the questions seemed to fit the purpose.

The first pilot interview provided immediate feedback that the introductory questions were too abstract (e.g., "I don`t quite understand what you mean"). Hence, the necessity of specifying questions to make the conversation flow: "What is good about being 15?" In other words, the necessity of being flexible about the order of themes and questions was noted. The girls became unfocused half an hour into the interview. This made me realize that I had too many questions, and I would risk putting the youngsters off. Following this, the theme related to sports participation and leisure time activities was excluded on the grounds that if they were engaged with PA in some form or other leisure time activities, it was likely to be addressed under the questions related to "Being 15".

The second section of piloting represented, as previously introduced, realistic focus group settings, and were important to the main study in many ways. Overall, the questions seemed

more appropriate to 15-year-olds than the 14-year–olds and conversations ran more smoothly. This experience encouraged me to consider the interview guide to be a good tool for the main study. Furthermore, the process confirmed that groups of four to six were appropriate for stimulating discussion.

In addition to testing the questions, these two focus groups made me aware of three important challenges. First, the contrast in group dynamics was evident, ranging from willingly talking and engaged discussions in one group, to one-to-one interviewing in order to facilitate discussion in the next focus group. Second, handling personal issues such as having a body image complex raised within the group context. All-in-all, this made me aware that balancing the interest in rich and deep data on one side – and on the other side protecting individuals in a group, potentially risking to produce general and superficial data, is challenging. Third, with regard to the considerations upon whether groups should be gendered or mixed, the participants themselves confirmed that gender-specific groups made them feel more comfortable, providing them with an opportunity to discuss without feeling constrained by reflections upon how they might be perceived by the opposite gender. Furthermore, the gendered groups generated discussions about perceived differences between boys and girls in issues related to health and PE. Having an assistant moderator in the room to observe the group settings from an outside perspective and give feedback upon and discuss both content (i.e. questions), style (i.e. being attentive, being involved too little or too much, and the phrasing of questions), and atmosphere was also important.

All told, the pilot interviews resulted in, among other things, changes to the number of questions, a refinement of the follow-up questions, optimal sizes for the groups and the need for an assistant moderator. The next section considers the observations that took place before the focus groups are considered.

4.6 The observations

Observations were carried out prior to focus groups in all schools over the time period late November 2016 to beginning of March 2017. The reason for such a broad timeframe was logistical. The school year (e.g. tests, projects, exams and vacations) had to be taken into consideration, thus resulting in limited time both to observe and conduct focus groups. All-in-all, while recognizing the limitations of observing single PE lessons, these provided me with a sense of what was going on in PE lessons that otherwise would have been unfamiliar to me

when conducting the focus groups. Observing introduced me to and familiarized me with 10th graders' behaviours in larger groups and in a natural setting, as well as the variations within PE across schools.

Having outlined the practical process of gaining consents and forming groups, the thirty-two focus groups that were proposed if everything should go according to plan, was in reality reduced to thirty-one, as one school had been too optimistic with regard to youngsters` willingness to participate. Four groups were mixed, fourteen were boys' groups and thirteen were girls' groups (see Appendix 7).

4.7 The focus groups

Focus groups were undertaken over the time period mid-February 2017 to mid-June 2017. All focus groups took place in classrooms, meeting rooms or group rooms during the school day. The group size varied from three to eight, and focus groups lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. Alongside informal introduction, each session was initiated by informing as outlined in section 4.4, including explaining the reason for recording, as well as opening up for any questions to me – or about the project. Each focus group was closed up by posing insurance questions and inviting them to comment on the experience of participating in focus group.

I listened through the recordings as soon as I had the opportunity, and made notes both about content (what had been said) and how it was said (the social context).

4.8 Analyzing the data

The data generated from the focus groups was considerable, even though varying both in terms of richness in general and in terms of the topics that engaged the youngsters.

4.8.1 Transcribing the interviews

The focus groups were transcribed by a combination of myself, as researcher, and someone employed to transcribe. The most complex focus groups were transcribed by me as researcher. Being aware of the potential risk of utilizing a third party for transcription (Tilley, 2003), I listened to all recordings several times, making notes regarding, for example, intonation, in the process. The 31 focus groups that were carried out produced 695 pages of transcripts. The process of analyzing and interpreting the transcribed data more formally will be outlined next.

4.8.2 Data analysis

According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), the analysis of qualitative data can be a daunting task, not least because as Bryman (2016) observes, the characteristics of focus groups add a layer of complexity to the analysis of the ensuing qualitative data. In the first instance, I followed Bryman's (2016) advice about listening to recordings, reading through initial set of transcripts and field notes in order to find out what was especially interesting or significant. This resulted in extracts of interviews, entailing a summary of what seemed to be the most prominent issues that were raised within each theme across the focus group settings.

NVivo software was used to support managing and exploring the data. Transcripts were uploaded into the software and each focus group transcript was organized according to schools. NVivo was particularly helpful when initially coding into "nodes", writing memos alongside the whole process of coding, and creating maps to visualize potential connections within and between nodes in the focused stage of coding.

Analysis drew, as presented in 3.5.1, inductively on ideas from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014), adapting the process to reflect the complexity of focus group data with regard to conversations involving multiple voices. Analytic codes were constructed from data and built into categories in a primarily inductive manner. This process also involved the interweaving of theoretical ideas relating to the figurational perspective and was guided by the overarching research question. Interweaving in relation to figurational perspective was considered appropriate in line with Charmaz' (2014) observation that sharper and more detailed analytical categories can develop through a process of iteration – developing and relating categories informed by concepts from formal theory, for example. This process of iteration is consistent with maintaining a two-way relationship between inductive and deductive processes (Elias, 1978).

A comprehensive description of how the analysis process evolved is outlined next.

4.8.3 Coding

Grounded theory offers a step-wise approach to coding from the empirical data in a manner that fosters action and processes that help the researcher define what is happening in the data (Charmaz, 2014). Figurational ideas were used in order to be sensitive to social processes taking place at every stage of the analysis. This way, using principles from grounded theory facilitated

a constant interplay between what emerged from the data and, as Elias (1978) encouraged: "testing existing explanations of human actions" (p. 34).

Charmaz (2014) distinguishes between three main types of coding, also viewed as different phases of coding: namely initial coding, focused or selective coding and theoretical coding. During the first phase, initial coding, all of the data were coded into nodes by conducting a mix of line-by-line and incident-to-incident-coding in each transcript. More accurately, mixing was deemed necessary as the focus groups varied both in terms of what and how much the youngsters had to say about the themes discussed. Consequently, conducting line-by-line coding when responses and reflections were extensive would reduce the meaning in the data. Hence the necessity of constantly considering the balance between coding in order to see the familiar in a new light (Charmaz, 2014) and the risk of fragmenting data to such an extent that context and fluidity in narratives were lost (Bryman, 2016).

The narratives were coded to reflect action rather than simply the topic, in keeping with a processual approach. In this phase, I sought to move through data rather swiftly by using key words and phrases. These were recorded in a Word document, and organized according to the main themes from the interview guide. The reason for proceeding this way was primarily to ensure a detour via detachment (Elias, 1978) by retaining an open mind while sticking close to the data analyzing from the perspectives of the participants, as recommended by Charmaz (2014).

During the second phase – focused coding – codes were organized into categories and sub-categories. As noted by Charmaz (2014), focused coding allows the researcher to move across interviews and compare the youngsters' experiences, actions and interpretations to decide which initial codes made most analytical sense. In other words, I started conceptualizing the data. This entailed that frequent and significant codes were compared and categorized into themes with subcategories of different codes related to this theme. For example, a theme labelled "Perceptions of being exposed" included the initial codes "comparing", "creating pressure", "feeling vulnerable", "being judged", "feeling inferior", "avoiding attention", "showing capability", "revealing incapability". This significant step in coding was not, however, a linear process. It was necessary to constantly move between the transcripts – the initial codes as well as the recordings – to ensure that the decisions made regarding coding would serve the right analytic purpose according to the phenomena explored: being 15 and perceptions of PE.

In the process, I endeavoured to capture the interaction between participants, and utilize it to analytic advantage, as interaction between participants is the whole point of holding focus groups (Kitzinger, 1994), and in keeping with Elias’ (1978) principle that human individuals can only be understood in networks of interdependent people or figurations. I explored the diversity and looked for patterns by visualizing the coded data in various maps. For example, I created maps to detect gendered patterns in the coded data, one for girls and one for boys. In the girls’ map I included a category labelled “girls’ perceptions of girls” and “girls’ perceptions of boys”. The same was done for the boys.

The numerous reviews of the codes and the organizing into categories and subcategories was about taking a step away from the perceptive of the youngsters and conceptualizing data. Alongside coding from the empirical data, I constantly revisited Elias’ notion of “two-way traffic” to ensure being sensitive towards what was emerging from the data as well as considering how emerging codes and categories might be theorized. In this respect, theorizing codes and categories emerged from considering what initially was perceived as opposites as related. An example on the latter was “catharsis” that emerged from the codes “unwind” and “let off steam” among others and “feeling overrun” and “relucting to engage”.

During the third and final stage, that Charmaz (2014) refers to as a sophisticated level of coding, data were assembled into a coherent story by relating categories and placing them in a logical sequence, as illustrated in Chapter 5, “Findings”.

There are two particular things that should be said about the presentation of findings. First, quotations from the youngsters appear frequently. Youngsters are anonymized by pseudonyms, names of schools are replaced with a capital letter, and the number following the capital indicates number of focus group in that particular school (e.g., “ Tone, A_3”, which means school A, focus group 3). This is in accordance with the guiding principle when conducting research, namely that research should not harm participants (including the schools), as outlined in section 4.4.

The second thing to point out is related to the language. The focus groups were carried out in Norwegian. In translating the quotations, I have sought to keep as close to the youngsters’ ways of expressing themselves as possible, in order to minimize the risk of changing the meaning within the expression. Some quotations contain words or phrases that are italicised in order to reflect the emphasis given by the participant. Similarly, in some places gestures are included

within brackets (e.g., [nodding her head]) to add meaning and context to the words that were spoken in the focus group setting.

5. Findings

The findings are organized and presented in two main sections: being 15 and youngsters' perceptions of PE. The first section, "Being 15[4] in Norway", presents a contextual background to the more specific findings regarding PE and mental health. While chronological age is a key organizational feature of schools (Heath et al., 2009), the study sought to explore the youngsters' perceptions of youth as a process; in other words, how the 10th graders perceived the various dimensions of their lives at age 15 – e.g. school, family, friends, leisure and PE – in terms of "the nature of what it is to be young today" (Heath et al., 2009, p. 46). The second section – "Youngsters' perceptions of PE" – explored PE through the eyes of young people; particularly in terms of the emotions generated in and through PE, how PE might make them feel about themselves, and how lessons might be differentially experienced by young people.

The headings and sub-headings in this chapter represent analytical themes based, for the most part, on codes and themes that emerged from the data in conjunction with those (such as "being 15") that formed key themes in the interview guide but were also deemed useful analytical themes.

5.1 Being 15 in Norway

5.1.1 Balancing increased freedom alongside responsibilities

Being 15 was viewed as a life-stage which offered increased freedom, which included less strict rules at home with regard to "in hours", places and people to hang out with. This provided them with a feeling of being more trusted by their parents as well as being given more responsibility for themselves. The mixed-gender group B_1 illustrated this enjoyment of increased freedom:

> Trine: I feel that when you've turned 15 … people look at you as you're older. Like, much older I feel, than when you were 14. Compared to what they did when you were 13 to 14. Like, I notice that many consider me to be much more adult …
>
> Ola: Allowed to do more things … stay out longer, for example.

[4] Although some of the youngsters were actually 16 at the time of interview, the vast majority were 15 years of age and so, for simplicity's sake, I have titled the section accordingly.

Trine: Like, my parents aren't that strict on things like staying out late, going on trips and being together with people and such. Like, they're not that strict anymore. So, I have a little more freedom too in a way, because they consider me as being a little, like I'm older, in a way.

Mona: Responsible.

Nevertheless, they perceived being 15 to be a "pit stop" towards the ultimate privileges of adulthood, namely, independence through establishing their own household, taking up a job they had chosen and earning their own money.

Being granted more freedom and given more responsibility meant that they had to fix things themselves rather than depending upon their parents. This was associated with an emerging feeling of becoming adult: "10th [grade] is a little like, it varies a lot, but I think it's OK to say that you begin becoming an adult in 10th" (Trond, F_1). Becoming an adult was associated with the positives and excitement of the new challenges, opportunities and relationships awaiting them in near future.

Responsibility came, however, with costs. They were aware of the balance between the positives and negatives of responsibility related to the life-stage they were in. Being responsible was, on the one hand perceived to develop them as people. On the other hand, being expected to fulfill too much could feel unmanageable and serve the opposite purpose: "If it's too much responsibility and you feel you don't manage, it can make you lose motivation and it's not good being expected to fulfil far too much" (Jarle, C_1). In addition, some pointed to the responsibility of being expected to know the difference between wrong and right and make appropriate (that is, more adult-like) decisions: "I notice that I have more responsibility for my own future now …I have to make many decisions myself. And my mum and dad trust me to make the right choices, and that is scary at times" (Åse, C_4).

Thus, balancing freedoms and responsibilities was perceived as somehow ambiguous. This was evident when they considered parents' involvement in their lives, which indicated the youngsters' adaptation towards a lessening of inequality, as discussed by the girls in D_3 looking forward to adulthood:

Marie: Not just having to listen to mum and dad nagging at you like "do this, do that".

Bente: Right, constantly! [explains]: They [parents] are in such a period now. Because

> we do get older, we are 16 years, and I feel that mum and dad at least, wish you were little again. But you don’t have to treat me like a 10–year-old, because I’m 16. Even if it’s good to get help at times, from mum and dad. But it tends to be a little too much.

Addressing parents’ involvement as nagging and somehow discrediting their increasing independence on the one hand, was, however, balanced by the confidence that their parents were there “behind them”, so to speak: “In a way, we have come to the stage where we can decide more for ourselves, at the same time having our parents to turn to if anything happens” (Sofie,G_3). In this respect, the 15-year-olds were aware that they were in a somewhat privileged position, insofar as they remained close enough to childhood to avoid the “big” responsibilities related to earning and living and the corresponding stresses of adult life, which typically entailed what Mette (A_2) referred to as “think(ing) of really important decisions”, and at the same time having their parents there to support them.

In other words, adapting to freedoms and responsibilities involved the transitional “balancing act” of being a 10th grader: “Being on your way to becoming an adult, but at the same time still being a child” (Fredrik, B_2). This balancing act was manifested in positives because people recognized them as being more independent and mature, which at the same time gave rise to more expectations. In other words, balancing was considered a little difficult because of differing expectations:

> It’s like … people think of you as a child, but some think of you as an adult, and then you have to somehow act as a child and an adult at the same time. So, in some situations they expect you to behave as an adult, and then in some [situations] as a child. A little difficult. (Sanna, A_3)

5.1.2 Perceptions of generational change

In discussing balancing freedom and responsibility, some youngsters perceived the lot of contemporary youth to have improved compared with their parents’ generation:

> It’s pretty good [being 15]. I find that if you compare with the previous generation, or our parents … They did a lot more teenage rebellion and all that stuff at home. There is not so much of that anymore, I feel. (Linn, G_2)

This was attributed by some to contemporary youth having fewer constraints due to greater tolerance and fewer taboos in society allowing people to feel more comfortable with who they were. However, the most prominent view was in accordance with Toril (G_2), namely, that their generation was experiencing more constraints and increased number and variety of pressures:

> I actually disagree with that ... I can’t say for sure, but compared to the way my parents grew up, I think we put more pressure on ourselves in many ways, if that made sense. That way, there are so many worries, in a way. It’s supposed to be so worry- free, and then there is so much drama and pressure. You should perform, in away. That`s what I feel. (Toril, G_2)

In discussing greater openness in a more enlightened society through, for example, television programmes and public debates in the media, the youngsters talked about to the inevitability of internalizing these external pressures or influences:

> I think there is a difference in that nowadays you put more pressure upon yourself, and it is more like – from society, social media and such – whereas earlier on it was the parents saying “you should perform in school, you should occupy yourself with this”. It is not like that anymore. There are some who still have it like that, but I feel it is more yourself who say such things now. And maybe society in general. And then there are some unwritten rules you should follow, but you aren’t verbally told that you should do this and that, but it is just something everyone knows, in a way. That you should follow a kind of recipe for what you are supposed to be like. (Linn, G_2)

The combination of unwritten rules and the need to be continually updated about a variety of things gave rise to a feeling that they there were so many things going on in their lives simultaneously – “very many things to think about at once”:

> Certainly, if we are to achieve the optimal: you should have a social life, you should be socially well-established and then you should do well in school. In addition, you most likely should be good in sports, or at least good in something outside school, whether it’s sports or an instrument … So, we have a lot to think about compared to adults. So things overlap much more, I think, for youngsters. (Iver, C_1)

This generational change was perceived to make it difficult for people of different age groups – and parents in particular – to understand how everyday life actually was for contemporary youngsters:

> Like adults go around saying "Oh, I miss being a youngster, when I had far less pressure, stressed less and had shorter days", and things like that. But it's calmer. First, you work with a job you most likely like, at least you got to choose right…And then when they come home, they're allowed to calm down. They get to "Phew'" [exhales]. But I can't do that. I come home, eat, do homework, prepare for test, attend training, shower, prepare. (Fredrik, B_2)

The youngsters identified multiple dimensions associated with the life-stage which placed them in what they viewed as a constantly ambiguous position, balancing the enjoyment of increased freedom and the emerging constraints associated with responsibility and expectations. This tended to lead to additional concerns related to a heightened sense of self, and being "individual", not least because of the many choices that had to be made and, as corollary, prioritized:

> Ingvild: There's so much to choose from. We have many choices ahead of us that make things a little difficult, much to think about and such.
>
> Viktoria: It's like, for example, spending time being social with friends and such, or getting enough sleep or getting a sufficiently good grade on a test. You can't have everything, so you have to choose. There's something that has to be sacrificed, all the time. (C_4)

These reflections were perceived to be part of the somehow scary and demanding dimensions of becoming an adult, eventually being expected to prioritize according to conscious choice rather than simply enjoyment, as emphasized by Hege (C_4): "You do have to prioritize. You have to make some choices that may not be the ones you'd really want to choose, but that are most responsible to do." Within the balancing act between increased freedom and responsibility, between being a child and an adult, between enjoyment and conscious choice, school was described as a balancing act in which they experienced the more negative aspects of these three couplets. This was evident in spontaneous expressions about being 15 such as: "Beyond school, being 15 is fun" (Trygve, E_4). School was discussed as being a transitional balancing act in its own right.

5.1.3 Perceptions of education and schooling

School was viewed as being an inevitable source of pressure: "In school, it`s like trying to catch four balls that come in your face simultaneously" (Fredrik, B_2). The realization that they were engaged in what amounted to the first steps in making significant career choices as part of the life-stage transition from education to (eventually) work, and having a good life in the future was recognized as a major part of the perceived pressures associated with the 10th grade. The importance of education was underscored by the girls cited below, caricaturing themselves as being "generation performance":

> Else: There's more pressure that you should get good grades. And we are after all labelled "generation performance", and there is also much pressure that everything should be perfect and fine all the time
>
> Mia: I'm thinking that we're kind of supposed to have higher education and much of that. That thing about education, having an education really.
>
> Mari: Mmm …everything depends upon having an education and work and things like that. And then having a basic plan is important. Whether it's getting good grades to get access to what you wish for and proceed forward in that … it's a pressure. And then you want to be the best possible. (E_3)

The significance of becoming "educated" created uncertainty related to making the right or wrong choices. The uncertainty related to being able to predict their future educational route at this life-stage made them aware that peers, parents, teachers and even prevailing norms isociety influenced them. In this regard, some occupational routes were seen as being more socially acceptable than others. The girls talked about the unwritten rules regarding this:

> Toril: It's, I don't know, related to choices of studies maybe. Like "you do choose to study academic subjects at Haug upper secondary". It's not like that for everyone, but
>
> Kine: Right! You aren't supposed to choose construction work [vocational education] in a way.
>
> Toril: You don't choose construction work. Or, you could but then it's like "OK, he chose construction work".
>
> Vera: If you make that choice, you are kind of stupid.
>
> Linn: But at the same time, the teachers say: "They need people to choose vocational" and all that, and they encourage us to choose that. But it has more status to say

> "No, I am a doctor or an engineer" rather than "I am a carpenter", right. And I do think many, that is something we have noticed since we were children, that those wearing suits and carrying briefcases have more authority and status than those wearing dungarees and helmet. There is a difference. (G_2)

The boys also discussed how students with low grades tended to be categorized as stupid and looked down on. For example, one boy who had chosen vocational education, felt others attached negativity to such a choice:

> But it's a lot of pressure because like here in [name of the city], it's pressure to study academic subjects. Everyone chooses academic … even though vocational actually is as good. But if you choose vocational, you're looked down on. It's kind of those who don't care about school, who just waste their time and just don't give a crap about what they are going to do. (Mikkel, B_2)

Choosing the right academic pathway thus involved what was socially acceptable as much as concerns related to interests. The youngsters were keenly aware of the importance of having an education, and preferably the right kind of education, and were, as a consequence, aware of the relevance of achieving good grades. In this respect, discussions of grades and being asked by peers about grades was commonplace. Nevertheless, it was seen as indirectly heaping pressure upon pressure. Such discussions and comments were perceived as unpleasant, not at least because they tended to initiate thoughts about being inadequate in relation to those having achieved better grades than themselves. This provided them with a feeling of not having invested enough time and effort, even though they believed they had done so.

Some youngsters rationalized the importance of grades in terms of being just a number. However, as recognized by the girls in E_1 –group cited below, it was difficult not to internalize the significance of grades and the pressure they created:

> Marte: I think numbers make such a large difference in our life these days, there is so much pressure on how much you weigh, what grades you get and everything like that. But it's [sort of] not the numbers that should define us. Rather, it is the personality and stuff like that. And there is so much pressure to get good grades on tests and stuff like that. No, I wish that everyone could just get 6[grade].
>
> Anette: I notice that it is really just a number, but we care or we spend so much energy on getting good grades, and it's just a pressure … in addition to everything else.

Identifying school as a source of pressure did, however, involve more than grades. The demands of teachers were viewed as mediating and often exacerbating the pressures coming from school and, as a corollary, the stresses of being 15.

5.1.4 Transitioning through secondary school

Transitioning through secondary school entailed academic and social dimensions, which were related and constantly in flux. The youngsters described the transition from 8th to 10th grade as involving shifting concerns according to school year, from concerns about being socially accepted and established towards concerns about school performance and grades. This shift in focus did not mean that one concern was left behind and another appeared as they transitioned from one school year to the next. Rather, the concerns were seen as constantly present and fluctuating only in degree: that is, to be of lesser or greater concern at different stages in the process. By the end of 10th grade, however, the shift towards a focus on school performance and its consequences for future educational careers was apparent. There was almost universal agreement that in 10th grade everything related to the academic dimensions of school. They compared the process to a steepening hill:

> Stine: It wasn't very hard. I was told that it would be very hard and all that, but it wasn't to begin with.
>
> Line: But it was a little strange getting used to grades and such.
>
> Endre: It was quite easy at first, you had more choices, more elective subjects. Then when we got to 9th grade the hill got steeper, and immediately when we got to10th grade, then suddenly the hill got even steeper and then even harder. The last six months have extended upwards again. It is completely different; it is really weird. Because suddenly we have all these tests, we have so little time and you just: no, no, no! (B_3)

The increasing awareness that 10th grade was significant – and not just academically – compared with the first two years, converged with the recognized shift towards greater responsibility particularly in relation to school. This was manifested in the reoccurring references to the significance of grades for the rest of their lives in terms of granting or denying them access to further schooling and the potential of a "brighter" future. The desire for future opportunities

also gave rise to feelings about identity. The boys in the C_2 group, for example, highlighted the reciprocal relation between grades and self-esteem:

Roger: They are important for the rest of your life … the grades you get … they are crucial. So, if you get a good grade, then you have a bright future giving you better self-esteem. If you get bad grades, on the other hand, and perform poorly at school then you get low self-esteem because then you know your future will be worse. Rather, it will be more difficult to do well in the future.

Magne: You might not have as much faith that you will succeed

The perceived importance of grades for future options and, as a corollary, the increasing responsibility they felt for optimising their prospects, revealed the significance they attached to the position they found themselves in during 10th grade. It was perceived to be a life-changing period: “So, if you make a mistake, it could – it could ruin your future” (Stig, B_2). Alongside the awareness of and worries about the consequences of grades for future options, the youngsters held optimistic views about leaving compulsory schooling (i.e. secondary school). This was related to the forthcoming transition from school as an arena where they had little or no choice to upper secondary school where they could choose (e.g. an academic or vocational route and subjects within those streams) according to their abilities and interests.

Secondary school was viewed, by boys in particular, as far too theoretical: “For 10 years, you’ve had theoretical subjects. For 10 years!” (Mikkel, B_2). Upper secondary was thus talked about as “opening up more routes” (Inge, D_4), with the prospect of attending school because they wanted to rather than because they had to. In short, school was perceived as having become serious in Year 10. Even though this shift to a considerable extent was related to the fact that grades were perceived to be less important in Years 8 and 9, the years were nevertheless seen as a process that influenced youngsters’ hopes and expectations when entering the 10th grade, whether they had a personal history of academic success or not.

This seemingly intensified and unanticipated drift towards seriousness in 10th grade was perceived to be reinforced by teachers’ time constraints and apparent unwillingness to take differences in ability into consideration. In the eyes of both boys and girls, students were expected to be on the same level, and preferably the same level as those performing best. Astrid (F_3) phrased it as follows:

> And then it's just like they, it's like that, for us at least, that they kind of want to help those who get 5s or 6s [grades] [are interrupted by the others in groups agreeing] instead of those getting 2 or 3, those who need to improve.

The impression was that teachers were neither bothered nor had the time to help pupils back on track at this stage. As the youngsters saw it, students who struggled were left with the responsibility to keep up and catch up on their own or simply fall behind:

> It seems like the teacher is having very little time. That way, if anyone falls off and doesn't sufficiently concentrate that lesson they don't bother to help the pupil back on track. They just proceed saying "You simply just need to do that by yourself". It is quite a lot to catch up on. (Trond, F_1)

The perception that teachers proceeded too fast meant that the youngsters felt as if they were being given up on as much as giving up on themselves. Harald (A_4) observed that "for us who don't understand anything, it proceeds far too fast, and then all of a sudden you have started on something new". Ellen (F_3) shared a similar experience in maths:

> It happens every math lesson, I sit with my hand raised all lesson. When he [teacher] sees that, he says: "No, we go through calculation on the blackboard" …. and then he goes through F, whilst I'm still on A wondering what I should do there.

The youngsters perceived the process of schooling as being increasingly uninspiring with little flexibility to stimulate the differing needs and interests of students. It was boys in particular who pointed to the tedium of being "forced" to memorize facts rather than being encouraged to discuss and explore in order to aspire learning. Thus, by the time the youngsters were 10th graders, school had become repetitive and routinized, as well as more serious:

> You get tired. You go to school and then you just sit waiting all day for it to end. And then you go home … You do a little, and then you wake up the next morning and just "Crap" and it's everything all over again. New presentations and tests. (Geir, F_1)

Alongside the recognition that school took on greater significance with consequences (for better or worse) for their future, schoolwork tended to follow the same path and spill over in leisure.

5.1.5 Perceiving schoolwork as a constraint on leisure

Youngsters perceived that the school day rarely had a defined end such that leisure time was experienced as a continuation of school. Arriving home from a long school day and being aware that they were not completely finished with schoolwork after all, made the whole day routinized: “you certainly do know what to do all day. It’s about school, training and homework” (Mons, H_2).

Schoolwork was seen as excessive, especially due to poor schools planning and organization such that tests and presentations tended to pile up. Consequently, students felt the need to spend leisure time doing schoolwork rather than recovering by doing something different; frequently feeling that time was constrained with no time to just be themselves and enjoy things.

Time spent doing schoolwork and homework was in itself perceived as tiresome, but it was having school constantly present in the back of their minds that made it difficult to relax and enjoy other things, whether on weekdays or weekends. Girls tended to refer to negative feelings – such as feeling guilty – if prioritizing social activities over schoolwork:

> Jenny: And if we don’t do anything on Saturday or Sunday and rather spend time with friends you get this bad feeling all day because you know there is probably something you rather should have done ... but you choose to prioritize being social.
>
> Ingvild: I really thrive socially, but it tends to be too much at times. You feel kind of guilty if you don’t complete ... if you don’t study in weekends and such. Like you don’t perceive it to be important in a way. You could choose to spend Saturday with friends rather than doing homework. (C_4)

Boys experienced similar dilemmas. Illustrative in this regard was the discussion that took place in the boys’ group B_2 among those who perceived themselves to be not particularly motivated or engaged with school. Nevertheless, they recognized an undesirable yet habitualized tendency to do schoolwork, even on weekends: “If you have done something fun, there is always this thought in the back of your head: ‘Crap, I have to do something’. It’s a little weird, it has become a bad habit not to do any schoolwork.” (Mikkel)

Because schoolwork expanded, it constrained their leisure, and, as they saw it, restricted their opportunities to enjoy being a youngster, which they saw as to contrasting with a routinized and disciplined day. Stig (B_2) explained thus:

> When you hear the term *youth*, you think of an active youth, for example. A boy or a girl who engages with something physical, who doesn't sit at home all the time thinking about school. Outdoors, with friends for example, having fun. Experiencing what a child is supposed to. But, in reality, it is like school is with you everywhere

Whether being engaged with organized sports, exercising with friends, playing in a band or other activities on a wide specter, leisure time activities were seen in relation to school. The need to expend more effort on schoolwork because tests and grades had implications for their future trajectories, meant that habits tended to change during the years of secondary schooling.

5.1.6 Combining school and leisure activities

Within the context of an otherwise constrained life, several pointed to difficulties in finding spaces to relax and enjoy. Engaging with leisure time activities was discussed as providing them with such a space, thus serving as a mental time-out by doing something different and thus counterbalancing the emphasis on mastering and performing in school. Jarle (C_1), who played saxophone, described the value of having a hobby:

> I actually use my hobby [saxophone] to relax, because I am doing something else and get a bit of respite from everyday life and ... I'm not thinking that I have to perform well there. I really just have fun. Thus, I relax when I do that … don't think of much else.

In a similar vein, Lone and Tuva (C_3) elaborated how doing gymnastics and dance in leisure provided them with a valuable time-out:

> Lone: But, generally, I get happy when I'm on training and feel that there is something I master, something I am good at. Because it is not like you get confirmation that you master in school, but on training it is more like "You master this".
>
> Tuva: Right! When I dance, I feel I am in a different world. On training I forget about all the things I have to do, I feel free in a way. And I have a lot of friends there, who support me. If you master something you get applause and hugs and people are genuinely happy for you … my coach isn't very old either, so she understands if we're feeling stressed and then we have a kind of free training to loosen up.

In this way, leisure activities were seen to provide mental refreshment, whether involving PA or otherwise. Notably, and as illustrated in the girls' descriptions, the relationships they were involved in were as valuable to them as the activity itself. For some, the need for such refreshment that was both enjoyable and self-chosen overshadowed the time constraint it led to school-wise:

> Fredrik: Right, because you do hear us saying "Oh, our time schedule is so constrained", and one of the reasons being training. But you don't hear us complaining about training.
>
> Mikkel: I like to attend training and be active.
>
> Fredrik: That's because we think it's fun! Right? It is something in our lives that we cherish, right. That we want to have time for. So, I rather choose that to homework. That makes the teacher grumpy because they don't understand: "Why is that?" Ok, but it is more important to me than remembering all those key questions. (B_2)

For those who had a history of participating in organized sports, the increased seriousness and pressure to perform as they had got older was perceived as similar to that expected with school work, which made them lose motivation and drop-out from such activities. In other words, what previously had been associated with unrestrained fun had become a matter of performing:

> I too think it becomes a little serious, like it's not that much about having fun, the way it kind of was before. It was more like, then you went there to have fun and to exercise and have fun. But now it's more like this "Ok, if you aren't capable of doing this, you end up in lower group" or "If you don't do this, you can't be here" … and things like that. (Laila, H_1)

The tendency that organized sports, as an elective leisure activity, tended to be strict and disciplined as well as require considerable time, had made several boys and girls move from organized sport clubs to gyms on the grounds that this way, they were in control of their own time and activities, as the boys in H_2 explained:

> Torgeir: You organize your own training.
>
> Petter: Right, that's fun.
>
> Torgeir: And then it's like if you don't feel like it, you can stay home. Nothing like calling to tell and then being yelled at for not showing up.

For those remaining in organized sports, the tendency for it to exacerbate perceptions of pressure was recognized. However, sport was considered so important that it was worthwhile. Whether considering organized sport to be important and worthwhile in 10th grade seemed, however, to be related to how good they were in that particular sport:

Ellen: There are many who play handball and football. Who are engaged with that. They often perform well at school as well … That's probably the reason why they have so much, that they have high status. Because they are good at school and play football and handball.

Ingrid: They are good at everything in a way! (F_3)

All-in-all, the pressure for commitment to schoolwork alongside refreshing leisure activities meant that choices were in flux but increasingly constrained towards the former. Choices the young people made in relation to how to spend their leisure time, however, often led to routines but without the attendant pressure or stress to perform – taking up work, training regularly in gyms, playing instrument, horseback riding or engaging in voluntary work.

5.1.7 School as an arena for socializing

While the increasing academicization of schooling was generally seen in negative terms, school as a social arena was viewed positively. As one youngster put it: "Socially, it`s fun" (Harald, A_4). In this regard, transitioning through secondary school involved the process of socializing in which "everyone has become friends":

Anders: Yes. In 6th and 7th grade, everyone hung together. And then in 8th and 9th grade everyone didn't know each other.

Trude: It was more like different groups of people … and now: nobody gives a [shit] and everyone hangs together.

Ulrik: We were much more quiet before, it was more like two and two talking together, but now everyone talks. (B_4)

Those involved with team-based activities outside of school already had a group when entering secondary school: "If you play handball, then you hang with those who play handball at school. It's as simple as that, really" (Kine, G_2). The process of socializing in secondary school was thus perceived to revolve around orientating towards and establishing contact with new people:

Vera: And then I think you change, well there are some who stick with the same friends

through all three years, but I think most change concerning who they hang together with. And you change a little as well.

Toril: Change according to what persons you hang together with, too.

Linn: In 10th grade, you've kind of figured out how … you've come to know a lot of new people, and I think, in a way, that you have settled more with the friends you've got. That you've made proper choices.

Toril: You know with yourself who you want to be friends with … who you feel closest to. (G_2)

Those who did not find themselves in the established position in the first place, described 8th grade as mainly concerned with getting to know people and be well-liked. These youngsters tended to refer to those established as "the popular ones". Getting to 10th grade and being established in one's own group was therefore perceived as positive, as described by Ellen (F_3):

> You have your group, in a way, that way it's not that important to be popular anymore. Because you are established in your group … I started to bother less when we got to 10th grade, mostly because I've kind of settled with my group and don't care what the popular ones think of me.

It was clear that close relationships mattered, but also changed during the years of secondary schooling: "Because people change and make new friends and such … new interests" (Laila, H_1). Nevertheless, by the time they entered 10th grade, it was meeting with friends at school that most prominently was considered to make school worthwhile.

However, having changed both as a person and in relation to friends and peers, the class climate – the lengthening chains of relationships – was perceived as having developed in a positive direction in 10th grade. The young people referred to that feeling more safe and confident in class, and fearing less about being laughed at if saying the wrong things was considered especially important as the focus on school performance increased. Thus, knowing class peers better and perceiving the climate to be less tense was seen as having beneficial consequences in the form of easing the pressure about school performance: "That's a good point. Because I think thriving better socially reduces the pressure about grades, when you become more confident with those in class. I'm pretty sure about that" (Iver, C_1). In effect, on entering a new school (in many cases) 8th grade, the students are preoccupied with establishing friendship networks and becoming accepted. As lower-secondary school progresses, and relationships

become more established, their concerns shift towards school performance and grades. Put differently, feeling more safe and confident in class formed an enclave in relation to the shift towards a focus on school performance and its consequences for future educational careers. However, the concerns attached to the forthcoming transition to upper secondary school as phrased by Grete (A_3) serve to illustrate the notion that concerns were perceived as constantly present, only to be of lesser or greater concern at different stages in the process:

> I feel that when you`re 15 years old then you have more pressure from what others approve of. Because, for example, now you`re soon to start upper secondary, then you feel pressure, in away, since friends will be split. Then you don`t know whether you will make new friends. Then you sort of must make an effort to make people approve you.

5.1.8 Transitioning through the emotional ups and downs of adolescence

An ever-present dimension of transitioning through secondary school were the shifting emotions relating to the intensified ups and downs, or turmoil, of being 15. In part, shifting emotions related to the youngsters' growing awareness of themselves in relation to their social surroundings, the influences therein and the necessity of trying to adapt as they increasingly appreciated themselves in relation to and through the eyes of others. A consequence of this was that processes of comparison were ever-present, which tended to be concerned with measuring up against the perceived standard for being good enough.

In general terms, the youngsters took the view that being 15 meant that there was much to process simultaneously. They pointed to the need to relate to the demands and pressures external to themselves while at the same time being in puberty and under the influence of hormones and their changing bodies. Vetle (C_1) captured it thus:

> Being 15 is really quite weird because it's a lot of like body pressure and pressure upon how you dress and … it's a lot of pressure. At the same time, we have these hormones that are affecting … we should perform at school, there`s a lot you are supposed to be good at. So, I would say that it's actually quite difficult.

Some were quick to point to the variation in "ups and downs" related to emotions and hormones which made them prone to mood swings, showing an awareness of how changeable they sometimes were and even, at times, unreasonable or contrary:

> Isa: It could be about these emotions or hormones that fluctuate throughout the body,

to phrase it that way. And suddenly you are sort of happy and then it can swing to not being so happy anymore, like that, lots of emotions.

Mia: We are sort of in the phase where it's like "I do not want it – but I want it" and stuff like that. Like that … contrary. If there is something you want and you will not have anything else, and so you insist until you get it, for example. That also has something to do with our mood and stuff like that. (E_3)

The perceptions of being on an emotional roller-coaster was articulated in various ways. For example, one youngster admitted to either being "up" in good mood or "down", in a very bad mood, referring to the latter as "having my moments … and then I just don't bother to do anything. I don't bother talking to people, I don't bother doing anything. I'm always in a bad mood!" (Trude, B_4)

Girls identified being on an emotional roller-coaster and the emotional character of being 15 as a common experience for all youngsters of their age and life-stage. Often such emotions were described as being short-lived:

Toril: And in our age, there are so many ups and downs as well. How you feel. You can be completely devastated in one moment, and in the next it's like "I`m the best", in a way. It goes very up and down.

Linn: But then you manage to pull yourself back up a little, if you have been down, and a positive wave follows, that pulls you back up. That prevents you from digging yourself even further down. And if you are really high, it is probably good to be reminded that "OK, I may not be a world champion after all". But it is tiring. (G_2)

It was mainly the girls who identified such mood swings and feelings of emotional intensity as a commonplace experience. Those boys who talked about these issues on the other hand, saw themselves as being different from the girls. Whilst they claimed to be in a good mood, irrespective of having a good day or otherwise, girls, they said, were different:

Jens: Yes, you do notice that about the girls.

Peder: That they aren't in, or aren't having a good day, then we notice that their mood suddenly, they don't have to say much because suddenly they just go crazy.

Nils: I think we cope a little better in a way, having a bad day or look a little bad. I don`t know … having many things going on simultaneously. (G_4)

Both boys and girls referred to being 15 as involving "drama". However, their reflections tended to follow a gendered pattern revealing the contours of what might be termed "boys' culture" and "girls' culture". Boys, for example, perceived girls to be sensitive, taking things too seriously and hence liable to create drama. Boys in one focus group emphasized the supposedly positive social environment among the boys that included tolerance for humour without risking hurting anyone. However, when it came to the girls:

> Einar: It's like … drama with practically everything. A lot of bickering … like people get upset about things and it becomes a big fuss … little more with the girls than with the boys.
>
> Harald: I don't know how the girls do it, but there isn't that much drama amongst boys.
>
> Einar: It's nothing like that in our class, at least. Nothing like boys get upset because someone says something bad about other boys, in a way.
>
> Eskil: We don't take everything that seriously. (A_4)

In short, they would have preferred girls to be more laid-back, similar to how they perceived themselves.

Girls on the other hand, tended to describe boys as being self-confident and, at times, arrogant, perceiving boys to show off and act in order to get attention and to position themselves amongst the other boys. This was seen as influencing them negatively insofar it left them feeling exposed to particular comments:

> Tuva: But, I think boys are more influenced by each other and seek to impress each other.
>
> Lone: I think it's like boys want to show each other that they are good.
>
> Tuva: Yes, they act tough.
>
> Synne: And then … they might be joking, they just want to have fun, but you might be offended and start thinking "Wow, there actually is something wrong". (C_3)

The dynamics between boys' and girls' behaviours were viewed as positioning boys negatively in the classroom setting. More specifically, boys spoke about teachers seemingly sympathizing and favouring girls and consequently being prejudicial to boys. For example:

> Herman: And then in class, it's like "Hi, girls!", and then he [the teacher] is angry with The boys for every single thing …

Jens: Whilst girls can be just the way they like all lesson, but boys kind of: “But really!” That’s a little unfair.

Nils: That’s what makes a bad day. (G_4)

Thus, boys and girls recognized not only that they differed but that they were inevitably interdependent: they mutually affected each other. Furthermore, boys tended to perceive girls’ behaviours and culture as deemed more acceptable in the classroom than those of boys. The boys’ characterization of girls – as being unduly sensitive – was not lost on the girls themselves, however. In fact, some girls identified the life-stage they found themselves in as being a “vulnerable age”. This was associated with an awareness that they were easily influenced by others, especially through constantly reflecting upon how they were perceived by others:

Synne: We should adapt to people’s opinions about us as well as our own opinion about ourselves.

Tuva: The social environment.

Synne: So, I think, in a way, that if someone says like “Oh, your hair didn’t look very nice today”, it’s like you let it affect you and kind of “Wow, do I look that way?”

Tuva: I will do better tomorrow.

Synne: Right, like you’re more sensitive … that you feel a bit vulnerable, you are affected by the things people say to you. (C_3)

This vulnerability was recognized as causing a lot of often unnecessary negative thoughts, whether in the form of reflecting upon how they dressed – “OK, if I wear this sweater, do I look fat?” (Lone, C_3) – or even listening to peers commenting on themselves negatively:

> It just reinforces the thoughts you already have about yourself. If someone says that they are ugly, whilst you think they are really good looking, you may start thinking like: “Then I’m probably that as well” … often things you go around thinking about for a while before it stops. (Viktoria, C_4)

The inherent complexity of being self-aware and constantly sensitive to what others might say or think about them made it difficult for the girls to “be themselves”. This was viewed as constraining, not least because of the recognition that it most likely was themselves and their own thinking that caused such problems. In other words, they recognized that they tended to observe themselves negatively through the eyes of others.

This sensitivity and insecurity about themselves seemingly initiated something akin to a self-fulfilling prophecy as even positive comments from others tended to be interpreted negatively and filtered through their own perception of themselves. Whether considering themselves to be under the influence of hormones or under the influence of what others might think about them, the youngsters observed the rapid changes emerging in the process of identity formation in the years of secondary schooling. This included consideration of the onset of adulthood. They referred to their own and peers' shifting personalities and behaviours, sometimes in "weird" ways and unforeseen directions, if only for short periods. Change alongside continuity was a way of understanding how they were coming to terms with transitioning through the secondary school years, especially in relation to their emerging identities; as one youngster put it:

> What I'm thinking of is that you go through different phases of things you try out. Not like physical things, that too, but who you want to be in relation to others: "Yes, but I'd like to be the cool one who just, sort of, is chill with everyone" … it's a bit like that, you test out different ways to be in relation to what those around you respond best to … you really notice if someone behaves a bit weird sometimes, or somehow, then there's something going on. (Toril, G_2)

The various descriptions of the shifting emotional processes illustrated that the youngsters often felt life was beyond their control. Rather, it appeared to them as if they were in a dynamic flux between what they ought to be, observed from the outside, and what they emotionally experienced themselves to be on the inside. In a life-stage marked by identity formation in an often rapidly changing social context this state of flux made them prone to comparing themselves to others, striving to be the best of simply their best – as Jarle (C_1) put it, "You try to be the perfect version".

5.1.9 Perceptions of the ideal-type Norwegian 15-year-old

Comparing and evaluating oneself was an ongoing process and one that the youngsters perceived themselves to struggle with when being 15. An inherent desire to see themselves (as well as be seen by others) as "good enough", according to a perceived ideal-type or norm, preoccupied them. This norm was, however, seen as being as abstract as it was compelling, operating as frequently expressed in terms of "ought" and "should". The ideal-type had a multidimensional form, as articulated by this 15-year-old:

> You're supposed to have time for everything. And you should get good grades in school, and make the right choices. And then you should have a lot of friends, and you should have a lot of free time, at the same time you are supposed to do a lot and should be good on leisure activities, and it's sort of very many things that you have to perform in. (Lone, C_3)

The contrast between the perceived ideal and the acknowledged reality was manifested in a life-stage permeated with notions of the importance of fitting in and not being different:

> Sanna: It's like, if you don't look like or do the same as everyone else …
>
> Tone [interrupting]: Then you are perceived as different. And that could be negative, and it could be positive. (A_3)

The importance of not being seen as different was perceived as yet another balancing act, which entailed finding a middle way between striving too hard and not making an effort – something the girls in G_2 described as being "Effortlessly perfect":

> Linn: You should be something in between, in a way. You should be active and exercise a lot, but you are not supposed to be like those fitness-bloggers who claim "I just drink protein shakes and keep on going". You are supposed to look fit and look good without striving too hard.
>
> Vera: Yes, exactly!
>
> Linn: And then you are supposed to be smart, but you should not be a nerd. And you are supposed to be very social, but not be too clingy and fussy. So it's like, you have to find the middle thing everywhere. That's how I feel, at least.
>
> Vera: It's quite stressful

Alongside striving to achieve the perceived ideal was the associated challenge of being similar and therefore not standing out, while at the same time being yourself in terms of being different in an acceptable way, but not too different within the unspoken yet prevailing norm. The expression of "ought" and "should" and how these affected 15–years-olds as a "we-group" emerged as a felt compulsion to compare. A perceived impossible, but nevertheless recognized outcome of striving to be the best, was the compulsion to compare upwards and to several according to different skills and attributes. The impulse to compare in this way was illustrated by these boys:

Amund: I was thinking, if you have a very smart [person] in your class, if you compare according to smartness, you most often compare to the smartest rather than to those who are on the same level as you are. … But you think "I want to be like the best one". And the same goes for sports, then you think "I want to be best in everything". But most often you are good at one thing, not everything.

Vetle: And then you most likely compare to several. There's one person who has that body, then you compare. And that average [in grades] that you probably compare to, then there's one who's good in sports, so you compare to that. With all these three, you rarely find it all in one [person]. (C_1)

Resurfacing as a constant tension between being "as good as" and at the same time being aware that everyone is different, the balance leaned towards a perceived negative awareness of self in relation to others:

> It may be because we are different. Some have the same thing as you have, and others have something else. And then you don't see what yourself have. You only focus upon others. (Hege, C_4)

In sum, the life-stage of rapidly shifting emotions embraced the youngsters' reflexive perceptions upon being under the influence of hormones and rapid changes entailing mood swings, multiple ups and downs and the proneness to let themselves be influenced as well as assessing themselves according to the perceived standard of the ideal-type 15–year-olds. Within the process of transitioning through life-stage of shifting emotions, these findings suggest that youngsters find themselves navigating between their inner life – what they experience and feel on the inside – and the social life – their interdependencies with others – constantly balancing in order to accommodate themselves in relation to the social norms, whether real or imagined. The "oughts" and "should" coercing the 15-year-olds in this life-stage operated as perceived external forces that nonetheless tended to be internalized as an inbuilt disposition to constantly compare themselves with others as well as the ideal-type. These pressures and expectations were experienced as constantly present and influencing simultaneously only to shift in terms of balances in intensity and form, according to the social arena and the interdependencies therein. Hence, the prevailing perception of pressures and expectations as something existing out there always constraining them.

5.1.10 Internalizing the ideal body

The ideals most frequently associated with social media as well as those perceived as having the most pronounced influence, related to body image and appearance, commonly referred to by the youngsters themselves as “body pressure”. In this regard, one focus group’s spontaneous reference to social media as being the primary source of perceived body pressure was illustrative of views shared by both boys and girls:

> Ingrid and Ellen: media!
>
> Ingrid: I think in fact it comes from clothing shops, as well.
>
> Ellen: Yes, with models and ... how the world is being presented. It’s always the thinnest and finest girls that are the most popular, or like … Kylie Jenner then, for example, or Kim K They create body pressure, in a way … When you browse through Instagram, and you arrive at a bikini page, there are only super skinny girls presented. Nobody who is a bit bigger, in a way. (F_3)

Within the discussions about body pressure that took place, the tendency to present the ideal-type body images as stereotypical of males and females was undisputed. The stereotypic ideal-types were summarized thus:

> Well, there is a major difference between boys and girls. Boys: big, preferably big muscles. There are some in this school who look like that. And girls, they should not be too big, because many are in their opinion. And be curvy, have nice curves. (Vetle, C_1)

The extent to which they perceived themselves as actually being influenced by such images, broadly followed gendered lines. In this regard, the youngsters offered insights into how they perceived stereotypical, unrealistic and media constructed ideal-type body images to be translated into their everyday lives.

5.1.11 Turning ideal-type body images into everyday “body pressure”

The youngsters revealed gendered body norms relating to an ideal-type, which were viewed by both boys and girls as being most constraining for girls. Boys viewed girls as struggling more and being more affected by body images than themselves. They also tended to ascribe this to pressure put upon girls by themselves as “All the girls in class want to have that perfect body, you know” (Øystein, A_1). Boys perceived social media to be the important:

> Maybe the way it's presented in social media and stuff like that. We are active on social media, and when they see, for example, girls with big buttocks and big breasts, and nice abs ... That's not necessarily what is … then they may start thinking that "I have to look like that. Unless I look like that, I'm ugly" but that isn't true. (Geir, F_1)

Boys admitted that they, too, were liable to be influenced by social media, although they tended to describe themselves as being more relaxed and less affected: "Others can feel it. I can understand that. But I think none of us [referring to the boys in the focus group] as I feel at least, care about the likes they get on Facebook" (Bård, G_1). Boys were also likely to trivialize body pressure amongst boys by acknowledging that it did exist, but did not apply to themselves.

Girls' perceived the strict ideals existing in their social networks as constraining. They were also, however aware that external social (stereotypical) norms, whether coming from social media or boys, were translated into and reinforced ideals held about themselves. This became evident when the girls talked about it being impossible to becoming satisfied with themselves:

> Tuva: And if you are thin, you are too skinny. If you have curves then you are too fat. There is nothing …
>
> Lone: It`s exactly like that. I think it's related to our own thinking as well.Because there isn`t any blueprint saying all boys prefer slim girls. But I think it's related to your own opinion about what you would like to look like. And I do think that's what counts the most. Because if you feel "I am not thin enough, my feet are too big and my abs … " then you start thinking: "OK, I have to lose weight to be happy about myself". (C_3)

All-in-all, regardless of where the pressures came from, some girls acknowledged that the ultimate aim was to be recognized as good looking by others, including the boys:

> The thing with boys and body pressure … I think that you really would like boys to fancy you … and if you don't have that nice body, the boys will not accept you either. So, there is pressure coming from all directions. From girls, boys and adults. (Ingrid, F_3)

Furthermore, girls perceived boys to probably experience body pressure too, notably according to the stereotypical ideal-type male body:

> Lena: I think maybe … they experience body pressure related to having the biggest muscles and showing off that they have (a little better) abs than everyone else and that they have to somehow work out in the gym.

Astrid: But, somehow, it is the leanest boys and those who have biggest muscles who compete. It's not those who are a bit chubby. They don't care, at least they don't seem to care. I am not a boy, so I do not know for sure. But they, they are not engaged in the discussions around big biceps and such … but they do listen. That might do something to them as well. (F_3)

Girls were also aware that they might influence boys in the same manner they perceived boys to influence them, giving rise to a multi-directional dynamic when it came to exerting body pressure:

> We actually put pressure upon each other. We don't talk about them [the boys], we talk about celebrities who have six-pack and are really nice and such, and then comes those flimsies … I do think they feel the pressure too. (Bente, D_3)

5.1.12 Perceptions of physically active lives

The youngsters perceived engaging with some kind of PA to be the 'norm' among their peers, and thus viewed most 15-years-olds as having good health. This was most commonly manifested in utterances such as "There are so many active, right, and so few exceptions" (Frode, A_1). This way, variations in health were associated according to a continuum from engaging frequently with PA to not at all.

The latter group, those who did not engage with much or any PA, tended to be identified as being more into gaming, and characterized as engaging less socially and being sedentary. The girls in H_1 observed how gaming affected the physicality of some class peers:

Elisabet: I know of many in our class who spends very much time in front of the

Wenche: Right!

Elisabet: You do notice when we have PE lessons and such that it affects the physical side of things … that you don't exercise.

Although representing the minority among the youngsters, one boys' group whose interests lay outside of PA caricatured themselves in terms of being "very lazy people who don't bother doing much" (Stian, E_4). In short, whether belonging to the one group or the other, engaging with PA of some kind was perceived as being a marker of good health and an indicator of leading a socially acceptable "correct" life. In this vein, exercise was viewed positively in an ironic tone, as being "supposed to be good for everything" (Monika, G_3), they tended to feel

bad for not “doing any of that sporty stuff “(Mari, E_3). Generally, they felt some pressure to be active: “it feels like a kind of pressure that you should be active and engage in sports” (Else, E_3).

In this regard, the youngsters saw appearance and, whether they looked fit, as signifying good health. This typically entailed being slim, muscular and well-trained. In other words, being close to the ideal-type body image disclosed earlier. Physical appearance – and staying in good physical condition in particular – was thus seen as conveying an impression of healthiness, one way or the other:

> Sanna: Not being very overweight. There is no one [in their grade] who is like that, really. That is what I was thinking.
>
> Tone: Not being too skinny.
>
> Sanna: Right. But we don`t have anyone like that in our grade, hence I consider that to be a good indicator that we stay in shape. (A_3)

There was a tendency for some youngsters to view some forms of PA, such as organized sports, to be more authentic and genuine than others, such as working out in gyms. Gyms were often the preferred arena for PA on the grounds that some youngsters felt less constrained by evaluations of their performances from others, whether coaches or peers. For others, exercising in gyms was considered to be primarily about appearance in terms of getting a good-looking body rather than actually being physically active:

> I don’t think people working out in fitness centers think that “I’m exercising to get the physical activity I need in the course of a day”. That is not what they think, guaranteed. They are more concerned about having the body they would like to have. (Iver, C_1)

Thus, youngsters tended to categorize and be categorized , not only according to whether they were physically active or not, but also according to type of PA they were engaged with.

Youngsters’ reasons for engaging in PA were rooted in it serving a useful purpose rather than being pleasant in its own right. In this way, being physically active was about doing good and avoiding bad. In this regard, PA was not only related to the physical benefits for health, but also to the positive consequences for several aspects of their mental health. They also related physical and mental health insofar as one was seen to have consequences for the other. For example:

> Hege: I think that if you aren't being physically active, it could affect your mental Health … If you don't exercise or just sit indoors constantly thinking about school, you could develop depression, anxiety and such.
>
> Jenny: Exercising does make you happy. When you're done you get endorphins. And if you suddenly notice that you have become stronger, or maybe have lost some weight, or that you have improved in PE, it affects you in a very positive way, even small differences. That way, if you are happy your psyche is good. (C_4)

The outcome of exercising was considered positive whether related to physical or mental aspects of health. Nonetheless, the reason for exercising was, especially among girls, also rooted avoiding the negative consequences of not looking "sufficiently good" (Synne, C_3). In this way, youngsters' concerns about putting on weight meant that exercise tended to be a response to feeling guilty:

> It's those thoughts … that leads you to feelings of guilt if not having exercised four times a week or something. Like you feel guilt for eating at McDonald's and then you exercise to avoid that feeling of guilt. (Bente, D_3)

In this regard, youngsters viewed exercise as enhancing both physical and mental health because they were interdependent, especially with regard to the body. Exercising could, therefore, add to the list of those things they felt they really ought to do, whether or not they actually did it:

> And if you're in pain, like mentally, it's good to get an outlet for that by exercising, for example. That's what I think many do nowadays. Exercise to get a break from homework and stress. And then there are others who do it because they feel they have to. Then it's no fun. (Linn, G_2)

In sum, girls in particular considered PA as having positive outcomes in terms of aspects of physical and mental health. The interdependent relationship included positive consequences such as becoming more happy and satisfied with themselves, interwoven with avoiding feelings of guilt.

A recurrent theme in the discussions with youngsters was the perceived impossibility of meeting the multiple expectations of those in their social networks "to be best in everything" (Iver, C_1) and thus being close to perfect. Thus, youngsters perceived themselves to waste time

in striving for the impossible when being rationally aware that being good in one or several things rather than everything was rather more realistic and "normal".

5.1.13 Perceiving pressures and expectations as social constraints

Managing pressures and expectations was a significant dimension of being 15 that served to constrain and de-limit the youngsters' enjoyment of increased freedoms and responsibilities. Most prominent for the youngsters was the perception of pressures, or external constraints, as ever-present, intersecting and simultaneous: "Social media, society, from everywhere really" (Marte, E_1). The expanding web of interdependencies they were a part of gave rise to people expecting much more of them:

> Viktoria: Family and friends, and everyone.
>
> Ingvild: Right. Your friends also expect you to join in on things. That you should get good grades, but – it's like I just said, that everyone expects something from you all the time. (C_4)

Experiencing their social world in this way tended to provoke descriptions of being 15 as stressful because it necessitated handling pressures and expectations from diverse arenas. When combined, they mutually reinforced feelings of stress and in a somewhat harried life. The boys in B_2, for example, discussed stress at length, which provided insight into the mesh of expectations that culminated in stress:

> … stress is bigger this year because we must, the grades count for the future. It has something to say for our lives, and we do want to be allowed to do what we really want to do, right. Then we have to strive and stress and stay up late and ruin our biorhythm at the same time. And it isn't just the pressure at school – it's the social pressure as well. Like, that thing about you being supposed to … look a certain way, you should be in such a certain shape, and have like certain good grades and then you still should have a certain number of friends. Having that status and all that. It's very hard. (Fredrik)

However, the recognition that they exerted more pressures and expectations upon themselves surfaced when discussing the issue of stress in the context of "should" and "ought". In this way, the young people inferred they perceived they had a moral obligation to meet the expectations and pressures that were increasingly confronting them. The youngsters recognized the ways in which they were increasingly internalizing external, social constraints as self-constraints:

Sanna: I don't feel I notice much of that, really.

Tone: Neither do I. But it's there.

Sanna: It's there, in a way, but it's not like I walk around thinking about and feeling it.

Tone: No. It's more the pressure I put on myself, in a way, that I have to get good grades and such. But it's not much from the outside. (A_3)

This dynamic between feeling compelled and compelling themselves pivoted on the inclination to compare themselves with others because of "not wanting to be worse than others" (Erle, F_4). Thus, the process of comparison directly contributed to feeling pressured:

> I think pressure emerges because you compare yourself with others, and you constantly assess yourself. So, instead of relaxing you think that "Today I am going to exercise because I want to look good, or because I am going to be good at a sport or just go for a run". I think that leads to pressure. (Jarle, C_1)

Constant comparison took place across all significant areas of young people's lives: performance at school, sporting ability, body image, as well as images presented on social media. In short, both boys and girls tended to compare themselves to others in every domain of their lives.

Notwithstanding the complex and interrelated webs of interdependencies in which the youngsters were involved they were able to disentangle the arenas and the pressures they individually exerted.

5.1.14 Pressure from significant others

Teachers were perceived to be a substantial source of pressure, not least because of the constant reminders and encouragements from teachers that investing time and effort was extraordinarily crucial in 10th grade: "We get much information from the teachers, you could say. That they remind us that this is the year and 'Now you have to work and now you have to pull yourself together and work, work, work'" (Ståle, D_2). These constant reminders about doing homework, the importance of grades, as well as being prepared for the upcoming exams meant that "everything gets messy and stressful" (Øyvind, F_2). The youngsters also perceived teachers to set higher requirements for them in 10th grade. Girls in particular perceived this to mean that they should maximize their effort when they had already invested their best. This could be

particularly stressful, which could have the opposite effect from that intended by the teacher by:

> They have high requirements too, I think. To us, who in a way maybe don't perceive it to be too much – and then we should try to achieve top grades. When it isn't possible, in a way, and you kind of try to do your best and everything … then you do get very stressed. And it certainly affects me when I become stressed. Because then I'm not able to do anything. And then it does in a way affect my grade. (Elisabet, H_1)

For their part, parents were viewed as augmenting the teachers in this respect:

> When I get back home from school, the first thing I hear when entering the door is "Do you have homework to do? What is your homework? Can I see your schedule? Do you have any tests this week? When are your midterm? Blah, blah, blah". It's like that all the time. I don't want to hear about that … I don't want to hear more about school … (Mikkel, B_2).

Thus, the web of interdependencies within and beyond school reinforced the identification of school as being a substantial source of pressure. The youngsters' references to pressures, requirements and stress in general terms when talking about school were elaborated when describing how they actually were affected.

5.1.15 School and the emotions

Pressure tended to be associated with stress, which had a variety of consequences. Recognition that they should work hard was shared across groups in terms of "having to be on top all the time" (Sanna, A_3) and, as a consequence, wearing themselves out. A leitmotif in the 15–year-olds' comments regarding how pressure and a stress affected them was tiredness:

> Anette: We do get tired. Or, I get tired.
>
> Ida: I fell asleep a quarter to nine yesterday, so I'm very exhausted.
>
> Marte: I do need much more sleep.
>
> Berit: You notice that in the evening, on my own behalf at least, because I very easily get tired … if anything happens, I quite easily react negatively to things. (E_1)

Tiredness did not necessarily lead to sleep, rather the pressure-related tiredness tended to be exacerbated by difficulty sleeping, which was partly explained by the unrelenting nature of

pressure: “You might have that thought in mind, that the next day, then you have an important test. So, you are somehow not able to relax. There is always something that needs to be done for the next day, and stuff like that.” (Frode, A_1). Another explanation provided for the difficulties in sleeping was a downward spiral of stress and reduced sleep: “In a way, your body, I have frequently been forced to study to one to two AM, and when you do not sleep you become stressed … and then sleeping is reduced.” (Endre, B_3).

Whether needing much more sleep or having difficulties in sleeping, tiredness from stress was often referred to as the root cause of other problems such as feeling unable to concentrate, feeling irritated and more grumpy. Reflecting over the course of secondary school, youngsters comment on a shift: “I used to be like positive and happy, but now I feel stressed all the time … I often can get very grumpy” (Line, B_3).

There was, however, a gendered pattern in how the youngsters described being affected by pressure. Boys perceived themselves as becoming stressed by everything becoming so serious in school, making them restless and leaving them with a feeling of unreasonable expectations. This way, some saw themselves as being more angry and rude compared to usual. It was also boys, like Atle (F_1) for example, who tended to describe themselves as becoming uninspired and disinterested:

> That you should walk around having such big expectations all the time makes me more easily tired of answering in lessons and not actually bothering to do things at school if it becomes a pressure. It’s the exact same thing with sports, if attending training becomes a pressure, I don’t bother to go, because then it’s no fun. It’s the same thing with school … I don’t like that at all. That’s why I get really passive when thinking about it.

Girls, on the other hand, were more inclined to identify the consequences of the pressure of having so much to do in more emotional terms. Thoughts about what needed to be done were seen as inescapable:

> Hege: You know that exact moment when you wake up, and it takes about two minutes before all thoughts flow into your mind. So you lie there under the duvet – and then suddenly everything comes to mind.
>
> Åse: It’s like: Monday French test, Thursday swimming. Those kind of thoughts.
>
> Hege: I’m not able to see any light. Everything is just dark [laughs a little]. You notice that there’s so much going on, it`s so much. (C_4)

Girls also spoke about how they felt like crying as a consequence of being "fed up with tests and getting up in the morning to go school" (Bente, D_3), feeling hopeless and sad, at times feeling incapable of mastering school and worrying about the consequences for poor grades. Feeling overwhelmed in turn could lead to a kind of emotional paralysis, which further increased unhappiness with their situation:

> Ingrid: It is very hard.
>
> Lena: There have been times when I've sat home crying. Because I feel I don't master, feel I have no future.
>
> Ingrid: Yes, it's like that for me as well…For example, yesterday when I was going To … I didn't even know where to start studying for the natural science tests. I just sat there staring in the book .I failed to read anything at all and just …
>
> Astrid: You somehow feel unable to manage everything.
>
> Ingrid: Exactly.
>
> Ellen: Yes, I looked at the homework in math test yesterday that I didn't understand and then tears started falling – because he [the teacher] thinks we should be able to manage, if we don't manage we get comments. And it's like: if we don't manage, why are they giving us comments. That can lead to reduced grades andprevent us from getting in to upper secondary. (F_3)

5.1.16 The consequences of social media

The interdependence with others via social media was perceived by the youngsters as affecting them in various ways. Facebook was, for example, portrayed as a public barometer of popularity through the number of 'likes' obtained on published photographs or comments:

> It's a lot of stress with social media and stuff like that, too. For example, if you have, let's say, a lot of friends on Facebook, and get a lot of likes ... while another doesn't get that, it may seem … it could be sad for the person who needs to observe others, who have so many followers and get so many nice comments. While one [self] may not have it. There is a lot pressure like that. (Stein, G_1)

Furthermore, trying to resist being influenced by peers' presentations of their lives on social media was perceived as difficult, notwithstanding the realization that such presentations were somewhat of a polished version of the reality:

> There is a lot [of pressure] from social media, really, because youngsters spend so much time there. On these social media you don't want to say you are not doing fine. On these social media you say everything that is fine, what you eat and when you look at those photos you feel "everyone is better than me". Even though it's not true. (Jarle, C_1)

Interdependencies on social media did, however, extend beyond those immediately identifiable in the form of friends, peers or family. More precisely, interdependencies on social media meant being exposed to the successful lives of celebrities, models, bloggers and Youtubers all of whom were viewed as having a powerful influence. Despite being acutely aware of the irrationality in letting themselves be influenced by such ideals, they nevertheless were:

> Berit: I think the pressure mostly comes from yourself.
>
> Ida: Yes, what you expect from yourself.
>
> Marte: I certainly think it is the stuff we see in social media. There are celebrities posting pictures from their perfect life. I think many of us think "I want to be like them".
>
> Berit: I often think of those bloggers and girls or Youtubers that are almost the same as us, and you get really tempted to try to because it seems that they achieve quite a lot in life, and you want to be pretty similar to them. (E_1)

The ideal images they witnessed on social media, thus, represented yet another yardstick to measure up against in addition to those prevailing in their real-life everyday context. The contradiction between feeling they had wasted time browsing through social media, such as Instagram, and acknowledging the necessity of distancing themselves because it was difficult not to be affected by it was not lost on the young people. As one group of boys observed:

> Amund: But I feel that when people post photos of muscles and such – I start thinking that they need to brag because they do not feel good enough. So initially I think: "What an idiot!" But, at the same time a thought somewhere inside occurs telling me that maybe I too would like to look like that … I think that's what strikes you.
>
> Jarle: It is hard not to let yourself be influenced.
>
> Vetle: It's a very big problem, a global problem so it is difficult for individuals to do anything about it besides blocking it out.
>
> Jarle: What you need to do is to ignore all that and think that you are good enough.
>
> Vetle: [you] cannot simply ask Kim Kardashian to stop being herself! (C_1)

Youngsters, thus, found themselves constantly balancing the prevailing, unrealistic ideals and norms existing “out there" that was made accessible on social media and the reflexive view that the responsibility for not being caught up in the spiral of striving towards such ideals was their own. In other words, they talked about this balance as a polarization between the society and the individual, which demanded of them, as individual 15-years-olds, a substantial portion of self-restraint.

5.1.17 Growing up in 21st century Norway

Growing up in today’s society was viewed as having significant implications for youngsters` mental health. The accumulation of expectations created pressures that they needed to cope with if they were to move towards fulfilling the ideal image of a 15-year-old. Pressures were an everyday occurrence to a greater or lesser extent and therefore “mental health … it can be tested every single day” (Vetle, C_1). Even among those who did not think they were driving themselves to depression and anxiety, they could see it among their peers. One way in which this was made sense of was in terms of the phrase “perfectionist society”:

> But the fact that the mental health has become poorer does say a lot about the society we live in. But again, you do create your own reality as well ... a perfectionist society. There are some who probably would disagree…who have another opinion. But in my view, that is exactly how it is. It’s “in” [makes quotation marks with her fingers] to perform well. (Toril, G_2)

Some suggested there was an inherent paradox in growing up in a society in which the media encouraged openness to talk more about things such as mental health on the one hand and on the other, perceiving openness about mental health to be taboo:

> Ingrid: No, I don’t think we’ve ever talked about it in class.
> Lena: That’s actually something I feel more generally, that it’s quite a bad climate in this town generally, actually.
> Ellen: Right. I feel it’s taboo talking about it.
> Lena: And then I don’t perceive those needing help to get real help either, because you’re always told that you’re healthy enough to manage this yourself. (F_3)

Mental health issues were related to youngsters’ inner lives and, in particular their thoughts and feelings, which meant that it was possible for them to remain hidden. That way, even if being

aware that peers could struggle "it's very difficult to tell because you can't see what others think" (Monika, G_3). Some youngsters admitted that they tended to say they were doing fine when being asked by teachers even though that was not always the case:

Ulrik: I always answer that everything is fine, even if it isn't, because I don't want to talk to the teachers.

Anders: I give a certain look [demonstrating, group laughs] … Why are they asking how I'm doing? I smile 24/7 because I'm always the person in class who's most alert, you could say … So, I always stand there and just say "Yes! Everything's fine". (B_4)

Others would have preferred that teachers occasionally asked how they were doing, if only to be attentive and show consideration:

Lena: And it's like, they rather should ask, and more generally amongst others as well like peers, ask like: "How are you actually doing?" That does something to you as well.

Ellen: I do think teachers know who is doing well and not, but they may not think … like, I think they observe it, but they don't reflect on it. (F_3)

The quotations above serve to illustrate the ambiguity, as highlighted by the youngsters themselves, between acknowledging the shifting balances in their "inner life" on the one hand and being public about such shifting balances on the other. Put another way, not being willing to disclose what they were really thinking or feeling contributed to maintaining unrealistic assumptions about others in relation to oneself. Being reluctant to reveal what actually was going on inside, or if all was not well, were embedded in the fear of what others might think about them. In this vein, being hesitant was related to avoid being pitied for failing (not being perfect) in some way:

> There are very many people who do not like it when people feel sorry for them. I hate it when people feel sorry for me that way and think that I'm pathetic. It is the worst thing I can imagine. Because then I feel that they are sitting and thinking of me as useless: "Poor her, she can't do it" or "she's no good" so it's likely that many, that they don't want people to feel sorry for them. (Viktoria, C_4)

The tendency for youngsters to discuss the negatives related to inner life when talking about mental health was prominent. When addressing mental health directly, it was frequently in

terms of anxiety and depression, and the notion that many youngsters of their age did struggle mentally. In this regard, there seemed to be a constraining balance emerging related to openness, as struggling with negatives such as anxiety or depression was perceived as being accepted, whilst being open about not doing well was perceived to be more difficult. Both boys and girls recognized that the dimensions related to inner life and, thus, mental health, were various and dynamic, referring to the perceived normality of balancing between the positives and negatives: "everybody has mental health, it's the state you're in. But most associate it [mental health] with something negative, like depression" (Roger, C_2).

Therefore, youngsters advocated a need for openness in order to normalize the feeling it was OK to feel that you were struggling and not always coping:

> I also think a lot of people keep things to themselves because they think that they are the only ones who feel the way they do but, in reality, there are many who feel that same way. If we had been more open … that it's completely normal to feel the way you do, that we opened up and extended normality. (Åse, C_4)

Youngsters tended to refer to the positives of "thriving[5]" (Fillip, A_1), "feeling good about yourself" (Synne, C_3), "being happy with who you are" (Marte, E_1), "accepting yourself" (Sofie, G_3) and having "self- confidence" (Roger, C_2) in order to counterbalance the pressure to strive for perfection. Such positives were, however, not straightforwardly achievable because of the high standard they implied. The difficulties in thriving, for example, were seen thus:

> But it's easier said than done … If you are to thrive, then you should be satisfied with everything you do, or be happy with who you are. And that can be quite difficult. Like being satisfied with all the work you do, the person you are and what you look like That's difficult, like mentally. Unless you are just being yourself, and I don't think anyone is like that. Perfect. (Jarle, C_1)

To some degree, the young people viewed their situation as requiring them to work things through themselves, wrestling with their thoughts and feelings and somehow talking themselves out of negative thoughts through focusing on positive things. For example, Jenny (C_4) said: "…. and think that you are satisfied with yourself, the things that are good about you, the things you like about yourself, then you will be a much more happy person."

[5] The Norwegian verb and noun for "well-.being", as introduced in section 1.3.1

Self-confidence was viewed as being an important dimension of surviving the pressure to be perfect and meet everyone's expectations. Having good self-confidence was associated with "not worrying about the worst things that could happen" (Hans, E_2) and "in a way trust in yourself, and not think about what others think of you" (Tonje, H_1). The boys in the C_2 group addressed self-confidence in the following way:

> Simen: If you have good self-confidence, and you fail, then you still want to try again.
>
> Vegard: It gives positive energy.
>
> Simen: Right! Rather than if you're feeling kind of depressed or don't have as good mental health, then it's easy to give up.

Even though these enabling dimensions mentioned tended to be ascribed to themselves as individuals, both boys and girls were aware of them as dynamic and interdependent through the various relationships they found themselves within. This meant that positives such as trusting yourself, thriving or accepting yourself were related to "Being surrounded by people you can trust in" (Kine, G_3).

In this vein, important relationships were identified as a web of interdependencies, involving parents and family, teachers, class peers, coaches and teammates. However, relationships to teachers and parents were discussed as being challenging at times due to uncertainty about what adults would accept and recognize as being real problems, hence being prone to deemphasize their issues. Therefore, within the web of relations mentioned, it was the significance of having good friends that was most prominent and was considered to be most important, as Stein (G_1) put it: "To have a good friend means everything. They support you when you feel troubled. Someone you can hang with, who can talk to you. Everyone needs to have a good friend". Friends were spoken of as providing them with space in which they could be their true selves, without having to be concerned about how they appeared to others – or whether the problems they were dealing with were deemed big or small: "And sometimes you need to complain to someone about small things, other times it`s about bigger things. And either way, it's important to have someone who can listen to you, and support you." (Linn, G_2)

The findings presented thus far have shed light upon perceptions and experiences of being 15, and the tension-balances attached to the process towards adult life embedded in awareness of themselves as "a human being among other human beings" within webs of interdependencies.

Interdependencies of which PE also is a part.

5.2 Youngsters' perceptions of physical education

In this section, how youngsters perceived and experienced PE is explored, especially in terms of the processes involved in the subject. Because their perceptions and experiences are shaped by various interdependencies shifting in terms of dynamic balances rather than static opposites, I analyze the major processes identified as having consequences for the youngsters' mental health. The first process unpacked relates to PE as offering a context for mental refreshment, especially by providing an arena for social (inter)actions, which contrasted strongly with the rest of the school day. The second process revealed was PE as a site for evaluation of oneself and others through the practice of constant comparison.

5.2.1 PE as mental refreshment

Conceptualizing PE as process for mental refreshment or catharsis pivoted, to some degree, on its relation to the rest of the school day, as PE was perceived to stand out as markedly different from the academic subjects taught in the classroom, not least by providing the youngsters with opportunities to move, speak and socialize. In this way, PE was serving as a contrast to their more routinized, teacher-led, individualized academic school lives, during which sitting still for long periods of time often without speaking was a prominent experience. Conceptualizing PE as process for mental refreshment or catharsis also centred on its informal nature as affording an arena for social interaction within the school day, in which social bonds and interdependencies were perceived as being prominent processes, within and across existing groups. In this way, PE was viewed as offering opportunities to know their peers better and in a different way, which could spill over beyond PE.

PE as mental refreshment did, however, include experientially mixed categories. Letting-off steam, for example, could be experienced as pleasurable by some but could among others also give rise to feeling overrun and undermined. PE previously perceived as mentally refreshing could shift to be mentally restraining. PE as mental refreshment is dynamic and interdependent. In the section that follows, I delineate in more detail the processes involved in order for PE to offer mental refreshment.

5.2.2 Enjoying the physicality of PE

In general, PE was, for most youngsters, spontaneously introduced as an enjoyable – for many, the most enjoyable – school subject, due to the intrinsic value of simply getting to move. There was a gender dimension to describing PE spontaneously, however. It was particularly boys, and especially those engaging with sports and physical activities beyond school, who were eager to point to PE as "the most enjoyable subject during the week" (Magne, C_2). They perceived PE as making the school day somehow brighter, simply by providing them with the opportunity to use their bodies and be active – and movement in itself gave rise to positive feelings, as pointed out by Trond (F_1): "To move is simply lovely". Furthermore, it was mainly the boys, who viewed PE as enjoyable and pleasurable in its own right as it substituted for the play experience and "joy of movement" they felt that they were missing out on as young people in the everyday school life. In this respect, Endre (B_3) addressed the enjoyment of moving in PE as in the following: "It's fun. Because when you were little, then playing and running around was fun, right?"

Overall, the girls were typically less likely than boys to speak spontaneously of enjoyment in PE, being more likely to describe it in more nuanced, neutral and sometimes negative terms, covering the spectrum from "It's OK, I guess" (Sofie,G_3) to perceiving it to be most enjoyable "when it's over" (Sanna,A_3). While boys were more likely to value PE unconditionally, girls tended to present more conditional reservations often rooted in perceptions and experiences related to PE, such as having issues with body image, feelings of competence, comfort with the type of activity on offer in PE, and perceptions related to class climate. Astrid (F_3), who said that she perceived PE to be one of the worst lessons, for example, related her reluctance to the changing room: "Because I don't want to change, I always come to school wearing training clothes, in a way, I don't want to change there". Others, like Sanna (A_3), pointed to being physical in the presence of others: "and that isn't something everyone likes, to show themselves in front of others when you are to exercise and such". Although girls appreciated the opportunity to be physically active as a variation from sitting still at the school desk, they tended to talk more about the positive feelings movement led to following the activities themselves, as described by Mette (A_2): "You feel much better about yourself, in a way. Like, you feel you`ve done something useful". Furthermore, girls, as illustrated in the extract below, considered boys to enjoy PE more specifically because of its physical nature:

> Mette: Maybe it's a little like, that it`s a physical subject in a way, you don't have to sit still and such.

Kristin: Most boys tend not to like such theoretical subjects generally. That way, when they are allowed to move a little.

Mette: They think that's fun. (A_2)

Notably, in this vein, boys shared the impression that they seemed to enjoy PE more due to enjoying strenuous activity and not shying away from body contact.

5.2.3 Contrasting PE with the rest of the school day

Beyond the differences that emerged in their spontaneous descriptions, both boys and girls were keen to describe PE as standing out positively by contrasting it with classroom subjects. PE was thus viewed to offer something to look forward to on the grounds that it represented something different and served as a "time-out" from the ordinary school day, which typically was associated with sitting still listening to teachers talk and doing theoretical tasks. In this regard, Elin's (D_1) consideration of PE serves to illustrate a general view held by the youngsters: "I do think PE is a little twist in the everyday, in a way. It makes the day a little easier, simply because you lose an hour of theory". Being provided with opportunities to move around, use the body and be active as opposed to sitting still by their desks was a reoccurring theme, whether they perceived themselves to enjoy PE or not. In this vein, Bente (D_3) asserted that there was everything to like about PE as it meant being free from the school desk. For the same reason, boys made the point that PE was worthwhile despite rather than because of itself, as clearly addressed by the boys in B_2:

Mikkel: I get to move around, I get to be active.

Børge: There is no desk you sit by and just.

Fredrik: Even if it isn`t a sport that I like, it`s still more fun than …like, even if it [PE] involves running round in circle, it is better than sitting behind a desk – being bored half to death.

The point made by Fredrik (B_2) was supported across groups, namely that even though PE was not always fun, it did offer activity and motion as a variation from theory and sitting staring at a blackboard. Consequently, PE was thus, frequently valued by the youngsters for what is was not, that is, sitting still and theoretical, as much as what it actually was in itself.

For some students the contrast between PE and other subjects – and, by extension, the contribution of PE to the way they experienced school in particular, as well as their mental

health more generally – was more particularly a contrast between doing and thinking: "No, PE is fun because it's not up here (pointing the finger to his head) it`s more like you do things, right. Move" (Endre, B_3). In this vein PE was seen as providing them with a "space to breathe" after the intensity of other lessons as elaborated by the girls in G_2:

Linn: If you come from a natural science lesson, and then it's writing lesson so you sit and write as if your life depends on it, and are supposed to learn and learn and learn for an hour. Then you get to social science and cram numbers and names and like work, work, work … And then you come to PE and it's like: "OK, we could play some basketball today" [saying this with a cheerful voice].

Kine: You do look very forward to PE.

Hence, getting a break from purely theoretical subjects and getting to think about something different, indicates that PE was valued as physical recreation rather than physical education per se. Ironically perhaps, this contrast between doing and thinking, or rather the recreational benefits from PE, was seen to bring with it a benefit of thinking for the academic lessons. Both boys and girls recognized PE as leading to positive, cognitive benefits, including feeling "more awake" (Gine, F_4) and energized: "You get a little energized and happy and maybe put down a little more effort" (Øyvind, F2). In this way, being active during the school day (in PE, for example) was seen as having positive consequences for cognitive functioning in terms of being good for the brain (Elin, D_1) and a corresponding ability to concentrate: "It makes things a little easier, because you feel more awake and I feel like I have more energy and more concentration after a PE lesson than I have if I had been sitting reading" (Berit, E_1).

PE was also viewed as positively contrasting with the rest of the school because it was more worry-free (than academic lessons) due to fewer cognitive and theoretical demands: "It is not a subject with tests that you worry about because you haven't done your homework, in a way" (Tone, A_3). In this vein, PE was described as "relaxing, as opposed to ordinary school" (Tor, E_2), the one aspect of the school day where "[you] get to relax, mentally at least" (Rune, D_4) precisely because it is experienced as an alternative to work, work, work as introduced by Linn (G_2).

It was, however, not always the case that it was associated with mental relaxation. On the contrary, and often alluded to by girls, PE, in accordance with school generally was, as

illustrated by the girls in C_4 below, seen as having changed during the years in secondary school, due to the increasing focus upon grades:

> Hege: It gets more serious, so you kind of have to practice. It's not a subject where you simply can relax.
>
> Viktoria: I perceive it to be a big difference from 8th, 9th to 10th [grade]. Earlier…PE was more like a time out from school, and I know of several who have talked to their parents like: "Should we go for a run now, so you can improve your PE grade?" You have to practice as much on your PE grade as in other subjects.

In this vein, the shift from having fun in PE towards performance in order to get a good grade was seen as robbing them from the time-out and fun PE used to represent, in replacement of adding pressure in the form of having to work hard, perform and be good:

> When I think about PE, I think that you should at least be in physical activity, but still have fun. And when you are physically active I feel that you just are being pressured. I feel that you only should become tired … you are supposed to become good. You should be good, you aren't supposed to have fun. (Ellen, F_3).

Consequently, for some, the development from worry-free enjoyment towards performance and being good enough during the years of secondary schooling had made them aware of their shortcomings. This awareness had, in turn, led them to start to dread having PE instead of looking forward to it:

> But when we got to secondary school I felt that, my effort wasn't or it wasn't good enough when I tried. Then I started to, I dreaded quite a bit having PE because I didn't perceive it to be any fun anymore. (Mia, E_3).

In effect, the perceived difference between PE and the rest of the school day diminished over time as grading was introduced. In this way worries about performance, albeit in a different form, could be experienced such that worries permeated their entire school lives.

On the other hand, however, those struggling to conform to the academic, theoretical school life and who did not worry about their ability to perform in PE, did perceive PE to offer them "the best from two worlds", so to speak. More precisely, they considered PE to contrast the rest of the school day in terms of being rewarded (by grade) for behaviours otherwise being

unacceptable and devalued. This was brought clear by the boys in B_2 when discussing how PE differed from other subjects in terms of discipline and strictness

Oskar: When we sit in a math lesson, and if we talk together, immediately get the clear message: "Keep quiet".

Fredrik: While here [in PE] we can just play and yell and shout and …

Mikkel: Still get a good grade.

In this way PE was viewed as being an important arena within school in terms of offering a subject for everyone, meaning that those struggling theoretically and whose abilities were physical, were provided with an opportunity to demonstrate their "worth", as observed by Sanna (A_3):"That way it isn't just difficult all the time here [at school], that you feel there's nothing you master."

The informal nature of PE, as alluded to above by the boys in B_2, was viewed as meeting the need to "unwind" by having the opportunity to act spontaneously without the normal classroom constraints. Thus, whether enjoyable in its own right or not, PE was viewed (by boys, in particular) as in some way cathartic[6] – an opportunity to "let off steam" and be energetic. The perceived tedium of much of the school day alongside the necessity of remaining relatively still in classroom lessons, meant that students typically described feeling in need of mental refreshment, renewal or recreation through PE: "By lunchtime, and if we aren't to have PE that day, we simply snap …Because we sit still all the time" (Jens, G_4). The girls in H_1 pointed to the restlessness, somewhat akin to tension, building up during the school day due to the need to move:

Wenche: You do in a way, get out very much energy in PE.

Moderator: OK?

Wenche: Instead of just sitting a whole school day.

Laila: And just sit on the bench, then you get like really restless and just: "I have to do something, I have to do something".

This individual restlessness tended to affect the class both in terms of having difficulties in concentrating upon what the teachers were lecturing and, consequently, an uneasiness and

[6] A purging akin to – what Elias and Dunning (2008) described as "a controlled de-controlling of the emotions" – providing psychological relief in a socially acceptable 'civilized' form through the open expression of strong emotions.

tension spreading in class as those still able to concentrate felt distracted by those who had lost focus. This tended to erode the learning climate for everyone. In the sense of easing tension building up in the classroom and restoring calmness in class, PE, in the eyes of many, and especially amongst boys, was perceived to be what Petter (H_2) referred to as "far much better than ordinary school" and was considered to serve as much a collective as individual purpose with regard to the rest of the school day.

5.2.4 The significance of competence and mastery

Whether PE was experienced positively in its own right or not often appeared at least partially dependent on perceptions of mastery: "If you have that feeling of mastery. If you have mastered something in PE, then of course, you have that good feeling inside. Then you may be more inclined to be at school" (Fillip, A_1). Both boys and girls tended to associate fun with the aforementioned mastery, and feeling mastery was in turn frequently associated with being good. This meant that PE was not straightforwardly categorized as fun or not. Rather, it was shifting in relation to whether they felt good in and mastered the activities on offer, as evident in Ingvild`s ($C_4$) reflection: "You often perceive the things you are good at to be fun. Whilst when there`s something you don`t master – you feel pretty bad."

As pupils differed in terms of competency, interests and by extension perception of what actually provided them with fun and excitement, their contrasting views about similar activities became evident as exemplified in the groups quoted from school C, when discussing gymnastics in PE:

> Simen: You have to be skilled for that [gymnastics] to be fun.
>
> Magne: I don't perceive it to be particularly exciting. Like it's no competition in it compared to orienteering or floor ball, for example … I don't perceive it to be as exciting nor motivating as everything else.
>
> Simen: Like if I hadn`t been assessed in gymnastics I wouldn`t have bothered to be active in those lessons, because I genuinely think it's dead boring. (C_2)

5.2.4 The significance of competition

A girls' group at the same school, however, engaging with gymnastics and dance in leisure, talked about hating PE for mainly entailing the dimensions the boys cited above perceived gymnastics to lack, namely competition and ball games. Consequently, they had come to dislike PE because they did not perceive the teacher to respect what they were interested in and were

good at. Thus, the activities most frequently on offer in PE, had led them to disengage and appear non-sporty in PE:

Lone: We aren't active within the right categories!

Anne: Right! We have for example football and cannonball. And I'm not good at that, or rather, what I'm good in … it's never a theme in PE, so what I'm good at, I ever get to show. (C_3)

The extracts from these two groups are illustrative of the reciprocal workings of enjoyment and excitement. Boys in particular, but also some girls, who were engaged with sports in leisure, appeared to enjoy competition and talked about being "carried away" by excitement and a prominent desire to win. Sander (B_5) gave the following description of the latter:

> It's just a PE lesson, you will not win trophies for winning ... Somehow, those in the class, they take it as I do too, we take it as it is the Champions League, something important. But it's not really important. When we come to the changing room then we do not care. It's just a PE lesson.

It was boys in particular who talked about the importance of competing and winning to ensure the rest of the day would be good, hence viewing the mental refreshment to extend beyond the PE lesson. In this regard, they were inclined to make activities, otherwise perceived uninspiring and boring, more exciting by making it a competition: "If it's like two together, you don't mind doing one push up more than the other, in away" (Peder, G_4). In relation to this, it was class peers' prominent competitive instinct that most frequently was identified as constraining and reducing the enjoyment for the less competitive, and amongst those most typically girls. The girls in D_1 explained how the enjoyment of and engagement in PE tended to be eroded by competitive peers:

Elin: Because they tend to become a little high and really grumpy and things like that. And it, it does affect you a little when you are being yelled at.

Andrea: You do in away become a little afraid of really participating. You become afraid of doing mistakes, in away.

5.2.6 The significance of the content and delivery of PE

The differing views implied that although PE undoubtedly was perceived as contrasting with the rest of the school day, it did not necessarily mean that it always served as a mentally

refreshing time-out for all. Rather, by providing enjoyment and catharsis for some, others felt they were prevented from experiencing it that way. Thus, the relational aspects within PE played a prominent role. The differing views and perceptions upon activities on offer and what dimensions therein that served students with mental refreshment were recognized as being unavoidable due to the diversity within PE. Except from the common characteristic of being 10th graders, the youngsters were keen to point out that everyone differed, had different interests and were good at different things. On these grounds, they emphasized the importance of varied content in PE, viewing PE as something general in terms of liking or disliking PE, or being good or bad in PE, was being misleading. Bård (G_1) exemplified the point thus:

> Some students who do rather bad in certain things, like football, for example … They often just stand watching. And maybe they just have a bad relationship to corner football. You can`t just assume that they don't like PE. Because it depends upon who that person is, what that person has done or not done before.

The majority of youngsters, across sportiness and gender, did perceive PE to be "too short and too little" in relation to hours spent in school. Whether discussing positives or negatives about PE, they nevertheless at some point in time during the interviews talked about the need for more PE, as summarized by Hege (C_4): "I think we should have had more PE. We haven't talked about that [in the interview]. That we should have more". Students in the sample had one (in some schools two) lessons of PE a week, something pointed to as being "completely paradoxical" when seeing the public claim that youngsters need to be more physically active in relation to that school is still sitting and offering little PE. Hence, the youngsters were keen to emphasize that the little time available was somewhat precious to them. On this notion, PE teachers were perceived to enable or constrain opportunities for enjoyment and motion because it was they who were positioned to plan and organize PE. Sometimes, as the mixed-gender group quoted below illustrate, they did not perceive their teacher to take this responsibility sufficiently seriously:

> Trude: Because it's just like the PE teachers don't know what to do in PE.
>
> Anders: It's like they don't bother
>
> Trude: They just plan something people normally like. (B_4)

In this vein, Trude added:

> It would have been a lot more fun having like real PE lessons. Because that thing about football and basketball aren't, it isn't even anything like real PE. It's just something ... a sport we do for several hours, and that's it!

"Real PE" was discussed as providing them with opportunity to be in movement with such an intensity that they got sweaty, such as in running, playing or even strength-training as sport tended to provide movement for some, more precisely dominating peers, and thus served to provide extra activity for those already active rather than engaging those otherwise not active.

Beyond the B_4 group, youngsters held the common view that PE should be organized to ensure that they got to be in actual activity as school in general meant sitting still and listening to teachers talking. Put another way, the value for the young people was in terms of maximizing the contrast PE made to the school day through spending as much time possible being in activity and movement. Similarly, teachers who talked too much and intervened to explain or instruct tended to be perceived as wasting valuable time: "Knut has a tendency to chatter a lesson away. Then it may take a while before we get to do what we actually are supposed to do, and then someone starts joking around and then even more time passes" (Frank, E_2).

The desire to spend as much time possible being in PA was for example the reason why the boys in C_2 enjoyed swimming lessons:

> Truls: Swimming in fact, because then there`s more PA. In PE there`s mainly talk, whilst in swimming we actually swim most of the time.
>
> Håvard: Exactly!

Nonetheless, when considering how PE had developed during the years of secondary schooling, a pattern emerged in which PE tended to be viewed as repetitive and to some extent monotonous with regard to activities presented. In that sense, even if representing something different within the school day, some addressed PE as becoming somewhat routinized:

> Kine: We practically do the same things over and over. We play floor ball, then we play basketball and when summer comes, we play volleyball.
>
> Linn: And then the teacher says: "to become competent you need to repeat". OK, we have repeated for three years now, so maybe it's about time to change. (G_2)

A solution to the latter was, as the youngsters perceived it, to involve the students more when planning PE. This was suggested for two reasons. First, because regardless of gender, competency and interests there was an overall agreement that it would be utopian both from the PE teachers' perspective and from the perspective of the students, to expect everyone to enjoy

and engage in every activity on offer. This was acknowledged by the mixed-gender group from school B:

> Stine: For example, today we had football [in PE]. I don't like football, but others did like it. Many liked it, right. So sometimes you have to sacrifice … It's the same in social science, it isn't like my dream social science lesson would have been.
>
> Oda: Right, because everyone doesn't like the same, so ...
>
> Endre [sighing]: Just talk about second world war.
>
> Stine: We can't actually have that … Like that everyone thrives. It isn't doable. (B_3)

Precisely because it was not possible for everyone to like or enjoy the same, ensuring variation within PE was seen to be of major importance in order to include everyone in activities they perceived to be enjoyable at some point in time. The latter was alluded to by Stig (B_2):

> Then they could have asked us: "What would you like to do in PE?" Noted down suggestions, and then vary; one lesson with that another lesson with something else. That way everyone gets to engage with something they like. So there is more equity, everyone gets to participate in everything.

Second, involving students more in planning would, according to the youngsters, ensure more age-appropriate activities that reflected what 15–16-year-olds enjoy and have interest in, rather than those "simple, old things like football, orienteering, strength training and such" (Jonas, F_1). Some degree of frustration was attached to not being able to suggest alternatives: "It's the teacher who decides, it's the teacher who decides, it's the teacher who decides. It's nothing like, we don't get to come up with suggestions, for example" (Tonje, H_1).

Once again, the youngsters were clear that PE was entirely dependent upon the teacher. As illustrated in the quotations above, it was the PE teacher who decided the content, and, consequently therefore, their enjoyment of PE. On what grounds PE teachers chose or decided content was, however, unclear to the youngsters. Some perceived that PE teachers chose activities based upon what the teachers themselves seemed to like and know, frequently referred to as "he prefers" or "she loves". Others perceived PE teachers to choose activities based upon what they considered the students to need in order to improve physically. In other words, making decisions on behalf of their students what was perceived to be for the students` own good. The latter was commented upon by Bente (D_3): "Our teacher says we need to strengthen our core. It's a thing he has, and it's typical him to have strength training". On this specific

occasion the boys' group from the same class shared this view, requesting more varied PE on the grounds that they did that kind of exercise in leisure.

For the 15-year-olds in this study, PE teachers were also viewed to be a crucial dimension of classroom climate insofar as their practices could significantly influence the students' predispositions. Having a PE teacher who was engaged in the activities as well as cheering the students rather than standing on the sideline shouting and correcting mistakes made it easier for the students to engage and enjoy. A PE teacher that managed to balance authority with a little playfulness was perceived to make PE enjoyable, taking the edge off the seriousness related to performance, so to speak. In this regard, the girls in G_2 pointed to their own PE teacher to illustrate what a good PE teacher was like:

> Linn: If we have gymnastics, then he takes a backflip and stands on his hands and explains the activities, in a way. He's like awesome, in a way … We respect him.
>
> Toril: Right. And it's much easier doing your best in lessons when you respect the teacher.
>
> Vera: He jokes a little as well. That makes it easier for us not to be too serious, I feel.

In this way, the teacher was associated with the process of promoting or inhibiting PE as a mentally refreshing arena, with every possibility to influence the various dimensions involved.

All-in-all, as the youngsters' transition through secondary school, they value that they are moving closer to being adult. Seemingly, school life becomes more routinized and serious with age and the youngsters perceive themselves to be constrained by tests, individualized classroom discipline with little influence upon their everyday life within school. PE, thus serve a valuable role within the school figuration in the sense that it represents less strict rules, opportunities to move and have fun and serve as mental refreshment in an otherwise academic and stressful school life. However, and to some extent in relation to the challenge addressed in Chapter 5.1 in balancing between being a child and being an adult, they addressed the child-like need for enjoyment through play whilst at the same time wanting to be more involved in their own PE process in terms of being acknowledged to be older.

One particular feature of PE, which also served to contrast the rest of the school day and enhance mental refreshment was that it provided considerably better possibilities than academic lessons for important social interaction and socializing due to its more informal nature. The

opportunity PE provided to "talk and have fun even if we are being active" (Mette, A_2) because it did not have the routinized constraint towards quietness that characterized other academic subjects, surfaced across groups and schools.

5.2.7 PE as an arena for social interaction

Both boys and girls suggested that the informal nature of PE, not experienced elsewhere in the curriculum, could strengthen and reinforce social bonds both within already existing friendship groups as well as across their class more broadly. When considering what aspects of PE they appreciated the most, the social dimension – sociability – was prominent. There were, however, differing views about the type of activities facilitating social interactions and sociability, dependent again upon competency and preferences. Whereas the boys in D_2 specifically pointed to gymnastics as a bad activity due to being too technically demanding and individualized and, hence, preventing them from enjoying the social side to PE, the boys in E_4 value gymnastics (specifically, in contrast to football) precisely because it provided more fun being individual and provided them with the opportunity to engage unrestrictedly and on their own terms.

The social aspect was viewed as central to the classroom climate in PE – in other words, the prevailing mood in PE lessons – and this had an impact on how the activities presented were perceived:

> Rune: It does depend upon the environment in class, how the whole class behaves.
>
> Karsten: It's not like all of a sudden half the class is negative to what we are doing, while the other half just joins in, in a way. So, the attitude in class does have some impact on what we are doing.
>
> Inge: Right, it does spread if there's one who is negative. (D_4)

Playing and working in teams was something frequently talked positively about due to the enjoyment of doing things together as a group or class, generating a positive atmosphere. In this vein, predispositions towards an activity could shift by adding a cooperative dimension, even if it entailed competition. Competition was thus seen to be enjoyable across gender and competency if it took place within a less serious context, which typically meant neutralizing differences in competency; in other words, if balancing the potential polarization of abilities within teams. As Øyvind (F_2) explained, a boring activity like relay could turn into something mutually enjoyable by adding a little humour:

> Like, instead of running with a stick in your hand back and forth between two points. Because that speaks for itself, that's no fun … But, like running with a stick in your hand with someone on your back, for example, then it suddenly does become more fun … and then it's teamwork.

Cooperation and teamwork in PE were especially liked because they served to counterbalance the stress associated with individual activities, both within and beyond PE. This counterbalance seemed to be particularly important to girls, and especially girls who were not too enthusiastic about PE. By focusing upon team play and teamwork, PE could serve to reduce tension and offer relaxation within an otherwise stressful period in school life:

> And it may be too much to ask, but when the teachers realize that we stress a lot, both at home and at school, then maybe PE could be more focused on team play and teamwork, so that you feel you have some interaction. That you're not alone. (Jenny, C_4)

This way, social interaction within PE that served to loosened up tension and restraints both individually and relationally was seen as having consequences beyond PE. Getting together in a setting that differed from the classroom, being in activity together and laughing did "bring everyone closer" (Bård, G_1). Being grouped together with classmates they normally didn't hang out with could make them feel safer in class on the grounds that "you know that people you thought were completely different from you actually are quite more alike you than you thought they were. That way it does change the climate" (Jenny, C_4).

The pleasure of team-based activities and competition was not without reservations, however, with the main one being related to differences in competency. Traditional ball games, such as football and basketball, were used as typical examples of dissenting views about team-based activities. The complex and multiple dimensions related to such activities became clear in the discussions that developed. From the perspective of the less competent and competitive, the dominant and often rude behaviour of the competitive and competent boys were the most prominent issue. In this context, they felt overrun and reluctant to participate:

> For example, there are many playing basketball, and they want to show off and be good. And they don't really show much consideration. Just plunging over the course and suddenly they have scored …. I think that is some of the reason that I am not that happy

> with ball sports. That you don't quite manage to participate because the boys, or at least some of them, are so violent. (Nora, B_5)

This quotation serves to illustrate experiences across schools and groups, and were reflected in expressions such as "like you just stand there, because you think that "I'll never get the ball anyway" (Randi, D_3) and "It's a lot of in a way demeaning comments. And in a way bad losers and bad winners" (Elisabet, H_1). The dynamics emerging from such activities within the PE context sometimes appeared to reduce the youngsters' enjoyment of doing particular activities in PE compared to when doing the same activity in another context, such as leisure-time:

> Trude: When we play basketball, then I don't bother. I can't stand basketball when it is together with the class.
>
> Ulrik: That's like me and football. When we have football, I hate football in PE. I can play a little bit like at school with friends, that's a little fun. (B_4)

The rude and dominant behaviours accompanying the excitement of some thus served to erode the social nature of PE and affect the classroom climate negatively. Interestingly, when discussed from the perspective of those competent and competitive, some pointed to the frustration they felt when classmates were reluctant to do their part leaving them with the responsibility for the game:

> For example, when you play football, then you are on a team, and that team doesn't bother to do anything. They don't make an effort, then it's bad for you. You have to control the team, and if you lose the ball, it's your fault and that's how it is. (Stig, B_2)

Even demeaning comments could have a reciprocal function, as taking responsibility and keep the game flowing tended to provoke negative evaluation from those less competent and competitive: "Others can easily get mad at you, because they think that 'He`s only obsessed about winning. His ego'. It's not fun to hear that you are ego" (Geir, F_1). Thus, frustrations emerging from such activities seemed reciprocally related. Nevertheless, they did not necessarily enhance the classroom climate even though they were team-based because of the polarization in competence between the pupils involved.

It was evident that even with PE, games can generate intense emotions similar to those generated on the sport arena in which the competent and competitive youngsters forget that it is only a PE activity:

Erik: Like some might feel that they have to perform ... otherwise you'll be yelled at. But it's just that we become engaged … It's not that important, in a way, if we lose. It's not the end of the world.

Martin: Even though there and then, it is. But like afterwards, you find out there are more important things. (A_1)

Based upon the experiences alluded to above, the youngsters themselves, regardless of gender and competency, emphasized the positive aspects of less traditional activities. These suggestions varied among the schools, but were common in the sense that they represented activities no one was particularly good in and, thus, facilitated engagement on more equal terms. This prevented pupils from feeling overrun as well as being positioned to overrun. The positive aspects were rooted in the unrestrained atmosphere it led to when everyone could and dared to join in. The girls in the A_3 group, who did not perceive themselves to be categorically enthusiastic about PE, described how "Stickball" could serve to exemplify the latter:

Kari: I don't know why, it's just great fun. Love it. Loads of fun.

Tone: Everyone runs. Everyone moves, and it's fun in a way. It's just play.

Kari: It's the adrenaline you get by doing it. By avoiding being out.

Tone: We get really excited and just "Yes, we shall make it". You feel everything is going well, I was to say.

In this way, PE, especially when affording less traditional activities were perceived as providing them with the opportunity to know their class mates in a more authentic way: "You see a little more of people's personalities when we have PE, because there isn't any blue print, in a way. You are what you are" (Linn, G_2). Somewhat ironically, perhaps, it was being seen as "what you are" that made the public nature of PE enabling for some and constraining for others, as will be discussed below. Taken together, and seen in relation to the rest of the school day, PE was viewed as having the potential to make up for the strict and individualized atmosphere characterizing academic classroom-based lessons.

5.2.8 PE as a site for constant comparison

One particularly significant aspect of PE – for those pupils who liked it as well as those who did not – was its public nature. Within the ordinary classroom setting, they were better positioned to control how they appeared and what they revealed [in telling grades or raising

hand to answer questions, for example]. In PE, however, the differences become visible through the body and the competence. Grade was also being based upon the visible, whether being graded by performance, effort, attitude or fair play. Vetle (C_1) observed: “When you are to show an effort in PE, you do get exposed to your strong and weak sides. And I think that becomes really evident in PE”. The main challenge was thus rooted in the diversity of students attending PE:

> Didrik: It’s difficult.
>
> Iver: I think the problem is that you mix those who don`t have sporting background with those who do have sporting background ….
>
> Iver [continues]: and when they, immediately when that happens they do feel the pressure. But you kind of can`t separate or make two groups; those who are good in PE and those who are not good in PE. I don`t think that would have worked out. (C_1)

Being good in PE was associated with being good in sport, more specifically standing out by being capable of combining high performance and high effort. For those who were good, the public nature of PE was viewed as an opportunity to demonstrate prowess: “If you are good in PE, it is something all notice, since everyone is present…everyone is present and watching” (Harald, A_4). PE was seen as providing a space where those who were good could blossom. Compared to other subjects, although they knew of each other’s competency and performances, they were not necessarily witnessing it by observing. For those who were not good, however, the public nature of PE was viewed as an opportunity to expose their shortcomings:

> I’ve never had much motivation for PE anyway. Because I don’t like that people are able to look at me when I do things … There are occasions when I manage to try. But sometimes it’s just actually really disgusting, I think. To be around those in class, for them to see that you aren’t as able, or are as strong as they are and can’t do everything like them. (Mona, B_1)

It was apparent that the youngsters viewed sport as a significant source of social status in Norwegian society, in particular – status that brought with it something akin to symbolic capital. Furthermore, youngsters perceived status as not only a good thing in its own right, but also something that generated and sustained social connections that went beyond PE. In other words, it gave rise to social capital. Two girls in B_1, who did not perceive themselves particularly

enthusiastic nor good in PE, talked about the symbolic and social capital of sport and being sporty in the following way:

> Trine: I think it's a little like if you're good in one sport … That's most likely football or something. And you are good and run and have good coordination and endurance (laughs a little) Then it's easier for you to be good in other sports as well, as well, like basketball and handball. Even though it's very different … Even if you might be really bad, you tend to be looked at as better for some reason. Even if you are as bad. It's very strange.
>
> Mona: It's about status. Like, if you have high status in something, it kind of follows you in everything else.

Thus, being good at sport was seen as having multiple personal and social pay-offs. Being good in PE was, according to the boys in E_2, associated with the ideal-type of sporty boys being presented as tough, cool and muscular in media. That way, people know about you and considered you to be fit:

> Hans: You always want to be teamed up with that person
>
> Tor: You may be a model to many.

The degree of social status and its transferability into the rest of youngsters' lives appeared closely related to the form of sport youngsters were good at:

> Ingrid: If you play handball or football, then you have …
>
> Ellen: Then you have status.
>
> Ingrid: Then you immediately have status as popular. (F_3)

The major national Norwegian team games were perceived as possessing the greatest status and, by extension, transferable symbolic capital that generated feelings of being accepted and well liked: "We can be characterized as popular, because we are handball girls, at least were!" (Toril, G_2). In relation to PE, it was recognized that having that particular sporting background brought advantages similar to that described above:

> But you could say that we're quite versatile. Since we're OK in ball games … Since you do get endurance and strength training in the things we engage with in leisure as well. That makes us quite versatile. (Toril, G_2)

Unsurprisingly, therefore, students who saw themselves as lacking the necessary sporting competence were far more likely to perceive PE in negative terms and as potentially damaging for their self-esteem and social status, as well as stressful: “If you feel someone is better than you, and you do your best and it still isn’t good enough … that feels bad” (Trygve, E_4). Thus, not being and feeling competent in sporting terms tended to erode self-esteem.

The public nature of PE was, thus, considered to enable those who were competent to develop symbolic and social capital, while in comparison constraining those less competent to appear and feel inferior. In this vein, the balance between being reluctant to expose themselves in PE on the one side, but nevertheless wanting to be involved and visible was brought clear by girls in some of the discussions that took place. This was typically related to the perception of being incompetent or “bad” in ball sports, something brought to attention by Mari’s (E_3) experience of football in PE:

> You feel bad. That you don’t manage to do what they do. You feel like being kind of stigmatized, that they are good and you are bad: “Then we pass the ball to those who are good and you just stand there on one way or the other”. Even if they maybe don’t mean it like that, they don’t really see you. Because you may not understand nor manage. You really wish to – but then you just become invisible in a way.

Reluctance to expose and engage appeared to develop in a somewhat self-reinforcing spiral, namely that in being visible (exposed) in terms of lack of skills one had a feeling of being overseen and becoming invisible, which restricted oneself from engaging further. Trine (B_1), who revealed that she had found a strategy to participate without engaging, advocated as follows:

> I just stand on the court and just: “Ok, now they run over there. Ok, fine, then I’ll run a little here so it appears as if I’m in”. But without actually being in, active, I don’t do my best. Because I know that, yes, they won’t notice whether I do my best, because it’s not that different.

Ironically, strategies like the one Mari had chosen, seemingly served to reinforce the active and sporty boys’ tendency to overlook those less engaged within that same class. This led them to view lack of effort to actually be lack of interest and a negative attitude:

> Børge: They don’t like it!
>
> Ulf: It doesn’t interest them. (B_2)

Thus, views about what apparent lack of engagement actually signified tended to differ according to the position the youngsters found themselves in, something that became evident in all groups, whether unilaterally representing the "passive" ones or the "active" ones. In some groups, however, contrasting views about where responsibility lay with regard to engaging were prominent. The girls in G_3, who were rather neutral in their description of their own competence in and enjoyment of PE, discussed the balance between being involved by others and involving oneself:

> Monika: You can handle things if you try, everyone handles something if they try, if they make an effort to try something or master something, it is possible.
>
> Sofie: But that's exactly what makes it difficult to make an effort to try, when those who are good never pass you the ball in a way, then you never get the chance to try and show that you're capable.
>
> Monika: Ok. If you aren't provided with any opportunity, it does become difficult. But the very instant you get an opportunity to try it becomes much more fun because then you get to be involved more.

Although it tended to be the ball games that most regularly were the subject of discussions when exemplifying the significance of competency, there were other individual activities, like gymnastics, that were highlighted to exemplify as well. Regardless of the type of activity, it was the actual or perceived competency in relation to classmates that seemed to be decisive for whether or not the experience was seen to be good or otherwise. In other words, perceptions of the varying activities and one's own competency within these activities were dependent upon whether they were one out of few who did not have the required competence. Stian (E_4), who was not particularly enthusiastic about PE shared his experience from running intervals in PE:

> … the PE teacher said we were supposed to get in good shape with it, but I didn`t get in especially good shape because the only thing I did was coming down again [to the starting point] too late and such, because it's so boring to just run to run… Then I got back up too late, then it got to the point where I turned half-way, and then we got yelled at by the teacher because we didn`t do what we were supposed to do. So, it just became wrong!
>
> Lars: And then you get yelled at for being too late, and that affects those who aren't very fast.
>
> Stian: But those who are good in PE … who are really fit and are in really good shape

and such think this is almost fun, you'd think, because they are capable of keeping up.

5.2.9 Assessment, grading and evaluation in PE

The quotations from the boys in E_4 above serve to illustrate something that emerged as a reoccurring theme amongst the youngsters, namely the ever-present tension between competency and making an effort or, rather, the mutually interdependent relationship between these two aspects. Based upon the views of the youngsters in this study however, grading for example, was seen as being more dependent upon the one than the other, based upon what position they perceived themselves to be in with regard to competency. Those having a sporting background and thus having competency tended to view grades as being dependent upon effort, attitude and what frequently was referred to as "fair play", hence perceiving it to be rather easy to get a good grade in PE. The boys in F_1, who considered PE to be a subject everyone could achieve the best grade possible, summarized the requirements for getting a good grade in PE as follows:

Trond: You have to make an effort and be happy and then you should help others and cheer and such. Pretty much.

Jonas: That's actually the only thing you need to do to get 6 [best grade] in PE.

Trond: It's rather easy.

Geir: It's fine for those who aren't interested at all. But it can be boring for those who take it very seriously too. That it takes so little to get the best grade, in a way.

In a similar vein, a group of sporty girls from the same school perceived attitude and effort to be the most important aspects considered when grading. These girls, in F_4, took the view that grading in PE was unfair as grades achieved in other subjects were straightforwardly based upon competency and skills:

> Like, I do think that it should actually have a lot to say, like skills, because if you, for example, have math, it doesn't help to make a good effort, you aren't graded for working good in math, in a way. That way, it's what you do, so I actually think that's what should count the most in PE as well, because it is the same. But evidently, it isn't … (Erle, F_4)

From the contrasting position, however, the tendency to point to the discrepancy between saying and doing when it came to grading was prominent. Whilst teachers claimed that effort

was considered crucial when grading, the youngsters considered the reality to be completely different. The pattern among the youngsters in this study was that, in their eyes, especially those of the girls, it was those who were good in sports and performed well who tended to be rewarded with good grades. From their perspective, this was considered unfair as it meant that some were better conditioned physically to perform and, thus, had advantages in PE. Moreover, PE was seen as different from other subjects where you could study and practice in order to get a good grade. Being sufficiently physically conditioned tended to be viewed as something biological and static, hence difficult to control and improve through effort: “That’s things you can’t control, for example, I can’t control whether I can go into the splits or not!” (Elisabet, H_1). The view that effort tended not to compensate for lack of skills but rather was ignored or unrecognized, was prevalent among those perceiving themselves less competent and physically conditioned compared to peers. The girls quoted below are illustrative in this vein:

> Else: Sometimes you feel that no matter how much you try, it’s still just your skills they look at. And I think, it’s like we mentioned previously about PE, that it’s irrelevant how much you try … it only focuses on one thing.
>
> Mia: That they should think more about effort, in a way, and see how you try, and remember that not everyone is, that everybody is different. And that you must remember that we aren’t professionals. (E_3)

All-in-all, the youngsters presented diverging views upon how much they had to invest in order to get a good grade in PE as well as whether effort actually was valued. Whilst some talked about giving up trying their best because it did not seem to benefit them in terms of how they were graded, those finding themselves in a more privileged position did not always try their best for the opposite reasons. Kine (G_2), for example, admitted that “…it isn’t always you bother, because you’re a little like ‘Ok, it’s PE at school. I manage to get a quite good grade anyway, so be it. I don’t bother’.”

In this vein, the reciprocity between grade, feedback from peers and teacher and motivation to invest effort were elaborated in a long-term perspective by Trine (B_1), considering the PE process from 8th grade up to 10th:

> Like in 8th grade it was more like this “Now I actually have to participate, now we get grade in this”. Like, yeah! And then it just died out a little, and towards the end of the year it was like “I don’t really care”. And then by the beginning of year 9 it was a little like “Now I have to sharpen up, come on”, and then it died out. And I realize that it

happens now as well. In 10th it was like "Now you actually have to sharpen up, it's 10th grade, this is the grade you will end up with". And then just "poof", I didn't have so much motivation after all. And it does something to you, what people say to you and such.

This extract serves to illustrate how previous experiences in the form of feedback tended to be perceived, by those not good in PE in particular, as shaping their identities and understanding of themselves whether negatively or positively. The feedback they received was perceived as signifying whether they were valued as physically capable or not. Suffice to say that grading was something considered immensely important but likewise immensely difficult to relate to, especially for those not being or perceiving themselves sufficiently competent to measure up against those good in PE. Notably, it was not simply how grading appeared in relation to perceived invested effort that made grading so prominent to the youngsters. Rather, it was when combining the public nature of PE and grading, how they perceived themselves to perform compared to their peers, that the distances in competency became evident and potentially served to undermine evaluation of own performance as well as erode the enjoyment of being physically active:

Vetle: If you are a little behind and realize that you won't get a good grade and like everybody else manages, then it's easy to give up.

Jarle: Then you don't become motivated … You might stop exercising and have no joy from it. Because you feel you're much worse than everyone else. (C_1)

Thus, evaluation of themselves and their performances appeared as being inherently relational. That is, it was by comparing own performance in relation to that of peers that self-evaluation evolved positively or negatively. This was prominent, whether being good or otherwise in PE. In this regard, Frank (F_1), who was one of those competent and good, explained thus:

It's often in relation to the rest [of the class] … Often you have an opinion yourself about what is good and not good, and what you expect from yourself. But if you aren't completely satisfied with yourself and you see that you still perform better than everyone else, that does motivate a little. Whilst if you are kind of satisfied but still are much worse than others, then it destroys a little. That way, how everyone else around perform has a lot to say as well, I think.

Comparison, whether in the form of teacher's assessment and grading or self-assessment were viewed as exacerbating their emotional response to PE and had consequences for their self-esteem as well as motivation.

In the numerous discussions regarding grading and assessment in PE, the youngsters revealed reasons other than simply not bothering or lacking competency when addressing how they appeared in PE. Simply put, they questioned whether PE teachers actually were positioned to make justified judgements about what effort actually looked like. Andrea (D_1) pointed to the relevance of having a bad day, for example:

> They do say that they consider effort. But it could be that, let's say you`re unlucky and have a bad day, and you do make as much effort as you are capable of, but the teacher doesn't see that you do everything you can. He pulls you down a lot [in grade]. Because it`s difficult to know how that person actually is inside and what that person actually can do.

In order for PE teachers to be in a position to make justified judgements about effort, the youngsters and especially the girls, viewed PE teachers' consideration and interest in their pupils to be crucial. To develop the point made by Andrea above, they should be sensitive to and understand – or empathize – how the students actually are feeling inside. The best way to approach students, as the boys and girls saw it, was to recognize that a PE class is formed by individuals, and consequently the PE teacher needed to relate to them as such. This was viewed to be of particular importance not at least when taking the public nature of PE into consideration. Being exposed in public was perceived to have consequences for their mental health in terms of reinforcing the already prominent perception of not being good enough, whether in relation to teachers' expectations and requirements or in relation to peers' performances. For some youngsters, the apprehension this generated gave rise to a reluctance to engage in PE to the extent that they truanted, as Lone (C_3) explained in relation to 9th grade:

> I was sick the days we had PE [last year], or didn't participate, because it felt so uncomfortable that everyone else was so much better than I was. It was uncomfortable that our teacher didn't accept me as I was, what I was good at and things like that.

Even for those who did participate, like Merete (D_1), having high demands in relation to their performance diminished enjoyment because of the perceived self-imposed pressure to always be good:

I want to perform in everything all the time. And I get tired from it, in a way. I have to teach myself that I can't perform in everything. I can't be good in everything. I can't master everything all the time.

The girls in C_4 used the running test that they had to do twice a year as an example of the mental restraint that tended to follow from performing in public:

Jenny: And then I've dreaded, for example, the running test to be graded, because everyone is supposed to watch each other when we run…It's probably difficult for teachers too, since we are so many pupils. But I don't always think they are capable of understanding how difficult it can be for some actually having to run together with 24 other pupils. I perceive them to really wear us out. Both physically and mentally.

Viktoria: And then there's this thing that you have to remember your own time afterwards, since the teacher can't possibly memorize all those times. And then all results are to be told in public afterwards. When it's your turn to tell your result, then all the focus is on you, and then everyone compares to those results that already have been told. That's quite stupid.

Furthermore, PE teachers' inclination to devalue or ignore invested effort from those less competent were perceived to influence both enjoyment of and motivation for PE. Inevitably, perhaps, feeling and being competent and thus liking PE did not lead to the same pressure towards constantly performing and showing that they made an effort to compensate for poorer skills. In other words, performance and effort did not cost them much as they simply did what they liked and were comfortable doing:

I like exercising and such, and then I kind of feel that I just do, I don't feel that I get very pressured. Because I like exercising. But those who don't like it might get more of that pressure. That they kind of have to do well and show effort all the time. (Elin, D_1)

The girls in F_3 reinforced Elin's impression by explaining the discomfort they felt in PE when being encouraged to show effort:

Ingrid: You kind of have to take it seriously to get a good grade. And that's what ruins it a little for us, I think. That we don't thrive in PE lessons, because we feel we have to work hard all the time

Lena: And when we actually do work hard, the teachers kind of don't see. They don`t

see that we work as hard as we actually try to.

In short, it was the relation between the public and visible processes, how they appeared in terms of performance and effort, and the invisible processes, how they actually felt when performing and making an effort, that tended to give rise to feeling of comfort or not. Furthermore, it was through processes of verbal and non-verbal feedback from those watching, whether teacher or peers, that evaluation of self and competency were stimulated positively or not. Therefore, for those evaluating themselves negatively, it was crucial that PE teachers recognized these processes:

> If you have bad self-esteem and self-confidence and consider yourself to be worse than everyone else, but you still have PE because you want to perform well, you want a good grade, you want to access a good school – and then get the message in PE that: "Ok, you should do better than this". When you already know you are not good enough. Then it's hard to hear that you should be able to perform better. (Lone, C_3)

In this way, the evaluation of PE as contrasting with the rest of the school day by serving as a worry-free space that offers mental refreshment as previously discussed, appeared differently when looking into the processes within PE. The public nature of PE made everyone visible to everyone else whether they liked it or not. Ironically, perhaps, although in many ways aiming to be invisible due to a perceived lack of competency and, consequently, effort, the youngsters expressed a need for being visible as individuals by being recognized and acknowledged beyond competency, effort as well as how they appeared in public. This was a balance between standing out and showing themselves off on the one hand and being seen and given recognition as an individual person on the other. Putting it another way, balancing PE teachers' responsibility to be attentive towards pupils and the students' responsibility to attract PE teacher`s attention was seen to be necessary but undeniably challenging:

> Synne: And if you want your PE teacher to give you feedback and do things for you, then you need to do things for him to do things for you, right? That you need to show that you make an effort, and then he will show that he is making an effort for you as well, if you understand.
>
> Anne: But at the same time, it's his job to see everyone, and not…you shouldn't feel that you need to show off.
>
> Synne: Nevertheless, you must make an effort.
>
> Anne: You must make an effort, it's just that you shouldn't need to feel that you must

> show yourself off to get a good grade, rather that you are being seen. But you must make an effort [kind of], it's not that you can sit doing nothing. You need to show yourself off a little. (C_3)

5.2.10 Body image in PE

Competency and showing physical strengths or shortcomings in PE was, unavoidably perhaps, associated with the issue of body image and perceived body pressure. The body was seen as being at the centre of self-evaluation and comparing, whether in the changing room, within PE or swimming. Both boys and girls were acutely aware of the existing pressures in PE regarding body image and physical condition more generally:

> That is, most people who like sports, like practically everything, I think. Because they tend to be in good physical condition … But what I think creates pressure is for those who tend not to like PA and health – and who, maybe, are in poorer physical condition. So, when they get to a PE lesson it is like they're thinking that it is absolutely awful, because there is so much body pressure. (Amund, C_1)

Some girls referred to PE as an arena in which the public label upon their generation, "Generation perfection", came into play and viewed their experiences in PE lessons as simply a reflection of a wider societal focus upon body image and performance more generally:

> In the time period we find ourselves in now, there are so many struggling with body pressure and pressure upon grades and in a way performing in absolutely everything. Having this additional pressure on being as fit as possible when you are already discontent with, for example, how you look and your body looks. I think it is stupid that they will have like: "Ok, you should, in a way, complete within a certain time – you should meet that requirement". If you manage, you are good enough, but if you don't you should exercise *more*. (Lone, C_3)

Within the groups where body image and body pressure in relation to PE were discussed, boys held the view that this had to be the very reason why girls seemingly panicked if having swimming or were reluctant to shower after PE. The girls quoted from the C_4 –group below were clear in their view that self- image, which was possible to mask in public, was the main aspect at play when dreading having PE, including swimming, due to showing one's body in public:

Ingvild: It depends upon the person. It depends a lot upon your own self-image, I think.

Hege: And especially in swimming. There are certain people at school who don't like swimming because they don't want to walk around in swimwear.

Åse: Right. Some who never have swimming.

Jenny: I think that's a problem that isn't talked sufficiently about, because there actually are people who might not show it, but who appear open minded and happy, but then they actually struggle a lot with body-image and their own self-image, and they actually don't like to wear gym wear or have PE. Or they don't like having swimming amongst for example the boys or girls, or anyone really. Because of what people think of them.

Exposing the body was, for some perceived to be close to unbearable as it robbed them of the opportunity to hide their perceived imperfections by dressing strategically or wearing make-up. PE, and even more prominently, swimming, was thus viewed as a site for (involuntarily) revealing their natural and 'real' selves in public:

Ellen: We think it's bad to walk around in gym wear, and then we are supposed to show ourselves in bikinis!

The other girls in the group: Right!

Ellen: And then we have to wear a swimming cap, and I don't feel comfortable wearing that.

Lena: And then without make-up.

Ellen: Without make-up. So, I've always found excuses to avoid participating in swimming. (F_3)

PE, including swimming, is mixed-sex, and girls associated body pressure with boy's perceived expectations relating to the ideal female body, in particular. In other words, they put the blame on the boys. However, perceived body pressure seemed to persist regardless of those present when exposing their bodies in public. In this vein, some girls talked about feeling "vulnerable" when being naked in the changing room, even if being surrounded by girls:

Jenny: To be naked in front of everybody. That people can see your body, what it looks like.

Åse: Then you are vulnerable.

Ingvild: At least emotionally, you're vulnerable. (C_4)

In fact, it was the inclination to compare their bodies to other girls and anticipate negative evaluation from peers that were perceived to be the most constraining experience when changing and showering in public:

> I feel that the others have bodies that are much nicer than mine … I think that if I change there [in the changing room], they will give me this ugly look … even if they probably won't, but I feel that they will. (Astrid, F_3)

Girls, exemplified by the C_4-group below, did discuss their inclination to feel constrained by the anticipated evaluation from others as being the outcome of self-focus and self-awareness:

> Viktoria: You spend more time thinking about how you look yourself. You don't look much at others. So everyone is more focused upon themselves.
>
> Ingvild: That's true. And that's what we aren't able to think. I think it's completely right, because you think like "My God, how ugly I look. Everyone will be looking at me". But if everyone thinks the same, then nobody will look at you.

Even though talking about self-focus and self-awareness as something individualized such processes were nevertheless perceived to evolve in relation to the climate within the group, the interdependencies, they were involved in. Put another way, whether feeling comfortable with exposing their body was related to feeling safe amongst peers. The boys in A_1, for example, perceived girls` reluctance to shower after PE to be an outcome of the girls' climate in their class:

> Øystein: They are probably more shy.
>
> Frode: I don't think they are very united, the way the boys are.
>
> Øystein: Because all of us boys know each other in our class. The girls are split into small groups and then … are probably more reluctant to expose their body.

All-in-all the public nature of PE was perceived by the youngsters as serving as a prominent arena for comparison and evaluation with both visible and invisible processes and consequences affecting various dimensions of their mental health. Interestingly, the perceptions of PE as being public related how the individual feels inside when being exposed physically in front of or together with class and teacher.

Thus far, findings in this study have revealed social processes through which PE was experienced positively or negatively by the youngsters. A particular social process through

which PE can be experienced negatively, however, was discovered as a consistent dimension when exploring PE as a site for evaluation, more precisely the process of "othering" appeared interdependent with the classroom climate. The process of othering emerged from the youngsters' perceptions of the consequences of being judged within PE, which was ever-present as an invisible process within the public nature of PE. Thus, the next paragraph explores in greater depth the processes that might go unrecognized.

5.2.11 The process of othering in PE

At the outset, there was a clear view that by the time they had reached age 15, PE in school was reproducing already existing differences with regard to physical competency and perceived sportiness. That way, the youngsters themselves, whether "sporty" or not beyond school, viewed the differences within PE to be natural and unavoidable, implying that neglecting that such differences would play out in PE was näive: "Like, it's impossible to avoid, everyone knows who's a little better in sport and such. There's no point in hiding that" (Vetle, C_1). Thus, categorizing and identifying themselves and others as being sporty, or not, was a part of a long-term socializing process, starting in the early years of schooling as explained by Joakim (E_4):

> There are those who engage with activities outside school, and those who don't. That's how it is, in a way…actually it has been like this since elementary school. You did notice who kind of played football and were active with sports – and those who didn't. It was like two different groups.

Such categorization and identification were viewed as being translated into the context of PE. This was manifested in the youngsters' tendency to talk about "us" and "them" related to being able and sporty in PE or otherwise. In this vein, for example, the mixed-gender group B_1 instantly distinguished those who loved PE from those who did not:

> Mona: There are those who always have been the first to change, and run straight into the hall and ask: "What are we doing?" and do sports in leisure and spend a lot of their time doing it. And then we have those who mostly sit with their head down and "Oh, we're having PE", and some truant.
>
> Trine: Like you can immediately tell. Those who always participate, who always work hardest. You do see that they love PE.

The combination of having a sporting background (frequently referred to as football, handball and basketball) and belonging in that particular "we"-group seemed to be translated into both symbolic and social capital in school and PE. Those boys and girls were often referred to as "popular" to indicate a social ranking and were most commonly observed by those perceiving themselves as other than popular, that is to say, those on the outside. Both boys and girls spoke of the inevitability of friendship groups forming around sport and leisure-time sports clubs in particular that translated into school. Their established position and identity within such sporty friendship groups in school became even more prominent within in PE. Youngsters feeling that they were "out" in relation to these friendship groups tended to consider these boys and girls to behave and view themselves as they were superior to peers:

> Sanna: It's like those girls and boys. They are viewed as ...
>
> Tone: The popular ones.
>
> Sanna: Most of them are.
>
> Kari: Yes, those who perceive themselves as being better than the rest of us.
>
> Tone: And then [laughing] we are placed lower. (A_3)

Being on the outside – in terms of not belonging to such established friendship groups – seemingly led youngsters to feel they were ascribed a position as observers rather than participants in PE. Those competent, established and engaged were talked about as occupying the PE space by being vigorously active and loud hence attracting attention from both PE teacher and class peers. Dominating behaviours from competent peers thus made those marginalized feeling invisible, as being noticed by teachers in particular became difficult. In this regard, being provided with few opportunities to be noticed by their PE teacher made each opportunity provided crucial and stressful. Endre (B_3) explained the necessity of managing such opportunities well: "But that's important, that one time when it's your time to … shine, then you simply have to … If you give a bad impression there, then it's bad impression generally".

The differences in sporting ability were most keenly felt during interactions typically following game-based activities, in which the more competent youngsters (whether male or female) were sometimes described as tending towards "showing off" their superior abilities and, in doing so, consciously or sub-consciously drawing attention to the inferiority and marginal position of their less-able counterparts. This was perceived as a matter of difference in (sporting) status in one group at school B:

> Trine: They get like "We are best".

Mona: They really like to show themselves off. Like showing "We can do this, and everyone shall know that we can". It's a little like they are looking down on us. That they kind of perceive themselves to be much better, that we never can come up on their level. (B_1)

Nevertheless, and on a more general note, self-defined less competent or less sporty youngsters often spoke of the ways in which those who appeared to enjoy the subject, not least because they were "good at sport", tended to stick together, ignore, judge and evaluate (and, frequently, treat as outsiders) those considered less able (and, as a corollary less willing) in PE lessons. This became particularly apparent to them during games when they were deemed not good enough:

> You feel quite bad about yourself … that you don't manage to do what they can do. You feel that you are categorized in a way … that "They are good and you are bad. Hence we pass to those who are good and you just get to stand there", in a way. (Mari, E_3)

The nature of many typical PE activities, such as games of one kind or another, were observed as having an in-built tendency to exacerbate differences according to sporting ability and performance as brought clear in a boys' group at school E:

Stian: There is always those who are a little better in everything, who just take the ball and run off.

Lars: Especially in football. (E_4)

The importance invested by the more sporty youngsters in competitive activities in particular, such as games, was perceived as having inevitable negative consequences, whether intended or otherwise: "And it's like those who are good in ball sports and such tend to take things too seriously [when] we play matches and such. If you should do something wrong, they may be nasty and yell at you at times" (Mia, E_3).

Within the numerous discussions taking place in which various ball sports undeniably played a significant part when providing examples on shifting tension balances, two rather clear pattern became evident. One pattern took the form of the mutually interdependent but nevertheless reciprocal relationship between those competent and engaged and those less competent and engaged, a pattern formed along competency lines. The other pattern was formed along gender lines. The first pattern evolving was brought clear in the tendency of blaming the group of

which they defined themselves not to be a part of. Those boys and girls enjoying and engaging in PE tended to characterize their counterparts as not being bothered, not being willing or interested and having a negative attitude towards the processes in PE generally. The boys in the F_1 group, for example, admitted that they did become frustrated by their less-willing peers:

Trond: There are some who just sit there and don`t participate. I get a bit upset about that, because it can't be that difficult to bring a shorts and t- shirt and participate in PE, making the best out of it? Being as stubborn and refuse to participate no matter what.

Knut: Having strange excuses that "My ankle hurts. I`ve been bit by mosquito" not bothering to participate.

Trond: No matter what, they don`t bother to participate.

Knut: They always come up with an excuse.

In this regard, Trond and Knut's observations exemplify the more general frustration expressed regarding the ways in which less competent (and as corollary less willing) peers could affect their PE experience negatively by eroding the fun and pulling down intensity of energy. In a similar vein, it was also perceived to be frustrating if peers did participate but masked their lack of interest by fooling:

Jesper: But you do get a little frustrated if someone on your team just fools around all the time. If he doesn`t master at all.

Tor: And there are some in our class who do such things just to make us angry. They want us to get pissed. Then it gets a little irritating. Then I may say something.

Jesper: Like, in floorball, they just walk around and hit us in the legs. (E_2)

However, when reflecting upon why processes tended to evolve this way, by taking the perspective of the "others", both boys and girls recognized them as being rooted in in insecurity due to lack of experience and competence and fearing others judgement:

Yvonne: It could be that they do not perceive it [PE] to be so much fun.

Erle: And that they may, if they are not doing any sport then, that they feel that they are much worse and stuff like that, right.

Yvonne: And do not quite know where to stand in a way.

Janne: That they are afraid to do anything stupid. (F_4)

Hence, the youngsters themselves appeared more or less conscious of processes of othering. This awareness surfaced among those competent, and in this respect more established, in terms of observing that less competent peers tended to back down and occasionally even point to their inferiority in advance of team-based activities:

> Toril: There are times when people have said like “Sorry in advance”, in a way.
>
> Linn: “Sorry for coming on your team”.
>
> Toril: Right. It’s like “Oh no, don`t pass to me”, in a way. That do happen. And that’s not good because it…Yes, there are some who becomes less visible and who don`t get to participate because those who are good are very occupied with “Now I’m doing this”, in a way. (G_2)

This observation and awareness discussed, serve to illustrate that the balance between “us” and “them” was perceived constraining also from the established ‘us’ position. This was, not at least, evident in the many recognitions that unintentional bad comments probably did not serve to motivate nor enhance their peers’ self-esteem. In this vein, some of the groups consisting of sporty youngsters spoke of the lengths they went to in order to include those they judged to be less able (whether male or female) in order to avoid embarrassing them or further undermine their self-esteem and enjoyment. Amund (C_1) emphasized the importance of complimenting rather than criticizing if being teamed up with someone performing worse than others:

> Then for God’s sake do not yell at them. That just destroys their self-esteem, and it doesn’t make that person any better, just frustrated. Rather, it’s important to give good advice. It’s OK to set requirements – but not to yell … and if they do something good, it doesn’t have to be very ... but a little good, then you compliment them. Then they get happy and start thinking: “I can do this”. That way they get a feeling of mastery and they can build themselves up. And then they thrive.

The balance between complimenting and encouraging rather than criticizing did, however, require the ability to exercise a degree of self-control in terms of oppressing frustration and be patient towards their peers. Something perceived to appear unfair and pointless at times. The reciprocal responsibility was repeatedly talked about in terms of “them” taking responsibility to engage as much as “we” take responsibility to engage them. In team-based activities, like ball sports, the active ones perceived themselves to be as dependent upon the engagement from their less engaged peers as the other way around, as passivity and what tended to be referred to as lack of willingness to engage, eroded the whole experience for everyone. This was partly

because they themselves were pulled down, and partly because it generated little activity as it tended to end up with those less competent just stand watching, as elaborated by Jens (G_4):

> It just ends up with that the girls, not always the girls, but very often the girls. They just stand there clustered together and talk about things, and then other different people just, I don`t know what they are doing, and then Kim goes solo, and then they snap completely.

Notably, those less competent and less sporty were as likely to do what amounted to labelling by talking about "us" and "them",as their more competent counterparts. Frequently characterizing them as being loud, egoistic, being "show offs" and having a condescending attitude towards less competent and competitive peers:

> But I do notice that there are several of those who have a little of that attitude like, if we don't feel as good, right, and not always are able to do much it`s a little like "Ohhh" or "Come on then" or rather "you should be able to do more", in a way. It seems like they hold some expectations that everyone should be on their level, and they should be a little more like open minded they as well. (Kine, G_3)

The dynamics of games in particular – and the feelings they tended to generate – meant that, whether boy or girl, not fitting in affected their dispositions towards PE lessons. Feelings of being excluded tended, as discussed by these boys from school E, to be de-motivating:

> Stian: Well, we don't feel like playing when they never pass the ball.
>
> Dag: No, consider it to be unnecessary. "Don't need you", can do everything themselves. (E_4)

Such feelings were reported as having almost inevitable consequences for their engagement with PE. Hearing negative comments about sporting competence together with experiencing being excluded during activities combined to generate a degree of apathy among those on the receiving end, borne at least in part out of a sense of feeling redundant and unwanted. This was addressed in one mixed- gender group at school B:

> Ola: You don't feel like engaging.
>
> Trine: Right. You really feel like wanting to stop.
>
> Ola: Agreed. If people complain about you, and you suck at football, you don't feel like playing any more. (B_1)

Whereas negative comments and experiencing being excluded, especially in particular ball games were commonly commented upon from those on the 'outside', even peers' comments that were encouraging were discussed as having negative and discouraging consequences. This was rooted in the apparent gap between perceived competency and the undeserved positive feedback, thus reinforcing the recognition of being one of those not capable, as elaborated in the discussion in C_1:

> Jarle: At the same time, it isn't very cool to be like one of those who don`t manage, even if the others, like he said (Amund in the group) do that [compliment] and come up with advices and says that it's good when you master things. It`s not especially cool to be there. To be one of those few who gets such things, whilst everyone else do it really good. Then it gets like, then you know that everyone else see that you aren`t any good at that …that might not be a good feeling.
>
> Amund: That's why it's … you should brag and say "Splendid, that's real good! Keep on! Yes, we do this for each other", right? Then you get a little happy, you smile when I say that, right?
>
> Jarle [interrupts]: Right, but if everybody does that, even if you don`t perform particularly well … you get a rather bad feeling.

Apparently, whether perceiving peers to behave rudely or have low expectations towards their abilities by complimenting for underperforming compared to those more able – the negative feeling seemingly persists.

It was evident that the tendency to 'other' whether from the established or the outsider position was related to the activities taking place and the competency felt within that activity. Put another way, a tendency that perspectives differed according to the positions the youngsters found themselves in within the activities at offer was discovered, in other words, the balances seemed to shift. Else (E_3), for example, shared her experience of being excluded by "those good" when playing football, ending up standing watching because the others never passed her the ball. When playing volleyball on the other hand, she admitted to have slipped a couple of comments that she wasn`t particularly proud of towards peers who appeared not to bother:

> Like, I don't get grumpy if they're bad at it, but it's like, I perceive it to be more about the effort, that they try. Because, of course, I do get irritated when they don't even try and they just observe the ball passing them and such. But if they'd tried a little more, I hadn`t been irritated. That way I understand that they do their best.

In similar vein, the boys in C_2, otherwise perceiving themselves as engaged, enthusiastic and competitive, discussed how dance made them apathetic and annoyed by competent and enthusiastic others:

> But then it becomes more like "No, this is too difficult for you, so we have to make it much more simple. But that's no fun for me, it goes against my ideals" [imitating a girl's voice]. So, no I don't like it anyhow … It's demotivating. (Simen)

These examples serve to allude that processes of othering are dynamic and that processes and interdependencies are experienced differently by the same individual according to the positions they find themselves in.

While judgement and evaluation regarding sporting competence was seen as commonplace and pervasive throughout PE, its most obvious form was forged along gender lines. This tended to manifest itself in terms of processes of exclusion and/or inclusion especially within the playing of games, processes that within PE were ever visible. The consequences of being excluded within games was, according to the girls in E_1, often felt to be discouraging:

> Ida: If you are the worst in that particular sport, and the others are good, like Oda just said, there is someone and especially boys, I think, who don't want to include you in that sport, because you are bad.
>
> Hanne: Then you never get the ball.
>
> Ida: Exactly. It's not especially motivating.

The likelihood of competitive activities giving rise to physically aggressive behaviours was also seen as leading to the marginalization of girls more than boys. In this vein, some girls referred to standing in the way of, and being overrun by, enthusiastic boys whose strength was apparent in how they played the game. Referring to them as being violent and play hard. These kinds of situations could give rise to feelings of unease relating to the physicality that could accompany participation in these types of activities. Feeling unsafe meant that the process of marginalization tended to become self-fulfilling, something that was expressed by Trude (B_4), who stated as in the following:

> I feel like, it would probably have been much better to play football with some small kids than playing football with these 10th graders. They, especially the boys because

they are so aggressive, I get scared. That's the issue. I want to lie low. They use so much power, I feel.

Ironically, perhaps, the boys from school B did not seem to reflect upon the fact that they were the very reason why girls appeared passive and unengaged. Something brought to attention when the boys in B_2 talked about the girls' relationship to PE:

Fredrik: To be honest, actually it is mostly boys who think PE is fun, but for some reason there are many girls who are not motivated for PE. Even I can see that they, that even the smart girls in class as well, even they are like "Oh no!" They are far too nice to perform poorly in subjects, but even they.

Oskar: They just walk around.

Fredrik: They just walk around and don`t care what they do. So, I don`t understand exactly why, but is probably because they are scared of doing different things and such active things (or something like that). Because I don`t understand why they do not like it.

Mikkel: Because they're scared!

All-in-all, the process of othering, even if strongly felt by those othered, did appear to be an unintended outcome of the differences at play. Those perceiving themselves as being in a more inferior position tending to adapt and behave according to the position they felt they had been ascribed to, whilst those finding themselves in superior position not necessarily reflecting upon their superiority as playing a part within this process.

On a more general note, it was girls in particular who perceived themselves to be judged and consequently feared that they would be looked down on by their more competent peers. Feeling insecure about themselves made them reluctant to really engage as they were sensitive to the perceived judgmental response from "those having the loudest voices, who are best and manage everything" (Synne, C_3). The interweaving of processes in PE made their (lack of) competence visible and commented on as discussed by the girls in Synne's group:

Synne: In ball sports or similar things, you often observe that girls create like a small circle … Because they do not quite want to expose themselves. They do not want to wear themselves out because they are afraid of what everyone else might think of them.

Anne: And I strongly feel that you have to be very cautious. You cannot do exactly

what you would like to do because you will be looked down on … It’s like if you are very “out there” then you are really visible, right, and if you should do anything wrong, it becomes very public.

Tuva: Right. In cannonball, there are some who choose not to run for the ball nor throw it because they may not be as good throwers as the handball players. And, if you end up picking up the ball and throw it, some might laugh because you are not as good thrower as the handball players.

Being judged, or fearing judgement, tended to be an especially prominent issue within girls groups who generally described their class to be “judgmental”, and provided examples on experiences to explain their awareness. Being judgmental most typically took the form of repeatedly demeaning comments from boys, something the girls in H_1 described as highly affecting them:

Elisabet: Like, I don`t become especially motivated in a way, when “OK, that person slipped a comment like that to that person. What if he slips the same comment to me?” You do in away become …

Laila: You become a little upset … You get a little upset, you don`t get especially motivated, you get like: “Right, I`m not able. OK”.

Wenche: We do have two classes, and earlier I was in their class [referring to Elisabet and Laila]. And that was the main reason why I changed class. I felt very exposed to demeaning comments.

The bad or demeaning comments whilst engaging in the activities PE setting were commented upon in all groups across sportiness and gender, whether having been in the position to slip or position to receive. The consequences from unintentional comments dependent upon the position the receiver found him – or herself in and how frequent they occurred. Most addressed the negative consequences to be related to that particular activity or that specific PE lesson, as explained by Mona (B_1): “If you’ve done something wrong or done something good, it`s perhaps talked about in the break and the beginning of next lesson. But after that I don’t think you reflect particularly much upon it”. Few, like Wenche (H_1) quoted above, revealed long-term consequences resulting in bad relationship to at least some in their class, rather than to PE as a subject in itself.

Being judgmental did, in some cases however, go beyond mere comments. Whilst being worthy of noting that such cases were discussed exclusively in girls groups representing three schools, the incidents revealed serve to shed light upon the multidimensional processes involved in affecting the "us" and "them" relationships within PE, that might not be explicitly observable nor accessible to those on the outside, in these cases the PE teachers. Two girls' groups spoke about how specific episodes where boys had been evaluating and ranking girls` bodies had made the girls even more cautious not to expose themselves in PE and swimming:

Anne: You do become afraid of in a way be judged or ranked … You do become a little more afraid of that.

Lone: Right, and then it leads to that you very often feel you're being judged.

Synne: You kind of don't want to harm yourself, in away.

Anne: Right. It decreases self-confidence, and you have to be more attentive to what you do and such, to avoid being judged in away.(C_3)

Another girls' group from a different school described incidents where those not participating in PE had brought their mobile:

Sanna: Like, those who don't have PE film those having PE

Grete: They post it on social media, make fun … Everybody knows they do that, that`s why many back off. (A_3)

The tendency for some to be "othered" by being regularly put down by derogatory comments from others in class, both within and beyond PE had, in the experience of the girls in H_1, added restraints to the already tense relationship prevailing between some girls and boys within their class. Perceiving themselves to be put in a difficult position as telling teachers and supporting the othered would mean that they would risk of being othered themselves:

Tonje: And then you get this reputation that you're a blabbermouth.

Laila: Right, you do get that reputation.

The significance of the climate within the classes was, thus, perceived to be crucial in the process of being judged, and by extension the process of othering. In this vein, bad climate was identified as the class being judgmental and consequently prevented students from feeling safe. The extract from the discussion that took place in a girls' group at school E below, serves to illustrate the perceived dimensions within and the significance of a good classroom climate in PE:

Marte: But in our class at least, I don't know about your class [looking on girl sitting across her], it is nothing like people have high demands to each other. It's more like we have expectations to ourselves, and if anyone doesn't master we are there to support each other.

Ida: No one laughs at you if you get a bad grade.

Anette: I don't perceive that there is any pressure in our class, actually. I consider us to have quite good class climate … I certainly don't feel pressure in PE or anything. Not upon grades or anything.

Marte: Those who don't do sports in our class really like PE too. (E_1)

As the findings thus far indicate, classroom climate cannot be isolated from the shifting relationships therein. The findings also suggest that, whether implicit or explicit, messages regarding sporting competence and physical appearance tended, predominantly, to be generated within students' relationships and mediated by their peers. Nevertheless, the youngsters spoke of the role of their PE teachers in augmenting and sustaining, and occasionally generating norms about the pattern of competence in class. PE teachers were viewed upon as being, perhaps, the main mediators of PE experiences directly through providing feedback, showing interest and pay attention as well as through assessment and grading – and indirectly not only by choosing content but also how the content, the activities themselves, were organized. The PE teachers were, whether intentionally or not, involved in the process of othering.

One particular way in which PE teachers played a significant role in the process of othering manifested itself in which students received most attention. Youngsters highlighted as negative to classroom climate their PE teachers' tendencies to distinguish and discriminate between those deemed good and bad at sport and their predispositions towards "looking more on those who are good, because it is more exciting and interesting to watch those who are capable of playing real football. And then it results in that they don`t look as much upon the others" (Monika, G_3). Teachers' feedback, including giving or withholding praise, was one of the primary processes through which these messages were conveyed during PE activities, alongside giving attention in non-verbal ways such as watching particular pupils and spending time developing their skills:

> But I genuinely feel, in our class at least, that it is those who play handball and those who love exercising … they get a lot of positive feedback and they participate in PE every week. Whilst those who struggle with PE and actually think that it's awful, when

they finally do their best it is like: “OK, you never participate in PE anyway” … Like if you actually make an effort, you are not noticed and it is a kind of: “OK, you should be able to do better”. (Lone, C_3)

The perception that PE teachers were inclined to put more emphasis upon the negatives like the lack of effort or being absent from PE more than encouraging by highlighting something positive, was shared and deeply felt by several, for example by the girls in F_3 as they felt the teacher held preconceived ideas about them:

Ingrid: What I think might be a good advice to, especially PE teachers, is that they value when people try! That they value those who, for example, aren’t very active in all PE lessons, when there’s finally something they feel like engaging in.

Ellen: And that they focus upon when we are present in the PE lessons and not when we are absent, because they grade us based upon our absence … So they look at our absence and not when we contribute.

What were perceived as their PE teachers’ prejudicial predispositions was a leitmotif in the comments from those youngsters who saw themselves as less able and, as a corollary, less successful in PE terms. In this regard, the girls in the G_{3-} group meant to have disclosed that investing effort was secondary to valued competency: “She [a girl in the group] had a mission last fall, that we should get better grades. So, we did everything we could and really made an effort, but the teacher never looked when we did something good” (Kine). The notion that the teacher did not seem to notice was a reoccurring dimension within the process of feeling marginalized, which resulted in decreased motivation:

Kine: Then your motivation does decrease a little so it comes to that you don`t bother to try as hard because you know the teacher doesn’t.

Sofie: The teacher doesn`t look at you anyway. (G_3)

Getting feedback from the PE teacher was viewed as especially significant. The good feeling and the motivation positive comments from teachers generated was a recurring theme across groups, irrelevant of gender and competency. Getting positive feedback from PE teacher was considered to provide them with an external confirmation that they were seen, acknowledged and included. This way, PE teacher was in position to facilitate the sense of mastering, as pointed out by Jarle (C_1):

It’s this thing: in order for pupils to feel that they master something, it is smart that teachers brag about their pupils, when they make progress and if they do something well. Get to hear the teacher saying that this is really good. Because you kind of get a very good feeling from that others too think you do well. Then you do feel a little that you`ve mastered.

In this regard, witnessing that other were complimented and got positive feedback whilst perceiving themselves to constantly receiving feedback about doing more and preferably better, or simply no feedback at all, had a reinforcing negative impact, confirming their position as being inferior to their more competent peers. The latter was discussed thoroughly by the girls in the C_3 group:

Lone: And then she [referring to another girl in the group] kind of got very many compliments … because she did well. Whilst we who didn`t do that well got like: “We ignore them”.

Synne: And then if your PE teacher wants you to do well, then maybe he pulls down your self-confidence. He`d rather pull it up so that we want to do well, so we don`t go further down, in a way

According to the youngsters, and as indicated in the above extracts, PE teachers had the power to affect whether the students felt “in” or “out” through their distribution of attention and words. However, it was not only a matter of what the PE teacher said that was talked about as having inevitable influence. In the eyes of those feeling less competent and comfortable in PE, being commented upon in public could serve to increase their perception of standing out negatively of which they appeared considerably sensitive to:

Ellen: Mmm, when you notice that a pupil doesn’t manage, you should approach that pupil and kind of explain a little more thoroughly how to do it. And maybe help out. Standing on the sideline saying: “Yes, do that!” as well. But it’s often like that pupil doesn’t want that, because of the perception that you are the only one who don’t manage.

Ingrid: Then it is a kind of embarrassing to be the only one talking to the teacher, in away. (F_3)

Establishing the invaluable impact of getting feedback was, however, frequently followed by an overall experience that feedback from PE teachers, on a more general notification, was rare.

The role of the teachers appeared especially pronounced during the process of grading[7], which was often when students felt unjustly compared with others. The perceived injustice felt was specifically linked to the reoccurring issue of comparing less experienced and competent with those more able, and consequently measuring those inferior according to the standard of those superior that is having the same requirements irrelevant of unequal predispositions to perform:

> Jenny: There are boys, or girls, who are really good in football. But then they have the same requirements for them as they have to those who never have participated in football at all. And that does become wrong.
>
> Åse: You should be measured based upon your own, what you can. That is the blueprint on what you should be like. (C_4)

The standard, or requirements, set in order to evaluate and assess in the process of grading was consequently viewed as following similar pattern:

> I perceive PE teachers to compare a 6 [grade] pupil, let's say if one person gets 4 or 5, then the teacher compares to a better pupil and thinks like "You cannot get as good grade because you aren`t as good as that person". Rather, they should think individually. (Berit, E_1)

Formal processes of grading tended to be accompanied by informal processes, including praising and approving those students perceived as good at demonstrating skills. This was noted by the boys in school E:

> Arne: You easily see it when they [favourite pupils] are to show something to them [PE teachers]. That they want a little more from those pupils. Like they brag a little extra of that specific pupil if he does something.
>
> Frank: Our teacher loves giving examples, and there are a couple of persons he mentions every time, that he seems to endorse. (E_2)

PE teachers' inclinations to favour some pupils to others by praising and approving good skills was one form of judging and evaluating discussed. Bringing the issue of favouritism into discussion was something most frequently emerging within groups who perceived themselves to be devaluated and disapproved. Those finding themselves in the position of what amounted to being "favoured" didn't reflect upon the negative consequences this might lead to amongst

7 In Norway, grading of PE begins, officially, when students enter secondary school at ages 12 or 13.

their peers. Rather, from their position, getting PE teachers' approval by, for example, being asked to assist others in class by showing class how a certain activity or technique could be done, did provide them with a feeling mastery, as explained by Trond (F_1): "Getting message from the teacher to help some of the others in class, then you do feel you've done something right". Furthermore, using students as examples could, as they saw it serve to motivate peers by demonstrating that managing was doable:

> And those who maybe aren't that interested in PE feel that it`s difficult to get a good grade. Maybe they can think that "OK, it actually is possible" if a pupil stands in front and shows something. That it`s possible for them too to build themselves up and stay at that level. That way, maybe they can get better self-esteem to try and master. (Jonas, F_1)

Seemingly, by evaluating some students positively in public, the PE teacher at the same time risks evaluating other students negatively. Whether the outcome of such positive evaluations are perceived positively or negatively relates to the position the students perceive themselves to be in.

In the eyes of some youngsters, there was also a gender dimension to grading in PE. The mixed-gender group B_3 pointed to their PE teacher displaying a tendency to grade on the basis of gender-stereotypes, they reasoned this by comparing grades within the focus group setting:

> Stine: No matter what I do, I still get 4 in PE.
>
> Line: Me too.
>
> Stine: Because, I do think Line should have had better grade than Oda [third girl in group] and me … I just run around on the court and do nothing special, in a way [laughing], like me and Oda, but Line, she tries, she masters..
>
> Endre: 4 is the best grade a girl gets in PE in our class … it is almost like: "OK, girl, 4", and then you assess boys.

Boys from two different schools perceived their PE teachers to adopt a contrary view, grading girls more favourably based, seemingly, upon perceptions of the need of equality:

> Hans: They constantly talk about girls being treated equally to boys, but when it comes to activities [and such] they always get things easier.
>
> Tor: It is easier for girls to get 6 in PE than for boys.
>
> Arne: Yes. I don't want to be mean, but I think some teachers favour some one specific in class. Especially girls. (E_2)

The boys from H_2 quoted below held strong views upon their PE teachers' inclination to favour girls simply because he was more sympathetic to girls in general and, consequently, from their point of view, unfairly gave equal grades based on unequal terms:

> Mons: Well, I have the impression that it's different because, like most of the boys get the same grade as girls who are on a completely different level.
>
> Torgeir: Right!
>
> Petter: There's a lot of that going on here, to say it as it is!
>
> Torgeir: Last year, for example, there was this girl, she'd literally participated in four PE lesson. She was graded the same as me, and I'd been in practically all.

Indeed, some of the students (including females) pointed explicitly to what they interpreted as the ways in which male PE teachers were influenced by girls' physical appearance when grading:

> You know, some of the girls pulled their shorts up really high in order to get better grade. And they did get better grade. They didn't contribute in PE at all, just wandered around, where as I really made an effort. And I was graded lower than them because they were wearing handball clothes ... They were graded higher because of appearance and because they pulled their shorts up. He graded them 5 and 6. (Ellen, F_3)

Many students took issue with the actual process of grading. They felt that, in reality, teachers had often already arrived at a conclusion regarding their worth (in grading) terms: "Then Marius said. 'We have already put [allocated] the grade on some of you, but there are some we are still uncertain'" (Stine, B_3). Thus, there was a commonplace perception among the students that their PE teachers had made their minds up about the appropriate grade for many students early on in the school year and this was unlikely to change irrespective of how they developed and improved and their subsequent performances:

> Oh yes, it is Eivind, of course he's going to get that grade, and it is Thorsteinn, of course he's going to get that grade … And then it goes a sort of like that … It is just like you are who you are, you get this [the grade]. Not what you did when you did it, not how you are that year, but how you are in general. (Endre, B_3)

In this regard, students often expressed the view that PE grades frequently appeared to be arrived at by their PE teachers quite peremptorily. Several students pointed to what they viewed as the tendency of their PE teachers to grade on the basis of first impressions: "He has stuck in

his head: 'OK, he sucks in football"' (Endre, B_3). These students took the view that such initial impressions tended to become lasting impressions on the part of their PE teachers: "Once a teacher has got a bad impression of you then it is very difficult, almost impossible to get it off" (Stine, B_3). In short, the process of grading was perceived to be a process of communicating students' worth, and unsurprisingly perhaps, experienced to be a dimension in the process of feeling othered by PE teacher.

The findings presented disclose the complexity of PE as a social process in which differences, whether in terms of competency, appearance, interests, self-esteem or gender, are a part and in which interweaving interdependencies and shifting relationships shed light upon the relational and dynamic processes that actually constitute what in this study refers to as the "subject PE". The dynamic and multi directional relationships consequently lead to apparently opposite perspectives upon seemingly similar phenomena, although being perceived in comparison to, in relation to the opposing counterpart (in other words functionally interdependent).

The youngsters taking part in this study acknowledged the relational nature of PE both in terms of the kind of differing relationships to their peers and to their teacher as influencing their mental health whether positively or negatively.

The one aspect discussed as being fundamental for the processes evolving in PE with all the consequences it led to in relation to students` perceptions of success and failure, engagement and disengagement, and positive and negative outcomes was how PE tended to be organized. In this regard, organizing into appropriate teams prior to playing ball sports was considered to be discriminatory, whether directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, and was thus a key process through which being "judged" played out on a regular basis. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the organization of PE lessons was a process that the pupils believed PE teachers should take seriously, not least because organizing could make something constraining or enabling. In this vein, acknowledging differences, that everyone is good in different things, was seen as a necessary prerequisite for PE teachers when organizing PE.

One aspect of acknowledging and valuing differences was in terms of being good at varying content. Varying content would mean that more students, including those who weren`t especially good in and enthusiastic about conventional sports like football, would be provided with an opportunity to show what they were good at. This way, PE teacher could ensure that the feeling of "not being good enough" would be fluctuating rather than constant, and in the

eyes of those feeling mariginalized, it was the constant feeling of and feedback that they weren`t any good - or good enough that made them apathic and unmotivated. Trude (B_4), for example, had observed that "There's always someone who ends up being a little on the outside because they aren't as good in the PE lesson we're having" Mona (B_1), called for the following:

> Not have that kind of sport people are crazy about all the time, football and basketball. Because … That comes again, and again and again, and those who aren`t any good at that, do become tired from it. And less motivated. It's like this: every time you hear someone talking about it "We're having football or basketball", you go back to the changing room and hide.

Offering varying activities was thus seen as important because it would serve to balance the differences between those good and bad and make PE more enjoyable for all, something perceived both acceptable and understandable also amongst those good in traditional sports. The boys in the F_1-group serve to exemplify this recognition in their discussion of feeling disappointed whenever they were having dance in PE:

> Knut: If someone likes dance, then it's [PE] more enjoyable for them as well. So that it's within all themes.
>
> Trond: Right, that it [PE] should approach all themes
>
> Knut: That way everyone can enjoy, even if it`s not always enjoyable.

In fact, balancing the difference between those good and bad by choice of activity seemingly would reduce the probability that some would show off on the expense of their peers, reducing the tension of deeming and blaming according to physical worth. Something brought to attention by the self-defined non-sporty boys in the E_4 group when talking about the positives about gymnastics:

> Lars: Right, because no one is particularly good at that. Everyone makes a fool of themselves.
>
> Stian [laughing]: That is fun.
>
> Lars: Then nobody wants to show themselves off and such.
>
> Trygve: Then almost everyone is on the same level, and that`s a little better, than someone only wanting to play football.

What seemed to be the main issue, then, was not narrowly aimed at the specificity of the activity in itself, preferences naturally varied. The main issue, as perceived by these youngsters, was

what processes the different activities initiated within the public nature of PE constantly viewing themselves and their peers in relation to their surroundings.

The discussions revolving PE teachers' organization in PE took the form of keeping pupils "busy, happy, good" (Placek, 1983), from two perspectives. First, from an individual perspective by emphasizing the joy of movement and getting to spend restricted time being as much in activity as possible, as evident in the first main category. Sitting on the sideline watching others being active was nothing enjoyable whether it was due to not being or feeling included or due to the way PE was organized. Second, from the perspective of PE as a network of relationships and site for comparison. The second reason was rooted in PE teachers' position to ensure that success or failure were made less visible, in other words reducing pressure from exposing in public and enhancing involvement irrelevant of competency by organizing properly. Iver (C_1) used how volleyball tended to be organized as an example:

> If you manage to involve everyone, I think it will be easier. Because the instant it divides between those who engage and those who don't, they kind of become more and more distant from each other. One way to do that could be playing in smaller groups, maybe. Because you aren`t exposed as much to that pressure … For example, in volleyball, we play, like half the class sit watching and then the other half of class plays … That way I think people are much more afraid of involving in the game.

Participating in smaller groups was, thus, perceived to be a judicious response to the problem of marginalization, othering and alienation. Not at least because of the enabling feeling of not being observed and evaluated by others as everyone is busy doing something. Mona (B_1) perceived everything to be enjoyable when being in smaller groups:

> Because if you play against another team, they often watch. They look at you, and you kind of feel "I cannot mess this up!" But when we are in smaller groups, it`s more like: "Now there are very few here, and they [the others] are busy with themselves", and you feel you can contribute more, because you have to, in away. Because there aren't many others present to contribute. Then you get to kind of shine a little you[rself] as well.

Being active in smaller groups, and, in the eyes of many girls at least, preferably with friends, were perceived enjoyable and less constraining due to feeling more free and safe as opposed to feeling restrained by the fear of being judged. Put differently "You loosen up a little and it doesn`t get as tense" (Kristin, A_2). Ironically in this vein, perhaps, was the view that PE

potentially could and should serve to unify the whole class, occasionally by splitting into smaller groups:

Linn: You [the PE teacher] should reflect a little like, that there are differences in level and treat different according to that. And that`s just how it is. Some should maybe divide according to those feeling comfortable and those who feel uncomfortable.

Kine: We do that.

Linn: Right, but it's like, you focus upon that we are one class, and that we are supposed to have unity, blah, blah, blah. But that sometimes it is smart to split too, because it gets better for everyone. (G_2)

The significance of grouping within PE lessons was a reoccurring theme. Although asserting that grouping was both a smart and important solution for all students involved, there was contesting views upon how grouping should be done in order to provide students with the most positive PE experience possible. The two most prominent solutions discussed were related the perceived problems associated with differences in competency and with mixed-gender lessons.

In relation to the first problem, that of differences in competency, the solution to divide accordingly was perceived enabling for all. That way, everyone would be provided with the opportunity to involve and engage without anyone having to restrain themselves in order to be patient, express frustration and risk harming peers with dominant behaviour and negative comments on the one side – and feeling of being left on the outside and fearing to be judged on the other. In short, that way, everyone would be provided with a feeling of contributing and engaging. The youngsters were, however, sensitive towards that dividing according to such criteria could lead to more uneven balance between good and bad. Thus, grouping according to competency was nothing perceived straight forwardly positive when taking the other`s self-confidence into consideration. The boys in C_2, for example, reflected in the following extract:

Håvard: That would have been more fun, maybe

Magne: For some, but some might feel that they were treated unfair. If they are on a lower level.

Kjetil: Could risk destroying someone's self-confidence when they come on those lower groups. That's the bad thing about it.

Truls: I think they have to do something anyhow, since as it is now it`s organized according to those who don't know much.

Håvard: Yes, those who are bad up against those who are bad, and those who are good up against those who are good … But I think there would be conflicts, like "I'm better than you", and such.

On the other hand, playing across competency and being overrun and dominated by more competent peers could also erode self-confidence: "It does destroy their self-confidence because they are so dominated [laughing]. They don't get to learn anything because they don't get to try" (Truls, C_2). In this vein, Else (E_3) shared how dividing according to competency was perceived from the position of the "othered":

> We are always divided into like, those who are good and those who are bad … And it`s a kind of like, you don't get better self-confidence from it, in a way, when you observe that those who almost aren't capable to play nor kick a ball are on the same team as you.

In relation to the second problem, namely that of mixed-sex lessons, the argument for dividing PE activities into smaller groups by a "back to the future" solution: namely, single- rather than mixed-gender grouping within PE lessons themselves (and team games, in particular) – rather than across PE as a whole – was discussed as an organizing principle:

> It has happened a few times that, for example, he has divided into boys and girls, and then it tends to get better. For, sorry guys [looks at Ola in the mixed focus group], it's often they who are the worst … So, in many sports, it's much more fun to play just the girls, I feel. (Trine, B_1)

Dividing by gender, especially if having vigorous ball games like basketball and football, was something most frequently suggested by girls, as a consequence of perceiving boys to be "a little too much", very judgmental, high-headed and bad at inclusion. Playing within single gender groups was thus perceived more comfortable on the grounds that "I feel we are much more open minded, because here we`re on the same level, and we don't judge", as Line (B_3) phrased it. Notably in this regard, implying that dividing by gender would be the best solution was not necessarily supported by competent and competitive girls:

Gunn: I feel I do a little more in PE lessons when we are separated into girls against girls, and boys against boys.

Merete: I do think that if girls are together with girls in PE, we aren't that afraid of doing mistakes and such. But I feel I manage to perform better if I'm with the boys, because they're like…They push you a little harder, and they may be a little

more rough … In football, for example, they nudge you a little and then you aren't afraid of nudging back and use a little power, as with the girls. You are afraid of harming them. (D_3)

In sum, therefore, providing PE lessons that took diversity into account was viewed necessary, and the best possible way to do that was by being flexible and adapt both activities and organization so that diversity would neither be visible nor constraining, irrelevant of students` position as being "in" or "out".

It was not the case, however, that the youngsters did consider this to be unproblematic when looking through the eyes of their PE teacher. PE teachers were recognized as working under demanding conditions as "it is difficult for one teacher to be in control of 30 persons" (Tuva, C_3) and therefore not being capable of concentrating upon all nor capturing all processes evolving within PE. This was evident in the notion that the relationship between PE teacher and students was nothing uni-relational but rather bi-relational, and that students should contribute themselves to restore a more evenly balanced relationship if felt uneven to the extent that the relationship was constraining. More precisely, they held the view that students should approach teacher to ask for help, explanations and even give feedback in order to improve the situation they found themselves in. This was formulated in phrases like "You have to give by yourself to get something back" (Bente, D_3). Synne (C_3) opposed her peers in her group when being carried away in the discussion that being PE teacher is a job, of which making sure their students are doing well is a considerable part: "And it is a little important that it`s the pupil`s responsibility as well, in away. So when the teacher tries to do something good for you, that you don`t just ignore that, but actually try. Because they usually mean well."

The dilemma, as discussed by several girls, was that of being a part of "generation performance" with the prevailing feeling that "we are supposed to perform in everything: school, sports, body – everything is supposed to be good" (Andrea, D_1). Such "truths" made them more likely to passively interpret difficult relationships and situations in PE as being a result of simply not being good enough or not trying hard enough in relation to PE teachers' expectations as well as peer`s ability to cope. Put another way, accepting a position of being inferior with little power to change it. Hence, standing out and exposing themselves by approaching the teacher to tell how they actually felt or experienced PE and swimming could be uncomfortable and embarrassing, as recognized by Jenny (C_4): "Sometimes people are a little embarrassed of the

perhaps real reason. They don`t want others to know … People feel insecure about telling the reason or to talk about it".

To summarize, within the public nature of PE, it might be the non-public, invisible dimensions and processes therein that stimulate mental health positively or not. In the process of unpacking the underlying, but nevertheless inherently interdependent dimensions involved when exploring how and why the 10th graders experienced PE the way they did and the positive and negative consequences this might have for their mental health, the final category `PE as having formal and informal purposes 'intended and unintended consequences' was developed. This includes the formal and informal purposes of PE as perceived by the youngsters themselves involving grading, the role of the PE teacher and the potential to normalize according to prevailing "norms".

5.2.12 The ostensible purpose of PE

When the 10th graders considered the ostensible purpose(s) of PE, the formal reasons for providing pupils with PE as a school subject, one particular supposed justification surfaced namely, PE as a vehicle for (public) health promotion by providing opportunities to be physically active and therefore as having a broad role in promoting their health:

> Fredrik: To be honest, I don't think many of us really know – but I think it [PE] was initiated because we need to be more active.
>
> Børge: It's healthy.
>
> Fredrik: Yes, it is not healthy sitting on your butt all day.
>
> Stig: It`s like, your body isn't active then. If you sit home every day and try to do homework … nothing like going out, then you become less active, whilst here in PE, you get to run around. (B_2)

Such health-based justifications for PE prevailed regardless of whether or not youngsters were engaging with PA beyond school. They were also discussed in relation to the wider school context as well as in relation to youngsters' health in general.

In relation to the school context, the main health-based justification, as the youngsters saw it, was that of providing them with some PA to contrast the otherwise sedentary, "sitting still" school day: "But also because during the school day, we really only have subjects where we sit still. That way we get to move a little. Even in breaks most sit still in the canteen, so we

practically don't move" (Nora, B_5). Furthermore, PE was perceived to make the school day easier for those struggling with theory in addition to serving as a motivation to be at school:

Asbjørn: But it's better to be energized prior to a lesson than being completely blunt all day because you haven't anything to look forward to that is enjoyable that day. For example, if you only have language lessons and such one day.

Per: Then you aren't particularly motivated to sit writing.

Asbjørn: Then you aren't particularly motivated for being at school, really. (D_2)

Whether intended or not, PE was seen as serving a broader purpose by having a compensatory (physical) health function insofar as it ensured that every youngster was engaged with at least a minimum of PA:

> To provide pupils with at least some activity. Because not everyone is exercising after school or something like that, then it is a good thing that we have PE at school to ensure that those who don't exercise get some exercise after all. (Sander, B_5)

In this manner, the justificatory advocacy for PE tended to resonate public concerns related to the decreasing levels of PA amongst youngsters, something explicitly addressed by Kari (A_3): "Because many youngsters nowadays are not being especially active. Rather, they stay home to relax". By taking a reflexive stance towards their own age group in relation to levels of PA, it was the necessity of being physically active in physical health terms that was their focus. This became evident in recognitions like ideally would have needed more PE on the grounds that "We [referring to himself and a friend] are overweight, we're too big. There's no good physical health in that" (Ståle, D_2). Furthermore, they recognized that PE kept them in shape a little when their leisure interests tended to be more sedentary: "I'm not really interested in exercising. But that we have PE and such, then I still keep in shape" (Sanna, A_3). Engaging with a minimum of PA, i.e. PE, was even viewed as a necessity in order to make life a little easier: "It's not everyone who exercise and such. That way, things can become difficult in life if they do not exercise at all" (Astrid, F_3). PE was, in other words, viewed as having the functioning to serve a long-term purpose in improving public health. In this vein, to the extent of which PE was considered to have an educational purpose it was related the provision of experience with and knowledge about different physical activities with the perceived purpose to enable them to lead physically active lives with several positive outcomes for health. The conversation that took place in the C_1-group cited below serves to illustrate such perceived intentions:

Iver: To motivate people to get out and exercise a little … to improve public health, maybe. That has to be the purpose. In that sense, it`s good that in PE we are exposed to those sports involving physical activity and collaboration and preferably fresh air. Nothing like "Now we're going to the gym to see who lifts the most", in a way.

Moderator: OK. So public health is what?

Iver [interrupts]: Yes, I`d think that would be the point. A little like carpentry, art and craft are intended to make people perhaps wanting to take up such occupations.

Jarle: To educate people about how to exercise and about different sports. So that you know and maybe get a better lifestyle. That you exercise more and improve [your]quality of life and increase [your] zest for life.

Following from the youngsters' seemingly consensual view of the purpose of PE as being mainly health-based PA, some pointed to an inherent contradiction in this when taking the restricted time allocated for PE into consideration.Thus, the B_{4-} group struggled to pin down the purpose PE was intended to serve:

Trude: Be active.

Ulrik: Yes, but that doesn't really make any sense.

Trude: It's good for your health or something like that.

Ulrik: Right, but that doesn't really make any sense. Because then we should have had PE every day. But we sit two days, just like that, then we have one PE lesson, and then we sit two days. Just sit.

The inconsistency between the public concerns related to the need to "activate youngsters" on the one hand and the sedentariness prevailing in everyday life in school on the other was evident to the students. This inconsistency was also related to the "educational" elements in PE in terms of teachers actually teaching by instructing, informing and explaining which commonly was talked about as disrupting and stealing time that preferably should be spent being sufficiently active as alluded by the boys in the C_2 - group:

Vegard: It's a little annoying when they interrupt and say that "Don`t do it like that – do it like this". That they always give advice … That can be a little challenging at times.

Håvard: We waste time on it. Then there's little time for PE and such.

Another essential point discussed in relation to the supposed purpose of PE ensuring that youngsters engage with PA, was the evident gap between those already engaging with PA in their leisure – and those who did not. PE was perceived to be best liked by the former, something that was manifested in expressions like, "I think all those who do activities after school, like having PE" (Fillip, A_1) and "There`s like a major difference between those who love PE and those who don't" (Mona, B_1). In this vein, Endre (B_3) observed thus:

> But then you think like "OK, we need PE in school because there are many who don`t do any activities". But it`s often those who don`t do any activities who don`t engage in the activities … That way, it kind of just becomes like an extra training for those who actually exercise or bother, right.

They elaborated this observation:

> Endre: Because they don't do any sports, they just think: "No, I can't stand this".
>
> Stine: It's like maths. If you say "Yes, OK, I can't do this", then you can't. Then you never try in a way. If you say like "can do it", you can do it (B_3).

Endre`s and Stine's observations highlighted two prominent features surfacing in the discussions amongst those not liking PE particularly much, namely that PE tended to be about sports that required a certain competency and ability to perform, and that PE was nothing like maths or any other subjects in this regard.

Thus, PE was perceived to represent something akin to an organized sports arena within the school context. Based upon the youngsters' own assumptions that PE was intended to get all pupils active, through the provision of sports, it unintentionally added more activity to those already engaging. The second feature was PE in comparison to other subjects. Differences were inevitably perceived to be made more visible and crucial in PE. Therefore, PE teachers' ability and inclination to adapt the PE lessons to the needs and abilities of the pupils was viewed to be essential, frequently addressed as acknowledging diversity and having realistic goals so that everyone could master. In this regard, Lone (C_3) perceived norms for requirements in social science to differ from PE:

> Because in social science, for example it's like … everyone is supposed to master the same, but you don't have the same requirements for everyone because if there's one who is good in social science you expect that person to get 6 and do well, but if there`s one who struggles, then I feel that if you get 3 for example and usually get 2 it's like,

> "OK, this was very good". But in PE, it's more like "OK, you're not capable of doing one push-up like everyone else and you have to be as good as everyone else".

Because PE differed from theoretical subjects, how PE was graded was not perceived straightforward nor clear. The perceived inconsistency in the intention to grade according to effort, fair play, progress and skills has been alluded in the previous sections presented. It was the perceived lack of formative feedback, or AfL, that made pupils uncertain whether grading was based upon intended criteria. Some expressed concern regarding how difficult they found it to estimate how they were doing in PE, in terms of their likely or anticipated grade: "It is very difficult to know how you are doing in PE because you don't have theoretical tests and such. So it is a bit like 'Am I down at 3 [grade] now or am I still at 4? Or have I reached a 5?'" (Trine, B_1). In other words, "You don't really know what the teacher actually is looking for" (Elin, D_1).

This was associated with a perceived need for teacher-pupil dialogue as a form of formative feedback: "Then you would know, OK, now I have 4 [and] if I work harder I can get 5. If I don't shape-up I will get 3" (Trine, B_1). In the eyes of the boys in the F_1-group, providing pupils with regularly feedback was important not at least because they perceived it to be a subject where everyone could obtain a good grade:

> I think there should have been more [feedback], certainly when it's PE. Because everyone should be able to get 6 there. Then I think the teacher should talk a little with each individual pupil what they need to do to obtain a good grade. (Jonas).

Thus, students' perceived need for feedback (and, as a corollary, understanding why they were graded the way they were) was a leitmotif running through their comments

The requested dialogue between teacher and student, was especially prominent amongst those less engaged and who referred to themselves as being, in their own eyes, misinterpreted or even evaluated by assumption. It was often these students who emphasized PE teachers' willingness and ability to show that they were interested in and concerned about students who did not appear to be interested, engaged nor skilled when having PE. In this vein, it was girls in particular that were eager to point to the importance that teachers cared beyond performance. The girls in H_1 made this point by encouraging PE teachers to be as attentive towards the social as to the actual physical aspects of PE:

> Laila: Because he has to walk around and kind of see too that, "OK, up with your

buttocks and down with your leg" and those things. But that we have one who sees to that we are doing good socially and see to that nobody slips bad comments and such.

Tonje: It does help that he [the teacher] knows his pupils…that you can tell by looking at the person that something is wrong. And that you pay attention to demeaning comments, that you respond to that immediately and not let it flutter a way.

The perceived gap between what ideally could have enhanced students' PE experiences, in this regard, having a good relation to their PE teacher and what actually was considered doable from the position of the PE teacher didn't necessarily take the form of blaming the individual teacher. Rather, and as previously alluded to, they were sympathetic to PE teachers demanding working conditions, and consequently making it easy to "assume without knowing", as Synne (C_3) put it. The B_3 - group phrased it slightly differently:

Stine: In addition, I feel that maybe they do not see us because there are so many pupils.

Line: Right!

Stine: We have only two teachers, so maybe they just have a, OK they have got an impression of us, so ... they can't concentrate on all of us, at the same time, when we play volleyball and stuff like that, I don't think they look especially at me.

Whether PE teachers failed to acknowledge and approach their pupils intentionally or not, the outcome was, nevertheless, perceived to play a prominent role, negatively, for those not being in position to attract attention by performing:

Astrid: Because they think like, if you shy away in a way, they think that you aren`t willing to, or that you don't try.

Ellen: That you don't contribute in PE.

Astrid: Right, and it doesn't seem like they think that it has something to do with you not wanting to walk around in swim wear and such.

Lena: That you don't want to expose yourself. (F_3)

All-in-all, the formal purpose PE was perceived to have, namely ensuring that youngsters were provided with at least a minimum of PA and potentially enhance their motivation and ability to be more physically active beyond PE seemingly did not have the intended outcome. Youngsters' reflections thus resonated with prevailing concerns about reaching those "hard to reach". However, when taking the informal purpose as perceived by the youngsters into

consideration PE seemingly has, perhaps unintended, but nevertheless potentially positive outcomes by ensuring variation from theory and making them more alert for "ordinary schooling". Moreover, and as alluded by the youngsters themselves, if teachers are able and sufficiently flexible to show through action (that is through choice of content and organizing) and dialogue that they embrace diversity, PE could serve several good purposes like having fun within the school day, but also normalize the idea about "generation performance". Just precisely because PE stands out as a different subject, as made clear by Viktoria (C_4):

> You do hear much about how media influences, but personally I don`t notice that much. Observing really nice, lean girls on Instagram. After having had PE, after having had swimming and all kinds of such things, I do notice that people are different both in personality and appearance. Absolutely everyone. And I know that there are very few who looks like those super lean and good looking Insta-girls.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, will discuss the findings outlined above.

6. Discussion

The Discussion has two parts. In the first, I will briefly relate the findings from the study to current knowledge in the form of the existing literature. In the second part, I attempt to make sense of the main findings, as outlined in Chapter 5, sociologically and, more specifically, in figurational sociological terms (see Chapter 3).

6.1 Relating the findings to existing knowledge

6.1.1 Being 15 in Norway

Perhaps the first thing to say about being 15 in Norway is that the significance of being age 15 appeared to lie not merely in what was *involved* (e.g., pressures associated with school) but also what it *represented*. Put another way, the significance of being 15 lay in the significance of youth as a life-stage in which young people recognized that they were involved in a process: one of extended transitions towards adulthood. The youngsters' perceptions of the unpredictable and contingent nature of being 15 in Norway chimed with the literature on the relatively uncertain and unpredictable futures faced by youth as a whole in the Global North and their increasingly individualized biographies (Craig, Churchill, & van Tienoven, 2019; Roberts, 2016). Their perceptions were also reflective of the prolongation of a life-stage wherein all the steps young people take have a more pronounced sense of risk attached to them than hitherto, as well as particular and heightened pressures (see, e.g., Beck, 1992; Heinz, 2009). In effect, the findings from the present study reinforced Collishaw's (2015) observation regarding the greater individual vulnerability felt by contemporary youth as they negotiate youth's new condition. In Norway, as elsewhere, youngsters appear increasingly reconciled to the transition between youth and adulthood having become a longer, more drawn-out and unpredictable process. Spending longer in education was recognized as increasingly commonplace and an additional source of pressure and stress to those associated with 'growing up'. In particular, being in the transition from years of mandatory schooling towards self-chosen education routes amplified the seriousness of their choices, especially with regard to pressures related to grades. This lends support to the existing evidence that pressures related to school increase with age (see, e.g., Eriksen et al., 2017; Lillejord et al., 2017; Nielsen & Lagermann, 2017; West, 2009), which seems to peak in 10th grade (Bakken, 2018; Ruud, 2018). Nonetheless, although the youngsters experienced stress related to these pressures, they did not

necessarily consider themselves as not being able to cope, as others have observed (Eriksen et al., 2017; Bakken et al., 2018).

In many ways (e.g. increasing independence from, coupled with ongoing dependence upon, parents and families), being 15 in Norway shared many of the characteristics of being 15 in the Global North, albeit with a "twist". This took the form of the particular significance for Norwegian 15-year-olds of such things as the cultural traction of sport and PA and the relatively high aspirations and expectations that appear to be associated with living in a country with not only particularly high standards of living but also relatively egalitarian socio-economic conditions. The social norms associated with these aspirations and expectations, however, may give rise to a number of unintended consequences for young people's mental health. For example, those who perceive themselves to be struggling to live up to the prevailing standards might struggle to resolve their apparent failure to (Elstad, 2005; Dahl, Bergsli, & van der Wel, 2014).

Perhaps the most obvious similarity between the lives of the Norwegian 15-year-olds and other youngsters in the developed world manifested itself in what sociologists refer to as harried lives. In this respect, the descriptions of their daily lives supplied by the young Norwegians in this study chimes with the literature on youths' lives more generally; not least in terms of the pervasive perceptions of time pressures – e.g. on their resting and sleeping time and opportunities to socialize with friends – and, as a corollary, the harried nature of all aspects of their lives. Ironically, the pervasiveness of sport and physical exercise among Norwegians of all ages, and young people in particular (see, e.g., Bakken, 2019a; Green et al., 2015; Nordbakke, 2019) may well be exacerbating perceptions of pressure and time impoverishment. Even among those youngsters for whom sport and exercise tend to help relaxation and reduce stress levels, playing sport was often part of an overall active yet, at the same time, harried leisure profile which increased stress (with the consequence that these two processes tended to cancel-out each other's effects) (Roberts & Brodie, 1992). Interestingly, the time pressures brought about by a particular mix of the increasing demands of school and schoolwork, part-time work, increasingly serious sport for those playing organised sport, the desire to sustain friendship networks and so forth as they get older, may well be driving the evident tendency among Norwegian youth to engage with leisure activities that are flexible and easy to fit into their busy lives. The "harried lives" phenomenon is consistent with earlier work among Danish youth (Thing, Nielsen, & Ottesen, 2015).

Time pressures were, however, only one form of pressure experienced by the 15-year-olds. Perhaps an equally compelling pressure took the form of the perceived necessity to reflexively *create* a satisfactory and socially acceptable self-identity. This was another similarity between being 15 in Norway and elsewhere. As Roberts (2009) observes, reputations matter to young people. While they do not want to be the same as everyone else, they do want to stand out in socially acceptable ways. They want to fit-in while expressing individuality among their own close friends. Young people need to establish identities in this way. Thus, being 15 meant reflexively developing an identity which is not merely ascribed by family background. The identities and reputations established within youth sub-cultures remain important for as long as adult destinations remain unknown. Hence the reason sport becomes central in some 15–year-olds' lives and relatively marginal in others. Hence, also, the significance of social media and gender for young Norwegians' identities and self-esteem.

The explosion in digital and social media platforms has led to increasing calls for more to be done to prepare children and young people for the emotional demands of social media (Booker et al., 2018; Frith, 2017). Against this backdrop, whether all the time spent Facebooking, Whatsapping and Snapchatting has any detrimental consequences for youngsters' mental health has continued to attract considerable attention (Allen et al., 2014; Booker et al., 2018; Frith, 2017; Verduyn et al., 2017). The findings from the present study lend support to previous work (Allen et al., 2014; Booker et al., 2018; Goodyear et al., 2018), that youngsters perceive clear benefits from social media and the internet more generally, including connecting them with friends and family and remaining informed about those things that matter to youngsters at this age. These contributed to youngsters' sense of being "connected". However, the findings also add support to existing knowledge (see, e.g., Alm & Låftman, 2018; Blomfield et al., 2013; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Yang et al., 2018) that social media use is linked with low self-esteem and poor body-image (although causality remains unclear) among other potentially harmful consequences for youngsters' mental health. In this respect, the study also provides evidence that self-esteem is not simply significant in relation to grading – and education more generally – but also a crucial aspect of quality of life and mental health (Fox, 2000). The issue of self-esteem appeared particularly pertinent for girls. Booker et al. (2018) explain the gender dimension to decreasing levels of happiness between the ages of 10 and 15 in the UK in terms of the different ways that girls and boys interact with social media. For example, girls may be more likely than boys to compare their lives with those of friends and peers (Booker et al., 2018) – whether those are filtered selfies or positive posts about friendships, relationships or

material possessions, all of which can lead to feelings of inadequacy and lower levels of satisfaction. The pressures associated with having peers like or approve status updates and a perceived fall in or lack of popularity could add further pressure at, what for many teenagers is a tricky time in their lives (Frith, 2017). All of this is applicable to the Norwegian 15–year-old girls in the present study. The boys in this study, however, while recognizing social media use as a source of pressure for all the reasons cited above, tended to consider themselves as being better positioned to shrug off the potentially negative consequences than girls. All told, the findings reinforce the perception that social media use has accelerated the ease and extent to which comparisons can be made within and beyond peer groups – especially viz-à-viz desirable youth identities (West, 2009) – comparisons that resonate significantly among young people (Harter et al., 1998; Perloff, 2014; Steinberg & Morris, 2001) in terms of their identity formation (Hilmarsen & Arnseth, 2017).

The gender dimension to the influences of social media was a particular illustration of the broader gender dimension to being 15 in Norway. The tendency of both boys and girls in the study to slip easily into gender stereotypes and caricatures (what, in effect, figurational sociologists would call "the best of the best" and "the worst of the worst") when trying to describe their perceptions of their own as well as the opposite sex, served as a reminder that even in a country with greater levels of gender equality than any other, sexual and gender stereotypes remained deeply-rooted during youth, ready to surface when and where constraints may be sufficiently loosened, such as in PE lessons or on Instagram. In this regard, researchers have highlighted the importance for boys of conforming to masculine ideals by projecting identities which centre around physical strength, also addressed as toughness, and being athletic or sporty (Connell, 2005; Phoenix & Frosh 2001; Swain, 2004), often with the prospect of securing their popularity. In this vein, the boys in this study tended to distance themselves from "psychological" symptoms, using humour and irony to demonstrate that they were not taking things too seriously, a finding that is consistent with earlier work (MacLean et al., 2010). However, they also recognized themselves as being influenced by pressures and feeling distressed at times, although they tended to express themselves in less emotionally-laden terms than girls, by talking about difficulties sleeping, getting more easily irritated, and so on. With regard to the girls, the findings in this study further lend support to MacLean et al.'s (2010)

study in the sense that they were more likely (and willing) to express their concerns about being seen as "weak" or "different". That said, there were girls who were evidently reluctant to reveal

weaknesses in a similar way to the boys because of the risk of being perceived as unable to cope.

More specifically with regard to the youngsters' views on mental health, two aspects could be discerned. First, they talked about processes in their everyday lives relating to school, friends, leisure time activities, social media, and so on and the variations in mood and emotions they gave rise to. Moreover, the view that mental health was about 'being satisfied with yourself and the person you are' was prominent in the youngsters' discussions. Such perceptions might be taken to imply that young people have an everyday and multifaceted understanding of mental health in the broad sense as noted by Shucksmith et al. (2009). Furthermore, in discussing the joys and challenges of their lives, their views revealed a conceptualization of mental health as dynamic and relational (Gibson & Malcolm, 2019; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010) rather than static and isolated. In this regard the young people's understandings of mental health went beyond the pathological (Skogen et al., 2018). Second, they revealed that mental health related to what they viewed as having negative dimensions in the form of conditions such as depression and anxiety as well as negative perceptions about oneself. For many of the youngsters these negative dimensions were difficult to discuss because they found it hard to relate to these kinds of phenomena themselves and tended to speak in terms of them being 'what is inside your head' and thus difficult to specify and elaborate. At the same time, however, there was a tendency for the youngsters to view themselves as often as falling short when measuring up to others and, in this regard, mental health was then seemingly difficult to attain.

6.1.2 PE and mental health

Perhaps the most striking theme to emerge from the study was the fact that PE was valued by the students for what it was *not* as much as what it was. Among the "sporty" as much as the "non-sporty" students, the appeal of PE often lay in being different to and a break from normal (academic, passive, boring) school lessons of the kind reported by Bakken (2019b). The youngsters' preoccupation with enjoyment alongside their perceptions of PE as primarily a break from more scholarly activity and, at the same time, an opportunity for informal social interaction and strengthening social bonds, reaffirms existing knowledge (see, e.g., Coulter & Ní Chróinín, 2013; Dyson, 2006). In short, the students' justifications for PE revolved around the more immediate – and, as they saw it, more pressing – benefits of the subject as an antidote (whether inherently enjoyable or not) to what were viewed as the rest of their (increasingly)

academic, routinized and performance-oriented school lives. The benefits of PE were thus seen as *recreational* rather than *educational*.

In this regard, very many of the students shared a belief that PE could and should serve as a vehicle through which (what amounted to) their mental health could be enhanced by serving as an antidote to the restricted opportunities for physical movement, exercise and recreation and academic demands of the rest of schooling. Put another way, what the youngsters viewed as most beneficial in terms of their mental health were opportunities to play (for fun) the activities that they enjoyed, and had degrees of competence in, in a more-or-less recreational or competitive format (depending upon their orientations), with their friends, in climates more akin to their experiences of leisure-time physical recreation than school PE. Ironically, however, the students were also keen to highlight the beneficial consequences for the rest of schooling of energetic physical recreation in PE lessons.

Based on the students' perceptions of the subject it seems that one of the crucial ways in which PE has the potential to benefit mental health is through the opportunities it provides for sociability. In this respect, the importance placed on feeling connected to friends and peers was a leitmotif that ran through the whole study, so much so that it could easily have been interpreted as the most significant aspect of PE viz-a-vis mental health. In this regard, the youngsters viewed PE as counterbalancing the otherwise unsocial or individualistic school day. In this manner the study provides support for Nordbakke's (2019) findings that organized sport (in one form or another) can be an important social arena where friendships are both made and sustained. By extension, therefore, where opportunities – such as those provided by PE – for youngsters (however competent they may or may not feel themselves to be) to develop, sustain and strengthen peer and friendship bonds *through* 'sport' (broadly defined) in settings that suit them, then the subject runs the risk of having unintended consequences in terms of reinforcing feelings of social exclusion among those who do not participate in organized sporting activities in their leisure time. (see,e.g., Evans 2004)

The occasional references by the students to a desire to simply be allowed to play, in a manner not unlike childhood play, points up another, perhaps unintended, consequence of contemporary PE for youngsters' mental health: namely, the seriousness of PE. The desire for playfulness, alongside the drift towards seriousness and performance evokes the observation of

Penney and Evans (2008) that given the privileging of performance in contemporary PE, qualitative dimensions such as desire, fun, spontaneity, risk taking and other emotions, along with notion of sociability and interdependency have been diminished. Nordbakke (2019) has highlighted the fact that increased participation in organized leisure activities among Norwegian 5–12-year-olds is leading to what is called the "professionalization of play" wherein "children's spontaneous and self-driven play is overrun by leisure activities organized and run by adults, which disproportionately emphasizes learning and academic success" (p. 358). The apparent concern with performance in conjunction with assessment and evaluation (e.g., grading) in PE may well exacerbate their preoccupation with attaining the best marks and results and being the best possible as a member of Norway`s "performance generation".

It was interesting to note the students' belief that *physical* health was very likely to be the formal or "official" purpose of PE stood in marked contrast to their perceptions of PE as a vehicle through which their mental health could be enhanced by serving as the aforementioned antidote to the restricted opportunities to move and academic demands of the rest of schooling. In this regard, the study also substantiated Malcolm and Gibson's (2018) observation regarding the seeming contradiction inherent in sport, insofar as it incorporates particular forms of risks that can impact mental health. In other words, seeking out emotionally stimulating experiences can often result in negative effects such as not feeling good enough, lack of mastery, decreased self-esteem, lack of positive feedback, and feeling constrained by rules and expectations (from coaches and PE teachers, among others).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the dimensions of PE viewed as having especially significant consequences – in terms of any mental health benefits or negative consequences – included the content and delivery of PE; in other words, the specific activities on offer (e.g., football) and the degrees of competition these may or may not entail, alongside the teachers' predispositions and the ways in which the subject was taught. Together, these processes constituted something akin to *classroom climate*. Classroom climate refers to students' perceptions of the prevailing atmosphere or mood during PE lessons (from the changing room through to the lesson itself), including the attitudes of teachers and fellow students to all aspects of the PE lesson (from grouping of pupils through to norms regarding competitiveness). Classroom climate can be perceived by students as unsupportive, even hostile, and detrimental to enjoyment and learning. This is typically referred to as a negative classroom climate. A positive classroom climate, on the other hand, describes a supportive, unthreatening milieu seen as conducive to enjoyment,

participation and achievement (e.g., in terms of group pressures towards taking the activities seriously).

In this regard, the 10th graders had a good deal to say about the content of PE in their schools. Those activities that are, by their very nature, sporting – that is, physically vigorous and competitive game-contests – provoked relatively strong responses, both good and bad, from the students. The responses of many girls, as well as those boys who perceived themselves as less-able in sporting terms, merely confirmed what has long been known about school PE (see, e.g., Kirk, 2010) – as they transition through the life-stage of youth, youngsters who are not good at sport tend to shy away from engaging with settings that revolve around sporting competition. In this regard, the content and delivery of PE and the extent to which it generated feelings of enjoyment and fun, appeared central to the perceived classroom climate in the present study. On this matter the study found evidence supporting Lyngstad et al.'s (2016) highlighting of "hiding techniques" such as "kidding around" when situations became difficult or embarrassing, as well as being rough and noisy in order to hide a lack of skills and appearing to engage without actually involving oneself.

Thus, the content and delivery of PE mattered to students, not least because of the differences in and significance of sporting competence. This was not only a prerequisite for enjoyment of many of the activities, and especially team games, it was also often presented as a necessary prerequisite for experiencing such activities as cathartic. This did not apply to the same extent to those activities that were less or non-competitive where, because they were less demanding of high levels of competence and a positive disposition towards competition, were experienced (by those whose skills and interests lay elsewhere) as more enjoyable, relaxing and cathartic, as well as enabling them to demonstrate a modicum of competence. In activities of this kind, engaging on more equal terms with one another was deemed important, not least because of what was perceived as a more sociable climate. This was particularly so among the girls, but was, nevertheless, acknowledged by boys. In this regard, the present study adds to the literature on the significance of classroom climate in PE (see, e.g., Morgan & Carpenter, 2002), not least in confirming the importance of teachers' attitudes (e.g. towards inclusion of non-sporty youngsters and even those sporty youngsters who do not see themselves as traditional team games players and the recognition of effort) – as well as those of their peers. Teachers do, indeed, appear central to creating the conditions for youngsters' sense of well-being (OECD, 2017).

Perhaps the most detrimental aspect of classroom climate in PE for the youngsters' self-esteem and self-identities was what is typically referred to as the process of "othering". This refers to the ways in which some youngsters (e.g. those lacking sporting competence, who were out of condition and girls) are labelled or portrayed as somehow different from those who are in a position to do the labelling – be they fellow students (e.g. sporty boys) or teachers. Whether with regard to sporting competence, ideal-type sex-stereotypical body shapes or physical condition, PE was seen as a site of constant comparison from which there was no escape (not unlike social media[8]), with all the negative mental health consequences that attend being evaluated by peers and teachers. All-in-all, a particularly noteworthy feature of PE in the eyes of the students was its public nature: that everyone, whether they liked it or not, was visible to everyone else, with all the consequences for their sense of self-identity, self-esteem, confidence and other dimensions of their mental health.

It was also noteworthy that the likelihood that PE not only could, but would, have a positive impact on sporty youngsters was not always the case. These were often the youngsters who engaged in what might be seen as the lesser status activities (or "alternative" sports) in their leisure, such as gym, dance, parkour, drill, and martial arts. Those students whose abilities and sports were perceived as not being particularly valued by their PE teachers expressed frustration regarding PE being overly-focused upon traditional activities and sports, thereby robbing them of an opportunity to "shine" as well as enjoy themselves and reaffirmed findings elsewhere in Norway (see, e.g., Säfvenbom et al., 2015).

All-in-all, the findings add weight to several aspects of Tudor et al.`s (2019) study regarding those aspects of PE – what they conceptualise as the "social", "physical and organizational" and "performance environment" – that can generate "stressors" in PE. The former, the social environment includes peer relations. When it came to the physical and organizational environment, the changing facilities and the availability of particular activities were seen as stressors threatening the mental equilibrium of the 11–16-year-olds in the Tudor et al. (2019) study, and this was apparent from the present study also. What Tudor et al. (2019) refer to as "performance environment stressors" included those situations in PE that involved "the difficult acquisition of physical skills" (p. 675) and situations "where physical appearance and physical competencies were exposed". These stressors too were particularly prominent in this study.

[8] The difference here is that youngsters are not compelled (although they may feel so) to engage with social media as they are with PE.

The findings also raise some interesting questions regarding the place of PE in Norwegian education and society. In relation to education, the study adds to our understanding of students' perceptions of the prevailing *school* climate and the apparent focus on achievement and grades in PE, as well as the classroom. What makes the Norwegian situation especially interesting, however, is the fact that the process of grading re-introduces the kind of pressures seen as characterizing demands for academic achievement associated with the rest of schooling. If we treat as axiomatic Weber's observation that people respond to circumstances according to their interpretations of the situation (Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946) then, as far as the youngsters' in this study were concerned, the demands of an academically-oriented Norwegian school curriculum – exacerbated by the process of grading in PE – have resulted in students perceiving a key mental health benefit of PE to be found in its (latent) function in relation to the rest of schooling: that is, as an alternative – a form of physical recreation in an otherwise academic milieu. Many youngsters in this study could accept and live with both "good" and "bad" PE as long as it provided something markedly different from theoretical subjects. That is the weak sense of the mental health benefits of PE. The strong sense suggests that for those good at sport and who like conventional sports (and team games, in particular) then PE has the potential to offer experiences of "flow"(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) that may not be found elsewhere in school life. It may be this, in particular, that underpins the cathartic value of PE. Interestingly, it was apparent that experiences of flow were available in PE – even to those less sporty – in the form of non-conventional games and team sports, or what the youngsters referred to as "activities not typically associated with PE".

In this regard, the study supports the observation of those, such as Bernstein et al. (2011), to the effect that while skill-level and competency can be a crucial factor in the enjoyment of PE, nonetheless, those less-skilled are palpably still able to enjoy the sociability of such activities as long as activities are presented in a less performance-oriented (Mitchell et al., 2015), more accessible and supportive PE classroom climate (Sävfenbom et al., 2015). Put another way, what appears more important than the activities themselves – or even perceptions of competence therein – is the psychosocial environment or classroom climate in which they are delivered. This chimes with findings suggesting that as far as *mental* health is concerned, we need to take the context in which PA takes place and the relationships therein into consideration (see e.g., Lillejord et al., 2016).

The findings in this study also add to the available evidence on assessment, in general, in Norway as well as assessment (and grading) practices in PE, in particular, in several ways. First,

it is clear that assessment and grading in PE provide a neat illustration of Tveit's (2018) observation that teachers of school subjects in Norway in general have "struggled to integrate formative assessment into their national testing programmes"; thereby calling into question "whether national states' AfL efforts can be well served in national testing programmes primarily designed for conventional governing or certification purposes" (Tveit, 2018). Tveit (2014) argues that "Norwegian primary and secondary education is riddled with unresolved tensions as to the role of assessment criteria and national tests" that have accompanied the introduction of outcomes-based curricula. That said, this might be true of PE in Norway as well, if such "unresolved tensions" were apparent. But, based on the findings from this study they seemingly are not. Debates "over the extent to which tests should be used for accountability and/or diagnostic purposes" (Tveit, 2016) appear to be highly relevant and applicable to PE in Norway.

The findings also add weight to the evidence that PE teachers in Norway do use tests and performance outcomes in order to set grades in PE, despite the fact that Circular 08-2012 from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NDET, 2015b) states that extensive use of results from tests as a basis for setting a grade in PE can conflict with the goal-related assessment principle in the regulations *Opplæringslova §3-3* [Education act]. According to the regulations, assessment and subsequent grading in PE should be criterion-referenced – it should, in other words, be based on students' achievement of pre-defined competencies, and effort, rather than norm-referenced: i.e. graded in relation the achievements of their peers in tests, for example. The supposed benefits vis-à-vis "providing teachers and schools with information they can use to inform their instruction moving forward" (Tveit, 2016), notwithstanding, based on the present study it seems that policy attempts to encourage AfL in PE seem to not yet have been translated into PE teachers' actual practices– in other words, their seemingly intuitive reliance upon traditional and taken-for-granted approaches to assessment focused, as it still tends to be, upon outcomes rather than processes and on student performance rather than assessment for progression or learning. All-in-all, it appears that assessment practices in PE have been and remain slow to change (Leirhaug et al., 2016). Consistent with the findings from Leirhaug and MacPhail's (2015) study, PE teachers do not appear to have re-considered their assessment and grading practices. Thus, the notion that a revised approach to assessment in Norway – heralded by the 2020 curriculum reform to be implemented gradually from 2020 (NDET, 2018a) might provide teachers and schools with information they can use to inform their instruction moving forward (Tveit, 2016), seems to be challenging with regard to changing

Norwegian PE teachers' assessment practices. PE teachers in Norway do still use tests in order to establish grades in PE, despite the current assessment regulations (NDET, 2015c) do not allow for the use of tests (physical or sporting) as the basis for comparing students in the form of norm-referencing. Rather, the focus is upon criteria referencing on the basis of competence (in a broad sense e.g. beyond physicality) and effort particularly in a manner that forms part of AfL (Leirhaug & MacPhail, 2015). Circular 08-2012 (NDET, 2015b) explicitly states that extensive use of results from tests as a basis for setting a grade in PE can conflict with the goal-related assessment principle in the regulations to the *Opplæringslova §3-3* [Education Act]. Reasons for this apparent resilient towards adhering to and practicing AfL might, however, be rooted in PE teachers` struggle to find the balance between more specific criterion-referenced assessment and process-oriented non-criterion-referenced learning (Svennberg et al., 2018). All that said, it is noteworthy that while grading (and the tests involved) were perceived as uncomfortable experiences by many youngsters in the study, the teachers' propensity for ongoing assessment of performance and competency were seen as considerably more problematic as far as their enjoyment, self-confidence and self-esteem were concerned. In this regard, the findings also reinforce the impression that PE teachers believe that they can *see* whether or not their students are learning and improving, not least because they *know* their students. This was, at least, certainly the interpretation of the 15-year-olds in the present study. They also underline the well-established impression that PE teachers' assessment of their students tends to be summative, based on sporting competence and performance rather than formative, incorporating recognition of effort and improvement (Hay, 2006) – as required in assessment schemes for PE in Norway.

Insofar as the process of assessment and grading in Norwegian PE remains preoccupied with ability, physical competency and performance then it is likely to exacerbate a number of unintended consequences. In the first instance, some students' enjoyment of and engagement with PE will continue to be compromised as a consequence of their apprehension towards assessment and grading. In placing students under what may appear as constant evaluation – unable to simply "play" and unrestrictedly engage in activities irrespective of their sporting abilities – assessment and grading is likely to undermine or even erode the potential psychological benefits of PE by reducing the fun and spontaneity and the associated catharsis while exacerbating the negative feelings some experience in a subject that by its very nature tends towards a performance-orientation. Consequently, the process of grading in PE continues to threaten relationships between students and their teachers, as well as students and the subject

matter itself. Put simply, while it may be motivational for some students in some situations, grading in PE – a subject for which the main justification is typically seen to be the promotion of health and the joy of leading physically active lives – can be antithetical to mental health. Because PE is embedded in the over-arching regime of assessment and grading it is subject to the same pressures as school subjects in general. As much as students' perceptions of and experiences with assessment and grading are likely to be coloured by established perceptions about themselves as being "able" and "worthy" through feedback and grades received in the process of secondary schooling, the findings confirm Redelius et al.'s. (2009) observation that grading in PE is a powerful tool as it makes "the abilities and knowledge that are most valued become visible" (p. 250).

In short, assessment and grading seem to alienate those less-able students who already find themselves on the margins of recruitment to PA and sport through PE. Being devalued, and thus, alienated may be particularly biddable in a society where sport has considerable cultural traction. The unintended consequences of: (i) the grading process, (ii) PE teachers' seeming inability to recognize and cater for "effort" and improvement, (iii) the manner in which the process of grading impacts upon (not to say, distorts, the content and delivery of PE) reinforces the alienation of those already disengaged from PA and sport and threatens to further marginalize those on the margins of PE and sport. These conclusions have been well-documented in previous work (see, e.g., Evans, 2004; Nyberg & Larsson, 2014; Redelius et al., 2009). As Evans (2004) concludes, in these conditions PE will serve to reproduce the differences in physical abilities and interests achieved beyond PE rather than challenge them.

Clear indication of the significance of grading for the students was found in their responses when asked if and how they would change school PE given the opportunity. The tendency to point to grading and the assessment process (or rather the lack of the latter), rather than, for example, the sporting content of PE lessons, teaching styles or even organization (such as mixed-ability groupings) – even though they felt strongly about each of these aspects of the subject – appeared indicative of the prominence of assessment and grading in PE in youngsters' minds and its impact upon their experiences of PE, as well as the potential cathartic function of the subject. In other words, it is likely that fewer beneficial mental health consequences will be experienced the more PE converges with other curriculum subjects. Grading within the class not only makes young people feel uncomfortable, it also affects the processes within PE.

The findings also lend support for Wiklund et al.'s (2017) claim that not only do body and fitness ideals [remain] gendered but that teenage girls continue to be confronted by the paradox of shaping themselves as "strong *and* skinny" (p. 441) as well as persistent and pervasive stereotypes regarding ideal male and female bodies (Strandbu & Kvalem, 2014). Thus, the study found evidence to support Eriksen et al.'s (2017) observation that more boys than girls tend to be satisfied with their physical appearance and "looks". It also reinforces the perception that body satisfaction has a particularly strong effect on self-esteem throughout youth (Von Soest & Wichstrøm, 2014). Unsurprisingly, therefore, and consistent with the findings from Strandbu and Kvalem's (2014) study, "body talk" (what Strandbu and Kvalem refer to as "fat talk") was considerably more prevalent among girls than the boys, while body issues in general were considered more sensitive and problematic issues for girls than boys. All that said, othering is evidently multi-dimensional. In other words, it reflects what is often referred to as the intersectionality of various other and othered identities (Robinson, 2018). Thus, in this study, normative pressures relating to ideal-type feminine physical appearance was not felt so much, if at all, by sporty girls. Here, the findings appear to support Beltrán-Carrillo et al.'s (2018) observation that "adolescents who are competent in sport are less influenced by ideal body discourses than by performative body discourses" (p. 257).

The findings also add weight to Aasland et al.'s (2019) observation that, for both boys and girls, being identified as an "able student", in PE and sporting terms, requires success in physical tests and grading alongside "exhibiting skills in traditional ball games". Where the present study diverges is insofar as exhibiting skills in traditional ball games was taken to indicate that the students, both boys and girls, were competent in a broad range of activities and not merely in ball games *per se*. They were, in other words, simply more able. At the same time, when it comes to what Aasland et al. (2019) refer to as "gender performativity": "being perceived as a 'spunky girl' results in a positive evaluation, while being timid or shy is not similarly valued" (p. 1). As with Aasland et al.'s (2019) study, the present findings support the view that this results in significant tension between teachers and students.

All-in-all, four of the five themes identified – in peer-reviewed articles published in English over the past 30 years (Beni et al., 2017) – as central to young people's meaningful experiences of PE – social interaction, fun, challenge, motor competence – were, likewise, central to the experiences of youngsters in this study. The fifth theme – personally relevant learning – took the form of PE as an antidote to the emphasis on learning and academic study elsewhere in the curriculum. In policy terms, therefore, the "take home" message from this study is, I suggest, of immense significance for school PE. In the context of a hegemonic academic orthodoxy and the associated "crisis of legitimation" (Stolz, 2014) pervading PE, the marginalization of the subject within the school curriculum has been a persistent threat throughout the history of state secondary schooling in the West. Hence, articulating the (alleged) social as well as educational value of PE has been something of a holy grail among physical educationalists for over half a century. Ironically, it may be that in the context of a moral panic regarding the mental health of young people, the best justificatory defense for PE becomes physical *recreation* as an antidote to (academic) schooling – and other pressures associated with the life-stage of youth – rather than PE as education and one more subject on the "academic treadmill" (Dore, 1997).

6.2 Theorizing young people, PE and mental health from a figurational sociological perspective

In theorizing the relationship between young people, PE and mental health, the main figurational concepts I use are figuration itself (and, within that, the concept of interdependence, in particular), power balances, established-outsiders, involvement–detachment, and habitus. I begin, however, with the sociology of the emotions, in part because the emotions were central to the young people's perceptions of their mental health in general and PE in particular. I also begin the theoretical explanation by focusing on the emotions because they are fundamentally *social*: they develop within and are shaped by figurations of *interdependent relations*.

6.2.1 Young people, PE and mental health and the sociology of emotions

Although often treated as the proper domain of psychology, the emotions have long been central to sociological concerns (implicit in concepts such as alienation, ideology, and social norms). The emotions feature prominently in figurational sociology in particular – in the key concept of involvement–detachment, for instance. The sociology of the emotions is central to this thesis insofar as the study focussed upon young people's mental health. It is also central because the

study explores the role of a school subject – PE – that tends to elicit strong emotional responses from youngsters of all ages, across the globe, and has significant consequences for various dimensions of mental health, such as identity and self-esteem. Consequently, among the many and varied issues related to the sociology of the emotions and young people, this study focuseupon those aspects of school, and PE in particular, which impacted upon their emotional states and, by extension, various aspects of their mental health.

It was noteworthy that the youngsters tended to make sense of their emotional states (e.g. being up one moment, down the next) in both biological and social terms, and usually a blend of these. Sometimes they explained the "storm and stress" of being 15 in terms of the biology of adolescence (e.g. emotional states that they associated with puberty), while at other times they offered explanations related to the life-stage of youth (e.g. transitioning, eventually, from school to work). In whatever ways the 15-year-olds sought to make sense of their emotional states, it was noteworthy that these were significantly impacted upon by their relationships with others with whom they were interdependent – from friends, through peers to teachers – and, more specifically, the consequences of various aspects of these relationships for their self-identities and self-esteem. The youngsters recognized that their emotional states and, more specifically, their feelings (e.g., of pleasure, satisfaction, disappointment, embarrassment, confidence), often arose from comments – whether real, anticipated or just imagined – from significant others in their networks, no matter how trivial they might appear to the outside observer. Their feelings were, in other words, generated in and through their interdependent relationships with others in their various networks: from friendship groups, through PE lessons to social media platforms. Perhaps the most obvious example of this was the ways in which girls' body-image often appeared to be at the mercy of their peers' observations whether in idle conversation, during PE lessons or on social media. Thus, the significance of youngsters' relations points up the centrality of the concept of interdependence to a figurational understanding, not only of young Norwegians' mental health but also, and more specifically, the relationship between PE and mental health in their lives.

6.2.2 Figurations and interdependencies

The significance of figurations is grounded in what Murphy (2019 calls "the all-encompassing ontological premise" (p. 294), that all people everywhere are bound to others in bonds of interdependency. Human beings are shaped by their relations with others from birth. It follows from this that mental health is inherently *relational*. Thus, making sense of mental health and

the emotions requires an appreciation of the ways in which psychological states are socially generated, as fundamentally products of social relations. At the time in their lives when they are moving from childhood to adulthood, both physically and socially (albeit, with different start and end points and differing durations – approaching or in the midst of puberty while, at the same time, transitioning through the life-stage of youth), young people are always and everywhere enmeshed in networks of various kinds (e.g. school, sport, friendship, family and, in recent times, social media).

Peer and friendship groups proved to be especially significant networks of interdependence for the youngsters in this study. The emotional security provided by simply being within friendship networks was typically manifest in youngsters' perceptions of being allowed to simply be themselves. When their networks broadened, as in the case of PE lessons, and chains of interdependence grew, degrees of insecurity crept in as youngsters became apprehensive of others' responses to or judgements about them (particularly when presenting in front of the class or being teamed up in PE with those other than friends). The same was true, unsurprisingly, for social media.

In this regard, it was apparent from the findings that the interdependencies inherent in social figurations or networks have varying degrees of significance for mental health and its constituent components (e.g. self-esteem, anxiety); not least, because how youngsters felt about themselves was intimately related to their interdependencies ("having someone to talk to") and previous experiences. In this study, young people's most important interdependencies, in terms of their mental health, were friends, peers (both real and imagined) and PE teachers. The impact of some of the students' friendship and peer group networks were particularly strong, in part due to the intensity of the associations (in sport, in particular) but also because they extended well beyond PE and school and, therefore, permeated large parts of young people's lives in and out of school. Those youngsters engaging with team sports (such as handball, football, and basketball), for example, tended to be involved with the same individuals in different figurations: e.g. in both school and leisure settings. In such cases, sporting networks were also friendship networks. These sporting and friendship figurations inevitably spilled over into school PE making the experience of PE for these youngsters far more likely to generate positive rather than negative experiences. On the other hand, changing leisure and sporting networks (e.g. dropping out of team sports) meant changing who "you hang [out] with" and the felt need to "begin again", as it were, in terms of developing emotionally secure friendship networks.

The significance of interdependencies extended beyond the youngsters' immediate networks, whether friendship groups, PE lessons and even school more widely. Whether they realised it or not (and, for the most part, they did), young people were involved in networks – real and imagined communities – beyond their immediacy. The most obvious example was the family. However, a less obvious but equally compelling and, in terms of their mental health, influential network was that of social media. The increasing pervasiveness of social media (and Instagram, in particular) in the 15–year-olds' lives provided a neat illustration of their involvement in what they perceived to be ever-increasing, ever-lengthening chains of interdependence – chains of interdependence that inevitably constrained them to think in particular ways about themselves in relation, for example, to ideal-type Norwegian youth and what constituted "success" and/or "fitting in". Their use of social media illustrated the ways in which the social forces or constraints that characterize networks or figurations are nothing more or less than forces or constraints exerted by people over one another and over themselves (Elias, 1978, p. 17) within figurations or networks: the very same young people who felt themselves constrained by social norms and peer pressure were, at one and the same time, constraining others by exercising pressure on them while feeling pressured themselves (Goudsblom, 1977).

6.2.3 Power, power relations and power ratios

Bound up with the ontological supremacy of bonds of interdependence are power relations and the associated power balances: i.e. a recognition that the inevitability of interdependencies (among young people, for example) leads to the inevitability of power relations therein. Interdependencies generate power relations and, correspondingly, power ratios. Power relations have consequences for mental health. The students in this study were sensitive to what amounted to power relations and balances of power with a breadth of people in various networks, from parents, through peers to teachers but also a more "generalised other" in the form of a real but also an imagined peer group community on social media.

One obvious example of the significance of power relations for the young people's mental health was the PE teacher–student relationship. In this study, school teachers generally were perceived as having a good deal more power than they themselves as students. In the case of PE this was believed to be apparent not only in the content of the PE lesson (e.g. which activity or activities were undertaken) but also the delivery of the lesson (e.g. teachers acknowledging effort, accepting or intervening in unacceptable behaviours, and providing feedback). The relative power of the PE teacher was most apparent, however, in relation to a particularly

contentious area, namely grading. All that said, evidence for the sociological observation that power is most adequately conceived of in terms of ratios (in keeping with the fundamental premise of interdependence) was to be found in what appeared to be the ability of some youngsters (e.g. those good at sport) to influence their PE teachers' judgements regarding, for example, grading. Their inclusion and exclusion or marginalization by PE teachers and other youngsters was another example of the ways in which some youngsters perceived the power balances in PE lessons to shift or tilt away from them in a manner that had inevitable consequences for not only their experiences of PE but also their levels of anxiety, embarrassment and so forth. The reciprocal nature of interdependencies and the consequences for power relations that impacted upon the youngsters' mental health was also readily apparent in their emphasis upon the tendency for constant comparison with and among their peers according to grades, "looks", sporting ability, social status and so forth.

6.2.4 Established and outsider relationship

The tendency of the students to repeatedly draw comparisons with those they deemed more socially acceptable and/or successful in one of the aforementioned ways point in the direction of what figurationalists refer to as "established–outsider" relations. A particularly noteworthy feature of many youngsters' experiences of PE was their perceptions of constantly being "judged": judged in relation to sporting competence and judged with regard to physical appearance. The ways in which the youngsters in the study spoke of being judged – what amounted, in sociological terms, to being "othered" – was redolent of what figurationalists would refer to as established–outsider relationships.

Whether or not the sporty youngsters sought, as "established" groups, to "other" those less-able than themselves – the sporting outsiders – this often appeared to occur almost by default, due to the nature of the activities that constituted the bulk of PE lessons: competitive games of one kind or another. Sport, by its very nature is a zero-sum activity. Competition involves winning and losing and for one to win another must lose. Thus, the less sporty or outsider groups were inevitably identifiable, to themselves as well as others, due to the nature of the activities. It was clear that by the time they had reached the secondary school years the youngsters had come to recognize whether or not they possessed the requisite skills to be successful in sporting activities and whether, therefore, sport during PE was likely to give rise to potentially beneficial or harmful psychological experiences for them, particularly in relation to their emergent self-identities, self-esteem and social status. In effect, these youngsters saw themselves as what

might justifiably be termed "outsiders" (see Elias & Scotson, 1994). In this regard, established sporty youngsters were often inclined to caricature (as what Elias termed "the worst of the worst") those they saw as non-sporty in a manner that served to reinforce any inclination that these "outsiders" may have had to see themselves as falling short in some way

In effect, competitive sport had an inherent tendency to not only alienate less-able students, and girls in particular, from PE and sport but also from their more-able peers and even from themselves – feeling that they fell short of being a "normal" Norwegian youth in a country where sport is a significant source of social status: symbolic as well as social capital. The inherent tendency for sport to generate processes likely to lead to othering by default is likely to be exacerbated by the cultural significance of sport in Norway. Put another way, the likelihood of othering related to sporting competence not only occurring but having potentially significant ramifications for youngsters' sense of mental health, is likely to be pronounced in countries where sport and PA (and sporting bodies) have strong cultural traction, such as Norway. In this regard, the findings underlined the observation that strong social norms have an "inherently double-edged character": in the very process of binding some people together, they turn those people against others (van Krieken, 1998, p. 113).

In whatever context, and notwithstanding sporty youngsters' perceptions of being outsiders in the classroom, being "sporty" appeared to be a more robust identity across networks and situations. Put another way, whether taking part in sport or other activities (e.g. music, academic), to the extent that what they did defined them and formed a foundation for their self-identity, self-confidence and self-esteem, a sporting identity appeared a relatively strong and resilient basis for self-worth.

It was also apparent that some of those marginalized and, by degrees, alienated from sport through their PE experiences did, indeed, take the view that those good at sport – who possessed appropriately proportioned bodies – were viewed by their less sporty and attractive peers as displaying a tendency to persistently and repeatedly other them by treating them as outsiders, thereby stigmatizing them in word and deed. In this study, such examples of othering involved established groups (e.g. sporty students, those deemed physically attractive and fit students) co-constructing ideas about themselves and utilizing their established status to judge and include or exclude outsiders (see Elias & Scotson, 1994) or others. In this regard, the relative insularity of some groups (e.g. the boys heavily engaged in sport in their leisure) may have made them more susceptible to shallow stereotypes of other groups (Murphy, 2019), such as the non-sporty

girls. It may also have made them more open to second-hand messages from others in their wider networks, such as their PE teachers.

Nevertheless, the findings in relation to sports performance and sporting identities do not straightforwardly amount to othering – in the strong sense of one group deliberately and systematically marginalizing another group identifiable by particular and enduring characteristics. Nor, for that matter, do they appear as incontrovertible support for the relevance of the established–outsider concept. Rather, they seem to indicate the existence of what might be termed a weaker and perhaps more subtle sense of othering – although the consequences may be similar in relation to youngsters' mental health. Whether or not the established, sporty groups of students had intentionally sought to distance themselves from the others – portraying them as outsiders, different from those more established – in their own interests, as tends to be implied by the strong sense of the term othering, the findings suggested that it was far from straightforwardly the case that the outsiders – the less sporty ones – were in the process of internalizing their supposed inferiority. Whether consciously and deliberately or unconsciously and unintentionally othered, the less sporty were evidently more-or-less inclined to internalize the negative characteristics attributed to them by the established sporty groups. I say, "more-or-less" for two reasons. First, a number of the youngsters in the study appeared to have "a foot in each camp": i.e. while not especially good at sport they were by no means unsporty and lacking in some sporting competence and physical fitness. Indeed, some youngsters appeared to experience both sides of the othering coin: othered outsiders during team games, for example, but on the inside as established players of lifestyle sports. Second, many of the less sporty, marginalized outsiders were clearly reflexive in making sense of their situations and somewhat resistant to the implications. Indeed, it was noteworthy that the students appeared aware that some of the negative experiences they described were *not* necessarily psychologically damaging. In other words, while they did not like some experiences, and some threatened their psychological equilibrium, the felt able to put these into perspective (rationalize them) in a manner that left their core self-esteem and self-identity unscathed.

Furthermore, "blame gossip" appeared to bind outsiders together. While members of the outsider, non-sporty groups experienced their treatment at the hands of some (but by no means all) of their peers and PE teachers as demeaning and, at times, harmful for aspects of their mental health (such as self-esteem and self-identities), they were often resistant to interpreting their sporting inferiority "as a sign of *human* inferiority" (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. xxvi; emphasis in the original). Indeed, some students' observations that their sporty peers might not

"mean it that way" serves to remind us that discussion of othering in sport tends to overlook or, at least, under-play the intrinsically othering nature of sport and PE *per se* and, as a corollary, the unforeseen and unintended character of othering in the weak sense.

In addition, it was clear that established –outsider relationships were (a) time and place specific, but also (b) fluid. In other words, a student's location as either "established" or "outsider" could, and often did, depend upon context. Some of the sporty boys, for example, could be on the outside in academic lessons but very much on the inside and established when it came to PE: boys who otherwise felt like outsiders were established, if only transiently.

The composition of the focus groups – sporty and non-sporty, mostly single-gender – facilitated any predispositions within the groups to discursively consolidate their preferred views of themselves and others utilizing forms of "praise" and "blame gossip" (Elias & Scotson, 1994). It often appeared that girls – who were continually being reminded, through PE, of how unhappy they were with their physical appearance – particularly in relation to the ideal types being normalized among their peers and in the media – were, indeed, more likely to "incorporate the stigmatizing judgements of the established groups into their own personality structure" (van Krieken, 1998, p. 150).

When it came to the gendered dimension of displays of sporting competence in PE and, in particular, bodily appearance, a strong sense of othering seemed more applicable. Although perceptions of physical appearance were clearly intertwined with generational and wider social norms regarding the stereotypical attributes of attractive and desirable bodies – especially (but not solely) in relation to females – sporty boys and girls were seen to represent the closest approximation to an ideal-type physical appearance.

Boys' and girls' confirming their position as outsiders by talking about PA in negative terms and talking about themselves as "lazy" illustrates what Elias referred to as "outsiders internalizing their inferior position" (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 154) and "living up to their label" (p. xxviii) and thus reproducing the marginalized or outsider positions they had been ascribed. It is worth reminding ourselves, nevertheless, that PE (and, by extension, sport) was viewed as an alternative source of esteem for those (particularly boys) who fall short of what was required of them in academic subjects. Put another way, while they were outsiders in the rest of school, in PE they were established – they belonged.

The notion of an ideal type is associated with the work of Max Weber and his desire to typologize or classify views and/or behaviours in order to help researchers move beyond mere description towards interpretation and analysis. Constructing an ideal type involves selecting what are taken to be the most important features of an individual or group (e.g., a 15-year-old male or female in Norway), situation or process then relating them to each other, logically (Roberts, 2009). While ideal types *per se* are usually not intended as ideal versions of social phenomena – in the sense of being ideologically or morally desirable – very many of the 15-year-olds in this study clearly did possess images of ideal-typical male and female Norwegians of their age in their "mind's eye". These ideal-typifications of Norwegian 15-year-olds tended to revolve around cultural norms for sportiness and physical appearance (including attractiveness), as well as academic accomplishments of the kind likely to secure successful futures. In this regard, and as Weber (1949) observed: "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct" (p. 90).

All-in-all, the 10th graders tended to refer to being judged by their peers in relation to two criteria: sporting competence and physical appearance. These two features were frequently viewed as determining whether someone "belonged" in PE. For those youngsters on the outside by virtue of their relative lack of sporting competence and/or physical condition, the threat to self-esteem and identity posed by their experiences of PE often seemed likely not only to undermine their mental health but also to countervail any mental health gains in the form of recreational, cathartic benefits.

6.2.5 Involvement–detachment

For Elias, and figurationalists more generally, a balance of emotional involvement and more "rational" detachment is present in virtually all human behaviour. It is, therefore, an ever-present characteristic of interdependencies and, more specifically, the relationships that impact the various aspects of mental health. Thus, understanding the perceptions of the 15-year-olds in this study necessitated an appreciation that thought and behaviour tend to reflect the impact of emotion as well as reason. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the ways in which the youngsters' spoke of the significance of social media to their self-perceptions while, at the same time, recognizing the distorted messages emanating from social media platforms. Thus, the

study illustrates the ways in which passions (emotional involvement) often vie with reasoning and reflection (relative detachment). Indeed, the young people's perceptions often tended to manifest what figurationalists would refer to as the blend of involvement–detachment characteristic of all thinking. When, for example, they reflected upon the ways in which what happened in school in general and PE in particular affected their sleep patterns and mood and led to irritation and frustration they revealed a blend of involvement and detachment that veered towards the more detached pole. On the other hand, when they spoke of how friends, peers and PE teachers impacted upon them emotionally and, by extension, psychologically, they appeared less able to do so in a relatively detached manner, veering more towards the involved or emotional end of the spectrum. Thus, conceptualizing thinking in terms of degrees of involvement and detachment, it is claimed, holds out the promise of a more adequate conception of not only the emotions but, in this case, young people's experiences of PE and school in relation to their mental health.

Everything about the youngsters' perceptions of PE reinforced the impression that "the capacities for involvement and detachment are basic properties of the psychological equipment of human beings" (Murphy, 2019, p. 299) and, for that matter, "the principal means by which we acquire our capacity to orientate ourselves to the existential world" (p. 299). All that said, the study provides support for Murphy's (2019) observation that involvement–detachment is more adequately conceptualised as a blend or fusion rather than variously a shifting balance, a sliding scale or a hydraulic metaphor where more of one results in less of another. Each is an example of what Murphy (2019) refers to as a "greater–lesser" framework for conceptualizing involvement–detachment wherein "the two capacities are not *necessarily* inversely related" (Murphy, 2019, p. 309; emphasis in the original). Thus, this study seems to lend support for the idea that intense involvement can and often does coalesce with increased detachment, such as when the youngsters felt the emotional "spike" of feeling othered while being able, at the same time, to stand back a little and make sense of the process of othering from both sides.

In addition, the findings appear to support Murphy's (2019) observation that in the course of their daily lives (and in particular instances, such as PE lessons in this instance), as well as more generally, some people display higher levels of involvement and detachment. Hence, the methodological need to, in effect, triangulate the youngsters' perceptions by talking to a range of sport and non-sporty 15-year-olds. Particular figurations tend to generate particular blends of involvement and detachment and some, such as PE lessons, appear especially likely to generate intense emotional responses. And particular individuals may be more or less prone or

susceptible to higher degrees of involvement and intense emotional responses dependent upon their orientations and predispositions – their habitus – as was the case, in differing ways, for those who viewed themselves as particularly good or bad at the activities that comprised PE. Because "Different life experiences tend to be accompanied by different blends of involvement and detachment" (Murphy, 2019, p. 317) it should not surprise us that greater degrees of involvement were more commonplace in PE than academic lessons.

All told, perhaps the crucial aspect of the potential impact of school PE on the various elements of youngsters' mental health (e.g. stress, self-esteem) is the way in which their capacity for involvement blends with their capacity for detachment. In simple terms, when they are having experiences in PE are they in a position to make relatively detached sense of these or put them in perspective, and does the classroom climate enable them to do so. Thus, the critical issue is not so much the level and intensity of involvement but rather "*the way* in which it blends with our capacity for detachment" (Murphy, 2019, pp. 310–311; emphasis in the original).

It was noteworthy that the students, themselves, appeared partially aware of what amounted to the relatively involved and detached nature of thinking and the ways in which the transition from childhood to adulthood embodied in the life-stage of youth involved pressures towards greater detachment and "rationality". This tension surfaced when they spoke of feeling constrained to prioritize activities according to what others (notably, teachers and parents) and they (to the extent they had internalized as self-restraint and as conscience the constraints of others) believed they should spend their time doing (e.g. studying at weekends, exercising instead of relaxing) rather than what they would like to be doing. They were, in other words, continually under pressure to be rational and adult-like rather than spontaneous and child-like. At the same time, the students themselves perceived the school day to require differing blends of involvement-detachment at different times and in different places, swaying more towards one pole than the other in different lessons. In this vein, PE was seen as an opportunity for a relaxation of the pressure to be more detached and rational in favour of involvement and emotion. In this regard, PE was juxtaposed with the perceived pressures towards more detached, rational and calculative behaviours in relation to the particular pressures associated with upper-secondary school (such as educational grades and anticipated transitions to higher education and employment).

From a figurational perspective, PE in this study can be usefully conceptualized as an enclave – an area of the school curriculum surrounded by academic subjects but one that has its own

distinct characteristics – in the eyes of the students, at least. It was an enclave in which students sought the kinds of involvement in the form of emotional relaxation and/or excitement lacking in the rest of their school lives. The cathartic benefits of PE appeared as a form of purging akin to what Elias and Dunning (2008) described as "a controlled de-controlling of the emotions" – providing psychological relief in a socially acceptable "civilized" form through the open expression of strong emotions. Simultaneously, PE was seen as a break from the routinization of school – from doing the same things over and over again. In these ways, the findings from this study appeared redolent of Elias and Dunning's (2008) portrayal of leisure and sport not only as a "quest for excitement" but also an antidote to (and time-out from) an everyday perceived as routinized. In that regard, PE also served as an outlet for the relief of some stress/tensions and the generation of others (typically the excitement associated with sport), if only for short periods of time. Interestingly, insofar as the youngsters wanted PE to function as mere "play" they sought a break from the routinization of childhood more generally as well as school-life more specifically.

The youngsters' orientations to PE were inevitably influenced in no small measure by their sporting competence and this, in turn, was intimately tied up with what sociologists would call sporting habitus and various capitals and figurationalists would refer to as socio-genesis and psycho-genesis.

6.2.6 Psycho-genesis, socio-genesis and the civilizing process

For figurationalists the kinds of negative feelings that PE can generate (such as shame and embarrassment) can be understood in terms of a civilizing process and, in particular, social constraint towards internal restraint. The youngsters' self-proclaimed desire to avoid revealing their authentic feelings – "hiding inside" – resonates with a figurational perspective on the emotions in terms of becoming socialized into stronger and firmer internalization of individual self-control (Elias, 1987, p. 345). In other words, in the process of civilizing, there is a gradual transformation of personality structure, an intensifying "constraint towards self-constraint", inwhich the regulation of the human body, as well as our impulses, passions and desires, undergoes a "civilizing process" (van Krieken, 1990, p. 2).

Learning is made possible by the intertwining of two processes: a biological process of maturation and a social process of learning (Elias, 1987, p. 347). As children grow up, they "learn not to act in accordance with our emotional impulses to act" (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p.

92). More specifically, they learn to "control their feelings" by controlling their movement. This does, however, not mean that they stop feeling. Rather, what shows itself on one's outside is merely an expression and often not a true reflection of what is going on, in emotional terms, inside (Elias, 1987, p. 356). As much as this enables human beings to act according to the highly complex structure of their interdependencies, it nevertheless can create frustration, distress and tensions of a specific kind (Elias & Dunning, 2008). Viewing the frustrations and challenges as expressed by the youngsters on this matter in a processual perspective can, thus, be fruitful. They found themselves on their way to becoming adults and recognized that they were involved in a process of "growing-up". Yet, at the same time, they also recognized that, until relatively recently, they were regarded as children and allowed to behave as such. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they perceived the signals from their social surroundings to be mixed regarding their behaviour: being considered to be a child in some situations whilst being considered an adult in others. In other words, they recognized what amounts to a "double ring of constraint" (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p.94). Rules and regulations at schools, expectations and demands from coaches, parents, teachers – and "society" were perceived as external forces acting upon them from the outside. Expressions like feeling bad or having a bad conscience when prioritizing friends over schoolwork represent internal controls. The frustration and tension this "double ring" of constraint resulted in may be taken to indicate that they have not yet been fully socialized into the above mentioned "armour of self-control".

In Eliasian terms, learning to control one's feelings is a necessary step in the process of civilizing one's behaviours (Elias & Dunning, 2008). Nonetheless, the findings from this study indicate that learning to control feelings can be as constraining as it is enabling, demanding of the youngsters a calculated balance between reason and emotion – whether, for example, not wanting to show their true feelings through fear of the reactions of others or behaving in a supportive manner towards peers in PE lessons even when feeling frustrated because they are clumsy or disengaged. This was perceived as creating tension inasmuch as they acknowledged the emotional nature of the life-stage they found themselves in while recognizing the necessity of controlling such emotions on the outside in order to measure up with peers and expectations from their surroundings (whether coming from teachers, parents). It was apparent, then, that the youngsters were clear that authenticity was something only to be revealed within the most dense interdependencies (e.g. among closest friends).

6.2.7 Habitus

The possession of a sporting habitus and relevant sporting capital (e.g. the physical skills and knowledge) was, as expected, potentially very significant in anticipating young people's perceptions of PE. It was evident that sporting (competencies) and physical (looking good) capital generated symbolic capital, particularly in Norwegian society. However, the findings from the study suggest that the relevance of habitus does not stop there. Put another way, it was apparent that very many of the youngsters were predisposed towards valuing sport in a society where sport and PA are so deeply embedded in the national group habitus – put more pejoratively, the national psyche. This exacerbated feelings of marginalization and alienation among those youngsters who, while valuing sport, still recognized that they were outsiders in terms of competence and performance – that they were not, in other words, "sporty". In this regard, it is important to remember that their emotional ties to, and identification with, sport forms what Elias would describe as "a deep-anchorage in the personality structure" (or habitus) of many young sports men and women in Norway. It becomes a significant dimension of their individual and collective identities and one which "cannot easily be shaken off" (Elias & Dunning, 2008, p. 52); not least because what people value tends to be shaped by what they have experience of, as well as competence in. In this regard, some of the external influences and constraints to which young people are subject become internalized and part of their personal and, if they are shared, group habitus. Some of the values, beliefs and behaviours become so deeply internalized, habituated and embedded that they cease to register at the conscious level and become experienced as freely adopted values, beliefs and behaviours (Murphy, 2019).

The youngsters' experiences of PE appeared to play into and inform their developing habituses: their dispositions towards organized sport or swimming, for example, and the risks of shame and embarrassment they learnt to associate with these experiences. The information (and related orientations and values) – whether implicit or explicit – available to the youngsters from these experiences often appeared to be simply absorbed (whether taught or not) not least because it was the only model on offer (Murphy, 2019). The upshot appears to have been that these Norwegian youngsters had, in general, been socialized into cultures that place a high premium on, among other things, academic and occupational success, sporting accomplishments and physical appearance. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, to find that some youngsters feel that there is little prospect of them achieving even a modicum of success and satisfaction in these areas, with all the associated consequences for their self-esteem, self-identity and overall mental health. These youngsters' lack of aspiration was linked to a lack of expectation. Their

experiences of PE were disillusioning and, in the worst instances, generated feelings of disenchantment and fatalism.

As well as illustrating the unforeseen consequences for youngsters' self-esteem, self-identity and self-confidence of not coming "up to scratch" in sporting terms in a very sporting nation, the youngsters took for granted the importance of having an education and the corresponding importance of performing academically. Indeed, the predisposition to perform in all areas of their lives was "second nature" to them. The desirability of belonging also appeared as a deeply-rooted aspect of their individual and collective habituses.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Concluding comments

Since the Millenium, improving young people's mental health has become a priority for policy-makers in Norway as elsewhere. Children and young people's mental health is viewed as a central part of the social mandate of schools in Norway and school PE has been presented as a suitable setting for mental (as well as physical) health promotion. Few studies, however, have explored young people's perceptions and experiences of PE and the possible consequences for their mental health, the departure point for this study. Against this backdrop it became clear that in order to understand the putative relationship between PA (via PE) and various dimensions of mental health, greater attention needed to be paid to how PE activities were perceived and experienced by students. While it is well-documented that school-related stress is associated with a number of poor mental health outcomes (Eriksen et al., 2017), relatively few studies have explored how social processes might be linked to such outcomes. This is especially the case with regard to PE. Hence the rationale for this study. In addition, with the notable exception of a figurational study of Danish students' experiences of PE (Nielsen & Thing, 2019), few studies have explored the relationship between PE and aspects of mental health through the eyes of young people, particularly in terms of the emotions generated in and through PE, how PE make them feel about themselves, and how PE lessons might be differentially experienced by young people

In relation to the primary research question regarding the consequences of PE for young people's mental health, the study has shown that social processes such as PE can have profound consequences for some of the building blocks of mental health among young people: for example, self-identity, self-esteem and self-worth. Insofar as processes such as PE (and sport, for that matter, in countries such as Norway) can contribute to young people's habituses (their predispositions, values and routine behaviours) and through this their developing identities (as sporty or not, for example), processes such as PE may well have longer term consequences. In the process, the study has highlighted the potentially negative consequences of the trend towards viewing PE (and PA within it) less as "play" and more as "utility" (Gibson & Malcolm, 2019). An unintended consequence of this observed drift in a school and PE context may be that it diminishes its potential contribution to mental health.

Overall, the findings from the study confirm the hypothesis that PE differs from many other school subjects in a variety of ways, all of which have potential significance for young people's mental health at age 15, but also into their adult lives. Perhaps the first and most obvious difference is the kinds of competence required on the part of students in order to not only take part in PE lessons but to do so relatively successfully – in the students' own eyes let alone those of their peers and teachers. Where PE differs in significance from other practical aesthetic subjects such as music, art and nutrition and health, is in its particular cultural traction in Norway and, therefore, its symbolic significance for young and old alike, with all of the concomitant implications that has for self-identity, belonging and so forth.

The second obvious difference between PE and other school subjects, particularly in relation to mental health outcomes, is its public nature; in other words, the visibility of performance (often in competitive arenas). The potentially damaging consequences of the public nature of PE for some young people's self-esteem and self-identities (and especially those who lack the necessary competence in the games that tend to dominate the PE curriculum) is exacerbated by the counter-intuitive persistence of assessment and grading in a subject that is essentially about *doing* sport. It is certainly viewed by youngsters in this way. While this study confirms that PE can function as an enclave wherein young people's mental health might be enhanced, it also confirms that it can be a significant source of the kinds of experiences that can significantly undermine young people's mental health when they struggle to feel included and experience feelings akin to incompetence, failure, embarrassment, even shame (Nielsen & Thing, 2019). Once again, this is especially so in a country where sport, physical exercise and bodily appearance have particular symbolic significance (Metcalfe, 2018), notwithstanding the fact that these experiences are often patterned along gender lines (Nielsen & Thing, 2019). All-in-all, the study has added to the growing literature on the importance of viewing young people in figurations of increasing complexity as they move through youth. Youth transitions in the 21st century are complex. Their lives are in structured flux, constrained and enabled in multiple ways and with consequences for their emerging identities as adults.

In methodological terms, much existing research on mental health has been quantitative and sought to measure various mental health outcomes (often relating to mental illness or psychological distress). This study has focussed on understanding *processes* and in that regard has shed light on how mental health outcomes might be mediated in figurations. Mental health is viewed as processual – i.e. constantly developing in a state of structured flux.

In terms of its over-arching perspective, this has been a sociological study. Much research on mental health has focused upon the individual and their more-or-less rational capacities for confronting particular sets of circumstances as they impact their mental health. A sociological perspective accepts that young people are undoubtedly constrained by their bio-psychological structure (Murphy, 2019) as it manifests itself, for example, in the form of puberty. However, the study eschews psychological explanations that seek to view the individual in isolation from her/his socio-historical context – in the present instance, in isolation from living in a relatively secure nation-state with high standards of living, all-pervasive access to information and communication technology and a culture in which PA and sport have deep cultural traction and associated symbolic significance. This is why psychological attempts to make sense of young people's mental health in essentially individualistic terms, somehow rooted in enduring traits and at the mercy (rather than being susceptible to) instincts and innate drives, are misplaced and misguided. As well as being diametrically opposed towards the dichotomization of individual and society, the study is also opposed to psychological explanations that take a narrowly rational view of human behaviours. In short, from a sociological perspective, the findings bolster the view that while we are able and inclined to study individuals, "in order to begin to understand them more adequately we need to conceive of them as forming dynamic figurations" (Murphy, 2019, pp. 328–329): we need, in other words, to conceive of individuals as always and everywhere interdependent with other human beings and, thus, social to the core. In this respect, the findings from this study evidence the (figurational) observation that studies that endeavour to make sense of young people in individualistic terms – what figurationalists would refer to as the "we-less I" (van Krieken, 1998) – represent a "näive egocentric" view which fails to recognize, let alone address, the significance of the networks that young people are inevitably enmeshed in – and especially those formed with each other. These networks, and the interdependencies that constitute them, generate what are conceived as "compelling forces" (Elias; as cited in Mennell & Goudsblom, 1998, p. 118).

This study reveals PE as a particular type of figuration that not only differs significantly from academic lessons and generated particular "compelling forces" for aspects of young people's mental health. Thus, in answer to the question "Is there something particular about PE as a curriculum subject that has particular significance for young people's mental health?" the answer appears to be "yes and no". While PE shares many common features with other subjects (e.g. grading and being teacher-led), the particularity of PE was manifold. One obvious instance of the particular significance of PE for youngsters' mental health lay in the visibility of their

bodies – in the form of physical appearance as well as physical performance – at a time when the body and physicality become an increasing significant aspect of self-identity and self-esteem. In effect, PE becomes a stage for performance on which bodies undergo constant comparison with all the ramifications for key aspects of youngsters' mental health. This particular feature of PE often resulted in unintended consequences that tended to be negative for a good number of youngsters, and girls especially. A particular feature of PE that often resulted in more positive mental health consequences for the youngsters was its potential to act as an enclave for mental refreshment in a way that differed markedly from other subjects.

In theoretical terms, the study has highlighted "the all-encompassing ontological premise" that all people everywhere are bound to others in bonds of interdependency (Murphy, 2019, p. 294). In doing so, it has focused upon youth as a life-stage rather than adolescence as the period between the onset of puberty and biological adulthood. Youngsters' perceptions of their circumstances – including their views of their abilities, (whether academic or sporting), physical appearance, social status among their peers, and popularity – does not exist in a vacuum in the youngsters' heads. These perceptions coalesce with a range of ideas, values and fantasies many of which may have little if any object-adequacy (any basis in "reality"). Nonetheless, these ideas "have the capacity to contour interpretations" of the "knowledge" they acquire from, for example, social media, their teachers and their friends and peers and this "then emerges in forms which have a greater or lesser degree of object-adequacy" (Murphy, 2019, p. 298).

In sociological terms, the study illustrates the penetration of the individual by the social and the potency of the social; it illustrates, in other words, the process of socialization. In coming to understand not merely the relationship between processes such as PE and mental health but the mental health of young Norwegians more generally, we are confronted by the significance of growing up and living in a wealthy, social democratic nation-state with high living standards that tend to go hand-in-hand with high social and cultural expectations regarding ideal-typical young Norwegians – expectations (norms) that inevitably impact their developing individual and group habituses, their self-identities, and their mental health more broadly for better or worse and sometimes both.

In terms of the policy implications of this study it seems important to recognize that for the reasons outlined above (e.g. the cultural traction of sport in Norway, many youngsters' preoccupation with their appearance, and the potential for it to be a site for emotionally intense experiences), PE needs to be recognized as a particularly significant school subject when it

comes to young people's mental health. If PE is to serve in the promotion of mental health among young people, then the "take home" message from this study is a quite simple one: it needs to be seen more as a recreational subject than an academic one. Ironically, in the context of a moral panic regarding the mental health of young people as well as the "crisis of legitimation" (Stolz, 2014) pervading PE, it may well be that the best justificatory defense for PE becomes physical *recreation* as an antidote to (academic) schooling rather than PE as education in the sense of becoming one more subject on the "academic treadmill" (Dore, 1997). The potential for PE to function as an enclave in which youngsters can relax, refresh, have fun, nourish their relationships and so forth, away from the need to perform and be assessed is crystal clear. The alternative is that the absence of a suitable outlet (or enclave), such as PE lessons – focused more on recreation than education – for the controlled de-controlling of the emotions is likely to exacerbate youngsters' perceptions of stress and tension in their school-lives.

7.2 Limitations

When it comes to the limitations to the study, several things are worthy of mention. In methodological terms, there were several potential limitations to the study. The first of these was the observations. In short, it would have been desirable to spend more time observing PE lessons beyond the initial opportunities to become known by and familiar to the students who would later be interviewed. The second methodological limitation had to do with recruitment. Using PE teachers as key informants, thereby granting them a degree of flexibility when constructing the groups, involved a risk that students were recruited strategically by teachers. Nevertheless, I consider the balance between positives and negatives in the data as well as the balance in dynamics in the focus group settings to suggest that the PE teachers adhered largely to the brief they were given in terms of recruitment. Another methodological issue involved the focus groups. As noted in section 4.3.2, conducting focus groups tends to be more about practice than theory (Stewart et al., 2007). Hence, as much as I endeavoured to be sensitive and aware towards the climate within each focus group, it is relevant to acknowledge the probability that various groups effects did emerge. Enriching the focus group data with individual interviews could potentially have added nuances and elaborated some of the themes discussed within the group setting. This could have served to complement the potential weakness (such as the mentioned group effects) associated with focus groups, and confirm, moderate or reinforce what had been said in focus groups and potentially increased the trustworthiness of the findings in the study. Nonetheless, focus groups did seem to serve as a natural context for the youngsters

involved as proposed by Heath et al., (2009), and equally important, from a figurational perspective, individual interviews would have underplayed the significance of interdependencies for youngsters' thoughts and behaviours. Finally, the make-up of the focus groups (i.e. mainly single-gender, and perceived sporty and less sporty students) might have resulted in discussions that could have been more nuanced if groups were mixed. However, and as noted by some of the youngsters themselves, as much as it would have been interesting to discuss some of the topics in mixed-gender groups, many students may well have felt more reluctant to do so in the company of the opposite gender. This was borne out by the fact that, in the mixed-gendered groups that were formed, issues like body image tended not to be discussed or elaborated upon.

In logistical terms, the time schedule was an issue that might have affected the study in several ways: First, by aiming to interview youngsters in the last semester in secondary schooling, it is likely that issues such as schoolwork, time constraints, stress took on particularly importance and attention within the period of interviewing. As much as this is important to acknowledge, this time period is highly relevant for 10th graders, and thus provides insight into how the hectic end of secondary school is experienced. Second, the tight time schedule was an outcome of the schools' restricted opportunities to organize so that focus groups could be conducted. This meant that on some occasions, several focus groups had to be conducted in one day. Besides the recognition that focus groups can be challenging to moderate and that several focus groups are likely to affect the moderator's ability to focus, it also afforded little time to process what had been said in one interview before the next interview commenced. As much as this ideally (in methodological terms) should have been avoided, it was considered the best (if not only) solution in order to ensure schools' willingness to participate in all aspects of the project. Third, the time schedule provided little flexibility to adjust allocated time for focus groups to ensure that an assistant moderator was available. Hence, a number of focus groups had to be undertaken without having an assistant present, with the risk of losing information otherwise made accessible. Listening to recordings and discussing the focus groups with supervisor and co-supervisor were especially helpful in this regard providing opportunities to reflect and discuss the focus group settings.

In conceptual terms, perhaps the most pertinent and obvious potential limitation to a study such as this has to do with the language and prevalence of mental health. First, regarding the potential limitations of the language of mental health when talking with youngsters about a complex subject such as mental health, the findings suggest that 15-year-olds in Norway, at least, are

accustomed to using the language of mental health (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression) and did so, consistently and of their own volition (without any prompting from the researcher) when referring to various aspects of their lives, and school and PE in particular. That said, it was equally clear that whatever terms they employed to articulate their perceptions regarding, for example, the pressures they experienced at school, the youngsters' conception of mental health boiled down to the absence of psychologically "bad'"things (e.g., things they referred to as stress, apprehension, and pressure) and the presence of psychologically "good" things (e.g., positive views of their abilities, appearance and so forth).

In terms of the prevalence of mental health issues, the big issue is whether what we are referring to as mental health issues are *real* mental health problems (e.g. clinically defined as such), perceived problems, or rather common-or-garden, everyday difficulties that need to be dealt with as a part of the life-stage of youth. In this regard, and given the increased attention to, and interest in, youngsters' mental health, alongside more openness concerning mental health generally, it seems plausible to suggest that the increases might mirror increased recognition and willingness to report mental health difficulties among young people, and, as a corollary, greater likelihood of disclosing ostensible symptoms or difficulties. Indeed, some have alluded to the risk of narrowing and even pathologizing the normality of challenges associated with the youth life-stage (see, e.g., Nordtug & Engelsrud, 2016; Ose & Jensen, 2017; Patel et al., 2014), as well as medicalizing what have previously been viewed as the ups and downs associated with normal processes of transition through which most young people emerge unscathed (see, e.g., OECD, 2015a; Patel et al., 2014). In other words, the concerns expressed in some quarters might be a symptom of "moral panic" (West, 2009).

Throughout this thesis I have made it clear that my concern has been with youngsters' *perceptions* of school, PE, and the life-stage of youth as it effects their perceptions of their mental health. Whether or not these amount to the commonplace difficulties that youth might reasonably expect to encounter at school, home and in their personal lives is, as far as this study is concerned, misses the point. It is a moot point whether or not their thresholds for perception of stress are lower (or, for that matter, higher) than previous generations or whether they accord with clinical definitions of such terms. What matters is whether the youngsters perceive these things as, for instance, stressful, demeaning, damaging to their self-esteem and so forth. In this regard, it is a domain assumption in the social sciences that if people define situations as real, then they tend to be real in their consequences (Thomas & Thomas, 1928) – people tend, in other words, to act in accordance with what they believe to be true. It is also a moot point

whether most children and young people in Norway “thrive”, have good physical and mental health and are positive about their own futures (Bakken, 2018) or, indeed, clinical diagnoses and treatment of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders has increased over recent decades alongside substantial secular change in emotional problems and antisocial behaviour in high-income countries (Collishaw (2015). *If* young people believe that they are unduly stressed or anxious or a long way off the ideal-typical Norwegian 15–year-old *then* this will tend to manifest itself in the ways in which they respond to such perceptions – it will manifest itself in their behaviours. If youngsters believe to be true what social media, their teachers and their friends and peers tell them (about, among other things, their physical appearance and their sporting ability) then it will be true in its consequences for their self-identity and self-esteem and, ultimately, their mental health. Hence the reason sociologists argue that the minds of actors need to be part of any explanation of social processes, such as school PE. If we treat as axiomatic Weber’s observation that people respond to circumstances according to their interpretations of the situation (Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946) then, as far as the youngsters’ in this study were concerned, the demands of an academically-oriented Norwegian school curriculum – exacerbated by the process of grading in PE – have resulted in students perceiving a key mental health benefit of PE to be found in its (latent) function in relation to the rest of schooling: that is, as an alternative – a form of physical recreation in an otherwise academic milieu. In conceptual terms, the upshot is that the findings from this study support the notion that the concept of well-being enables us to extend the concept of mental health to include constructs such as identity and self-esteem as part of a developing habitus that is inherently relational (Malcolm & Gibson, 2018).

References

Aanesen, F., Meland, E., & Torp, S. (2017). Gender differences in subjective health complaints in adolescence: The roles of self-esteem, stress from schoolwork and body dissatisfaction. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, *45*(4), 389–396. doi.org/10.1177/1403494817690940

Aasland, E. (2019). Kan kroppsøving forsvinne som skolefag? [Is it likely that PE as a school subject will disappear?] In E.E. Vinje & J. Skrede (Eds.), *Fremtidens kroppsøvingslærer* (pp. 190–207). Oslo: Cappelen Damm.

Aasland, E., & Engelsrud, G. (2017). "Det er lett å se hvem som har god innsats". Om elevers innsats og lærerens blikk i kroppsøving [It`s easy to see who`s making an effort. On students`effort and the teacher`s gaze in PE]. *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education, 1*(3), 5–17. doi.org/10.23865/jased.v1.889

Aasland, E., Walseth, K., & Engelsrud, G. (2019). The constitution of the 'able' and 'less able' student in physical education in Norway. *Sport, Education and Society,* 1–4. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1622521

Ahn, S. & Fedewa, A. L. (2011). A meta-analysis of the relationship between children's physical activity and mental health. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 36*(4), 385–397. doi.org/10.1093/jpepsy/jsq107

Aldridge, J. M., Fraser, B. J., Fozdar, F., Ala'i, K., Earnest, J., & Afari, E. (2016). Students' perceptions of school climate as determinants of wellbeing, resilience and identity. *Improving Schools*, *19*(1), 5–26. doi.org/10.1177/1365480215612616

Aldridge, J. M., & McChesney, K. (2018). The relationship between school climate and adolescent mental health and wellbeing: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Educational Research 88*, 121–145. doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.01.012

Allen, K. A., Ryan, T., Gray, D. L., McInerney, D. M., & Waters, L. (2014). Social media use and social connectedness in adolescents: The positives and the potential pitfalls. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, *31*(1), 18–31. doi.org/10.1017/edp.2014.2

Alm, S., & Låftman, S. B. (2018). The gendered mirror on the wall: Satisfaction with physical appearance and its relationship to global self-esteem and psychosomatic complaints among adolescent boys and girls. *Young*, *26*(5), 525–541. doi.org/10.1177/1103308817739733

Andersen, P., & Bakken, A. (2019). Social class differences in youths' participation in organized sports: what are the mechanisms? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 54*(8), 921-937. doi.org/10.1177/1012690218764626

Anderson, D. L., & Graham, A. P. (2016). Improving student wellbeing: Having a say at school. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *27*(3), 348–366. doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2015.1084336

Annerstedt, C., & Larsson, S. (2010). 'I have my own picture of what the demands are ...': Grading in Swedish PEH—problems of validity, comparability and fairness. *European Physical Education Review*, *16*(2), 97–115. doi.org/10.1177%2F1356336X10381299

Arnett, J.J. (1999). Adolescent storm and stress, reconsidered. *American Psychologist*, *54*(5), 317–326. doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.5.317

Azzarito, L., Macdonald, D., Dagkas, S., & Fisette, J. (2017). Revitalizing the physical education social-justice agenda in the global era: Where do we go from here? *Quest, 69*(2), 205– 219. doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1176935

Backe-Hansen. (2009). *Barn* [Children]. Retrieved from https://www.etikkom.no

Bakken, A. (2017). *Ungdata. Nasjonale resultater 2017* [Youth data. National results 2017]. (NOVA Report 10/2017). Oslo:NOVA.

Bakken, A. (2018*). Ungdata. Nasjonale resultater 2018* [Youth data. National results, 2018]. (NOVA Report 8/2018). Retrieved from http://www.ungdata.no/

Bakken, A. (2019a). *Idrettens posisjon i ungdomstida: Hvem deltar og hvem slutter i ungdomsidretten?* [Sports` position in youth: Who participates and who drops out of youth sports]. (NOVA Report 2/2019). Retrieved from http://www.hioa.no/Om-OsloMet/Senter-for-velferds-og-arbeidslivsforskning/NOVA/Publikasjonar/Rapporter/Idrettens-posisjon-i-ungdomstida

Bakken, A. (2019b). *Ungdata. Nasjonale resultater 2019* [Youth data. National results 2019]. (NOVA Report/9/19). Retrieved from http://www.ungdata.no

Bakken, A., Frøyland, L. R., & Sletten, A. M. (2016). *Sosiale forskjeller i unges liv* [Socioeconomic differences in living conditions among Norwegian youths]. (NOVA Report 3/2016). Retrieved from http://www.hioa.no/Om-OsloMet/Senter-for-velferds-og-arbeidslivsforskning/NOVA/Publikasjonar/Rapporter/2016/Sosiale-forskjeller-i-unges-liv

Bakken, A., Sletten, M. A., & Eriksen, I. M. (2018). Generasjon prestasjon? [Generation performance?]. *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning*, *18*(2), 45–75. Retrieved from https://journals.hioa.no/index.php/ungdomsforskning/article/view/3151

Bangsbo, J., Krustrup, P., Duda, J., Hillman, C., Andersen, L. B., Weiss, M.,...& Naylor, P. J. (2016). The Copenhagen Consensus Conference 2016: Children, youth, and physical activity in schools and during leisure time. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, *50*(19), 1177–1178. doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2016-096325

Banks, J., & Smyth, E. (2015). 'Your whole life depends on it': Academic stress and high-stakes testing in Ireland. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *18*(5), 598–616. doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2014.992317

Barbour, R. (2007). *Doing Focus Groups*. London: Sage.

Barile, J. P., Donohue, D. K., Anthony, E. R., Baker, A. M., Weaver, S. R., & Henrich, C. C. (2012). Teacher–student relationship climate and school outcomes: Implications for educational policy initiatives. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *41*(3), 256–267. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-011-9652-8

Barker, D., Wallhead, T., & Quennerstedt, M. (2017). Student learning through interaction in physical education. *European Physical Education Review, 23*(3), 273–278. doi.org/10.1177/1356336x16640235

Baur, N., & Ernst, S. (2011). Towards a process-oriented methodology: Modern social science research methods and Norbert Elias's figurational sociology. *The Sociological Review,* 59(1), 117–139. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.01981.x

Beauchamp, M. R., Puterman, E., & Lubans, D. R. (2018). Physical inactivity and mental health in late adolescence. *Journal of the American Medical Association Psychiatry, 75*(6), 543–544. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.0385

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (M. Ritter, Trans.). London: Sage.

Beltrán-Carrillo, V. J., Devís – Devís, J., & Peiró-Velert, C. (2018). The influence of body discourses on adolescents' (non)participation in physical activity. *Sport, Education and Society, 23*(3), 257–269. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1178109

Beni, S., Fletcher, T., & Ní Chróinín, D. (2017). Meaningful experiences in physical education and youth sport: A review of the literature, *Quest*, *69*(3), 291–312. doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1224192

Bernstein, E., Philips, S. R., & Silverman. S. (2011). Attitudes and perceptions of middle school students toward competitive activities in physical education. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, 30*(1), 69–83.

Best., P., Manktelow, R., & Taylor, B. (2014). Online communication, social media and adolescent wellbeing: A systematic narrative review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *41*, p. 27–36. doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.03.001

Biddle, S. J., & Asare, M. (2011). Physical activity and mental health in children and adolescents: A review of reviews. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 45*(11), 886–895. doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2011-090185

Biddle, S., Ciaccioni, S., Thomas, G., & Vergeer, I. (2019). Physical activity and mental health in children and adolescents: An updated review of reviews and an analysis of causality. *Psychology of Sport & Exercise, 42,* 146–155. doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.08.011

Blomfield Neira, C. J., & Barber, B. L. (2014). Social networking site use: Linked to adolescents' social self-concept, self-esteem and depressed mood. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 66*(1), 56–64. doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12034

Booker., C. L., Kelly, Y. J., & Sacker, A. (2018). Gender differences in the associations between age trends of social media interaction and well-being among 10-15 year olds in the UK. *BMC Public Health*, *18*(321). doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5220-4

Booth, J. N., Leary, S. D., Joinson, C., Ness, A. R., Tomporowski, P. D., Boyle, J. M., & Reilly, J. J. (2014). Associations between objectively measured physical activity and academic attainment in adolescents from a UK cohort. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 48*(3), 265–270. doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2013-092334

Bor, W., Dean, A. J., Najman, J., & Hayatbakhsh, R. (2014). Are child and adolescent mental health problems increasing in the 21st century? A systematic review. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 48*(7), 606–616. doi.org/10.1177/0004867414533834

Borgonovi, F., Ferrara, A., & Maghnouj, S. (2018). *The gender gap in educational outcomes in Norway*. (*OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 183). Retrieved from. https://doi.org/10.1787/f8ef1489-en

Breistøl, S., Clench-Aas, J., Van Roy, B., & Raanaas, R. (2017). Association between participating in noncompetitive or competitive sports and mental health among adolescents: A Norwegian population-based cross-sectional study. *Scandinavian Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology, 5*(1), 28–38. doi.org/10.21307/sjcapp-2017-003

Brenner, M. E. (2006). Interviewing in educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 357–370).New York: Routledge.

British Youth Council –Youth Select Committee. (2017). *A body confident future*. Retrieved from http://www.byc.org.uk

Bru, E., Idsøe, E. C., & Øverland, K. (2016). Introduksjon: Psykisk helse i skolen [Introduction: Mental health in school]. In E. Bru, E. C. Idsøe & K. Øverland (Eds.). *Psykisk helse i skolen* (pp. 15–27). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). New York: Oxford.

Cale, L., & Harris, J. (2013). 'Every child (of every size) matters' in physical education! Physical education's role in childhood obesity. *Sport, Education and Society, 18*(4), 433–452. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.601734

Cale, L., Harris, J., & Chen, M. H. (2014). Monitoring health, activity and fitness in physical education: its current and future state of health. *Sport, Education and Society, 19*(4), 376–397. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2012.681298

Carlquist, E. (2015). *Well-being på norsk* (Report 6/2015). Oslo: Helsedirektoratet.

Carter, T., Morres, I. D., Meade, O., & Callaghan, P. (2016). The effect of exercise on depressive symptoms in adolescents: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 55*(7), 580–590. doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2016.04.016

Casey, A., & Quennerstedt, M. (2015). "I just remember rugby": Re -membering physical education as more than a sport. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 86*(1), 40–50. doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2014.977430

Cefai, C., & Cavioni, V. (2015). Beyond PISA: Schools as contexts for the promotion of children's mental health and well-being. *Contemporary School Psychology, 19*(4), 233–241. doi.org/10.1007/s40688-015-0065-7

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Clarke, A., Freide, T., Putz, R., Ashdown, J., Martin, S., Blake, A., Yaser, A.,…Stewart-Brown, S. (2011). Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS): Validated for teenage school students in England and Scotland. A mixed methods assessment. *BMC Public Health, 11*(487), 1–9. doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-11-487

Coakley, J. J. (2004). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies* (8th ed). London: McGraw-Hill

Coalter, F. (2007). *A wider role of sport. Who`s keeping the score?* London: Routledge.

Coalter, F. (2013). Game plan and the spirit level: The class ceiling and the limits of sports policy? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 5*(1), 3–19. doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2012.656690

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2013). *Research methods in education.* Retrieved from https://www-dawsonera-com.ezproxy.hihm.no/readonline/9780203720967

Collishaw, S. (2015). Annual research review: Secular trends in child and adolescent mental health. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 56*(3), 370–393. doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12372

Collishaw, S., Maughan, B., Natarajan, L., & Pickles, A. (2010). Trends in adolescent emotional problems in England: A comparison of two national cohorts twenty years apart. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 51*(8), 885–894. doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02252.x

Committee on Health and Care Services. (2017). *Innstilling til Stortinget fra helse – og omsorgskomiteen* (Inst. 51 S (2017-2018)) [Recommendations to the Parliament from the Committee of Health and Care Services]. Retrieved from https://www.stortinget.no/globalassets/pdf/innstillinger/stortinget/2017-2018/inns-201718-051s.pdf

Connell, R. W. (2005). Growing up masculine: Rethinking the significance of adolescence in the making of masculinities. *Irish Journal of Sociology, 14*(2), 11–28. doi.org/10.1177/079160350501400202

Coulter, M., & Ní Chróinín, D. (2013). What is PE? *Sport, Education and Society, 18*(6), 825–841. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.613924

Craig, L., Churchill, B., & van Tienoven, T.P. (2019). Young people's daily activity in a globalized world: A cross-national comparison using time use data. *Journal of Youth Studies*. Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1659941

Cribb, V. L., & Haase, A. M. (2016). Girls feeling good at school: School gender environment, internalization and awareness of socio-cultural attitudes associations with self-esteem in adolescent girls. *Journal of Adolescence, 46,* 107–114. doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.10.019

Crosnoe, R., Benner, A. D., & Schneider, B. (2012). Drinking, socioemotional functioning, and academic progress in secondary school. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 53*(2), 150–164. doi.org/10.1177/0022146511433507

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row.

Dahl, E., Bergsli, H., & van der Wel, K. A. (2014). Review of social inequalities in health in Norway. Retrieved from http://www.hioa.no/eng/Research-and-Development/Our-research/Research-and-Development-at-the-Faculty-of-Social-Sciences/The-Social-Welfare-Research-Centre/Social-inequalities-in-health/Review-of-social-inequalities-in-health-in-Norway

Dale, L. P., Vanderloo, L., Moore, S., & Faulkner, G. (2019). Physical activity and depression, anxiety, and self-esteem in children and youth: An umbrella systematic review. *Mental Health and Physical Activity, 16,* 66–79. doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2018.12.001

Dalene, K. E., Anderssen, S. A., Andersen, L. B., Steene-Johannessen, J., Ekelund, U., Hansen, B. H., & Kolle, E. (2018). Secular and longitudinal physical activity changes in population-based samples of children and adolescents. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, *28*(1), 161–171. doi.org/10.1111/sms.12876

de Lenne, O., Vandenbosch, L., Eggermont, S., Karsay, K., & Trekels, J. (2018). Picture-perfect lives on social media: A cross-national study on the role of media ideals in adolescent well-being. *Media Psychology*, 1–27. doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2018.1554494

De Ridder, K. A. A., Pape, K., Cuypers, K., Johnsen, R., Holmen, T. L., Westin, S., & Bjørngaard, J. H. (2013). High school dropout and long-term sickness and disability in young adulthood: A prospective propensity score stratified cohort study (the Young-HUNT study). *BMC Public Health*, *13*(1), 1–9. Retrieved from http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/941

De Ridder, K. A. A., Pape, K., Johnsen, R., Westin, S., Holmen, T. L., & Bjørngaard, J. H. (2012). School dropout: a major public health challenge: A 10-year prospective study on medical and non-medical social insurance benefits in young adulthood, the Young-HUNT 1 Study (Norway). *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, *66*(11), 995–1000. doi.org/10.1136/jech-2011-200047

Dervin, F. (2015). Discourses of othering. *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 1–9. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi027

de Swaan, A. (2001). *Human societies an introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

De Wit, D. J., Karioja, K., Rye, B. J., Shain, M. (2011). Perceptions of declining classmate and teacher support following from the transition to high school: Potential correlates of increasing student mental health difficulties. *Psychology in the Schools, 48*(6), 556–572. doi.org/10.1002/pits.20576

Dittmar, H. (2009). How do “body perfect” ideals in the media have a negative impact on body image and behaviors? Factors and processes related to self and identity. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 28*(special issue), 1–8. doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2009.28.1.1

Dore, R. P. (1997). *The diploma disease. Education, qualification and development* (2nd ed). London: Allen and Unwin.

Doré, I., O'Loughlin, J. L., Beauchamp, G., Martineau, M., & Fournier, L. (2016). Volume and social context of physical activity in association with mental health, anxiety and depression among youth. *Preventive Medicine*, *91*, 344–350. doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2016.09.006

Doré, I., O'Loughlin, J. L., Schnitzer, M. E., Datta, G. D., & Fournier, L. (2018).The longitudinal association between the context of physical activity and mental health in early adulthood. *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, *14*, 121–130. doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2018.04.001

Duinhof, E. L., Stevens, G. W., Van Dorsselaer, S., Monshouwer, K., & Vollebergh, W. A. (2015). Ten-year trends in adolescents' self-reported emotional and behavioral problems in the Netherlands. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *24*(9), 1119–-1128. doi.org/10.1007/s00787-014-0664-2

Dumith, S. C., Gigante, D. P., Domingues, M. R., & Kohl III, H. W. (2011). Physical activity change during adolescence: A systematic review and a pooled analysis. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, *40*(3), 685–698. doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyq272

Durkheim, E. (1893, 1938). *The division of labour in society*. Glencoe: Free Press.

Dwyer, J. J. M., Allison, K. R., Goldenberg, E. R., Fein, A. J., Yoshida, K. K., & Boutilier, M. A. (2006). Adolescent girls` perceived barriers to participation in physical activity. *Adolescence, 41*(161), 75–89.

Dyson, B. (2006). Students' perspectives of physical education. In D. Kirk, D. Macdonald and M. O'Sullivan (Eds.), *The handbook of physical education* (pp. 326–346). London: Sage.Dyson

Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (2011). Schools as developmental contexts during adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *21*(1), 225–241. doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00725.x

Eime, R. M., Young, J. A., Harvey, J. T., Charity, M. J., & Payne, W. R. (2013). A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for children and adolescents: Informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, *10*(1), 98. doi.org/10.1186/1479-5868-10-98

Ekornes, S., Hauge, T. E., & Lund, S. (2012). Teachers as mental health promoters: A study of teachers` understanding of the concept of mental health. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion, 14*(5), 289–310. doi.org/10.1080/14623730.2013.798534

Elias, N. (1956). Problems of involvement and detachment. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *7*(3), 226–252. doi.org/10.2307/587994

Elias, N. (1978). *What is sociology?* (S. Mennell & G. Morrissey, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.

Elias, N. (1987). On human beings and their emotions: A process – sociological essay. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *4*(2-3), 339–361. doi.org/10.1177/026327687004002008

Elias, N. (1994). Introduction. In N. Elias & J. L. Scotson, *The established and the outsiders: A sociological enquiry into community problems* (2nd ed.) (pp. xv – lii). London: Sage Publications.

Elias, N. (1994). *Civilizing process*. Wiley.

Elias, N. (2012). *On the process of civilization.* S.,Mennell, E.Dunning, J. Goudsblom, & R. Kilminster. (Eds.). Dublin: UCD Press.

Elias, N. & Dunning, E. (Ed.). (2008). *Quest for excitement: Sport and leisure in the civilizing process* (The collected works of Norbert Elias: Vol. 7. Rev.ed). Amsterdam: University college Dublin press.

Elias, N., & Scotson, J. L. (1994). *The established and the outsiders: A sociological enquiry into community problems* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Elliott, D., & Hoyle, K. (2014). An examination of barriers to physical education for Christian and Muslim girls attending comprehensive secondary schools in the UK. *European Physical Education Review*, *20*(3), 349–366. doi.org/10.1177%2F1356336X14534358

Elstad, J. I. (2005). *Sosioøkonomiske ulikheter i helse: Teorier og forklaringer* [Socioeconomic inequites in health:Theories and explanations] (Report 7/2005). Retrieved from https://www.helsedirektoratet.no

Enright, E., & O`Sullivan, M. (2013). Listening to young people`s voices in physical education and youth sport research. In K. Armour & D. Macdonald (Eds.), *Research methods in physical education and youth sport* (pp. 120–132). London: Routledge.

Eriksen, I. M., Sletten, A. M., Bakken, A., & von Soest, T. (2017). *Stress og press blant ungdom: Erfaringer, årsaker og utbredelse av psykiske helseplager* [Stress and pressure amongst young people: Experiences, causes and prevalence of mental health problems]. (NOVA Report 6/2017). Retrieved from http://www.hioa.no/eng/About-HiOA/Centre-for-Welfare-and-Labour-Research/NOVA/Publikasjonar/Rapporter/2017/Stress-og-press-blant-ungdom

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2013). *Physical education and sport at school in Europe. Eurydice Report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from https://eurydice.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/150EN.pdf

Evans, B. (2006). 'I'd feel ashamed': Girls' bodies and sports participation. *Gender, Place & Culture, 13*(5), 547–561. doi.org/10.1080/09663690600858952

Evans, J. (2004). Making a difference? Education and ability in physical education. *European Physical Education Review, 10*(1), 95–108. doi.org/10.1177/1356336x04042158

Evans, J. (2007). Health education or weight management in schools? *Cardiometabolic Risk and Weight Management,* 2, 87–101.

Evans, J., & Penney, D. (2008). Levels on the playing field: The social construction of physical 'ability'in the physical education curriculum. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, *13*(1), 31-47. doi.org/10.1080/17408980701345576

Faulkner, G., & Tamminen, K. (2016). Youth sport and mental health. In K. Green & A. Smith (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Youth Sport* (pp. 406–423). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Fitzpatrick, K. (2013). Brown bodies, racialisation and physical education. *Sport, Education and Society, 18*(2), 135–153. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.559221

Flintoff, A., Fitzgerald, H., & Scraton, S. (2008). The challenges of intersectionality: Researching difference in physical education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *18*(2), 73–85. doi.org/10.1080/09620210802351300

Flintoff, A., & Scraton, S. (2001). Stepping into active leisure? Young women's perceptions of active lifestyles and their experiences of school physical education. *Sport, Education and Society, 6*(1), 5–21. doi.org/10.1080/713696043

Fox, K. R. (1999). The influence of physical activity on mental well-being. *Public Health Nutrition*, *2*(3a), 411–418. doi.org/10.1017/S1368980099000567

Fox, K. R. (2000). The effects of exercise on self-perceptions and self-esteem. In S. J. H Biddle, K. R. Fox & S. H. Boutcher (Eds.), *Physical activity and psychological well-being* (pp. 88–117). Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Frith, E. (2017). *Social media and children's mental health: A review of the evidence.* Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/id/eprint/29528

Frydendal, S., & Thing, L. F. (2019). A shameful affair? A figurational study of the change room and showering culture connected to physical education in Danish upper secondary schools. *Sport, Education and Society*. Advance online publication. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2018.1564654

Furlong, A., & Cartmel, F. (2007). *Young people and social change: New perspectives* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Furlong, A., Woodman, D., & Wyn, J. (2011). Changing times, changing perspectives: Reconciling 'transition' and 'cultural' perspectives on youth and young adulthood. *Journal of Sociology*, *47*(4), 355–370. doi.org/10.1177/1440783311420787

Furu, K., Hjellevik, V., Hartz, I., Karsltad, Ø., Skurtveit, S., Blix, H. S., Strøm, H., & Selmer, R. (2018). *Legemiddelbruk hos barn og unge i Norge 2008* – 2017 [Use of prescription drugs in children and young adolescents in Norway 2008 – 2017]. (Report 2018). Retrieved from https://fhi.no

García-Moya, I., Brooks, F., Morgan, A., & Moreno, C. (2015). Subjective well-being in adolescence and teacher connectedness: A health asset analysis. *Health Education Journal*, *74*(6), 641–654. doi.org/10.1177/0017896914555039

Gard, M., & Wright, J. (2014). Schools and critical public health: Towards dialogue, collaboration and action. *Critical Public Health, 24*(2), 109–114. doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2014.888872

Gerth, H. H., & Wright Mills, C. (Eds.). (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gibson, K., & Malcolm, D. (2019). Theorizing physical activity health promotion: Towards an Eliasian framework for the analysis of health and medicine. *Social Theory & Health*, 1–20. doi.org/10.1057/s41285-019-00098-w

Glazzard, J. (2018). The role of schools in supporting children and young people's mental health. *Education and Health*, *36*(3), 83–88.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* New York: Doubleday Anchor Books

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. USA: Englewood Cliffs.

Goodyear, V. A., Armour, K. M., & Wood, H. (2019). Young people and their engagement with health-related social media: New perspectives. *Sport, Education and Society, 24(7),* 673–688. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1423464

Gore, F. M., Bloem, P. J. N., Patton, G. C., Ferguson, J., Joseph, V., Coffey, C.,…Mathers, C. D. (2011). Global burden of disease in young people aged 10–24 years: A systematic analysis. *The Lancet*, *377*(9783), 2093–2102. doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60512-6

Goudsblom, J. (1977). *Sociology in the balance*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Grabe, S., Ward, L. M., & Hyde, J. S. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: A meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological bulletin*, *134*(3), 460–476 .doi:10.1037/0033-2909.134.3.460

Green, K. (2008). *Understanding physical education.* London: Sage.

Green, K. (2010). *Key themes in youth sport.* London: Routledge.

Green, K. (2014). Mission impossible? Reflecting upon the relationship between physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation. *Sport, Education and Society, 19*(4), 357–375. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2012.683781 .

Green, K., Thurston, M., & Johansen, P. (2019) Sport in Norway. In J. Maiguire, M. Falcous, & K. Liston (Eds.), *The business and culture of sports: Society, politics, economy, environment* (1st ed., Vol. 3, pp. 413–428). USA: Macmillan Reference.

Green, K., Thurston, M., Vaage, O., & Roberts, K. (2015). '[We' re on the right track, baby], we were born this way'! Exploring sports participation in Norway. *Sport, Education and Society*, *20*(3), 285–303. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2013.769947

Green, L., Poland, B., & Rootman, I. (Eds.). (2000). *Settings for health promotion: Linking theory and practice*. CA: Sage

Gunnell, K. E., Poitras, V. J., LeBlanc, A., Schibli, K., Barbeau, K., Hedayati, N., Pontifex, M. B.,…Tremblay, M. S. (2019). Physical activity and brain structure, brain function, and cognition in children and youth: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *Mental Health and Physical Activity, 16*, 105–127. doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2018.11.002

Gustafsson, J. E., Westling, A. M., Åkerman, A. B., Eriksson, C., Eriksson, L., Fiscbein, S.,…Persson, R. S. (2010). *School, learning and mental health: A systematic review*. Stockholm: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Hagquist, C. (2010). Discrepant trends in mental health complaints among younger and older adolescents in Sweden: an analysis of WHO data 1985–2005. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 46*(3), 258–264. doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.07.003

Hall, G. S. (1904). *Adolescence*. New York: Appleton.

Hallal, P. C., Victoria, G. C., Azevedo, M. R., & Wells, J. C. K. (2006). Adolescent physical activity and health: A systematic review. *Sports Medicine, 36*(12), 1019–1030. doi.org/10.2165/00007256-200636120-00003

Harris, J., Cale, L., Duncombe, R., & Musson, H. (2018). Young people's knowledge and understanding of health, fitness and physical activity: Issues, divides and dilemmas. *Sport, Education and Society, 23*(5), 407–420. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1228047

Harter, S., Waters, P., & Whitesell, N. R. (1998). Relational self-worth: Differences in perceived worth as a person across interpersonal contexts among adolescents. *Child Development, 69*(3), 756–766.

Hastie, P., & Hay, P. (2012). Qualitative research. In K. Armour & D. Macdonald (Eds.), *Research methods in physical education and youth sport* (pp. 79–94). London: Routledge.

Hay, P. J. (2006). Assessment for learning in physical education. In D. Kirk, D. Macdonald, and O`Sullivan (Eds.), *Handbook of Physical education* (pp. 312–325). Retrieved from https://www-dawsonera-com.ezproxy.inn.no/readonline/9781446206997

Hay, P. J., & Macdonald, D. (2010). Evidence for the social construction of ability in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, *15*(1), 1-18. doi.org/10.1080/13573320903217075

Heath, S., Brooks, R., Cleaver, E., & Ireland, E. (2009). *Researching young people`s lives*. London: Sage.

Heinz, W. R. (2009). Youth transitions in an age of uncertainty. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of youth and young adulthood: New perspectives and agendas* (pp. 3–13). Oxon: Routledge.

Hilmarsen, H. V., & Arneseth, H. C. (2017). Livet på Instagram: Ungdoms digitale forlengelse av sosiale relasjoner og vennskap [Life on Instagram: Youth digital extension of social relations and friendship]. *Tidsskrift for ungdomsforskning, 17*(1), 3–23.

Hilland, T., Ridgers, N., Stratton, G., Knowles, Z., & Fairclough, S. (2018). Origins of perceived physical education ability and worth among English adolescents. *European Physical Education Review, 24*(2), 165–180. doi.org/10.1177/1356336x16673765

Hochschild, A. R. (1998). 'The sociology of emotion as a way of seeing'. In G. Bendelow & S. J. Williams (Eds.), *Emotions in social life: Critical themes and contemporary issues* (pp. 3–16). London: Routledge.

Holen, S., Waaktaar, T., & Sagatun, Å. (2018). A chance lost in the prevention of school dropout ? Teacher-student relationships mediate the effect of mental health problems on noncompletion of upper-secondary school. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *62*(5), 737–753. doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1306801

Hopfenbeck, T., Lenkit, J., El Masri, Y., Cantrell, K., Ryan, J., & Baird, J. (2018). Lessons learned from PISA: A systematic review of peer reviewed articles on the programme for international student assessment. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 62*(3), 333-353. doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1258726

Horrell, A., Sproule, J., & Gray, S. (2012). Health and wellbeing: A policy context for physical education in Scotland. *Sport, Education and Society*, *17*(2), 163–180. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2011.607948

House of Commons Science and Technology Committee. (2019). *Impact of social media and screen-use on young people`s health* (14th Report of Session 2017 – 19 HC 822). Retrieved from www.parliament.uk/science

Hovdhaugen, E., Vibe, N., & Seland, I. (2017). National test results: Representation and misrepresentation. Challenges for municipal and local school administration in Norway. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 3*(1), 95–105. doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2017.1316636

Imsen, G., Blossing, U., & Moos, L. (2017). Reshaping the Nordic education model in an era of efficiency. Changes in the comprehensive school project in Denmark, Norway and Sweden since the millennium. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 61*(5), 568–583. doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1172502

Jacobsen, M. H., & Kristiansen, S. (2011). Erwing Goffmann: Det situationelle selv og selvets dramatiske effecter. [The situational self and the dramatic effects of self]. In A.Pedersen (Ed.), *Selvet: Sociologiske perspektiver* (pp. 47–81). København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Jamal, F., Fletcher, A., Harden, A., Wells, H., Thomas, J., & Bonell, C. (2013). The school environment and student health: A systematic review and meta-ethnography of qualitative research. *BMC Public Health*, *13*(1), 798. Retrieved from http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/798

Janssen, I., & LeBlanc, A. (2010). Systematic review of the health benefits of physical activity and fitness in school-aged children and youth. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 7*(1). Retrieved from http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/7/1/40

Jenkins, R. (1992). *Key sociologists: Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Johnsen, N., Toftager, M., Melkevik, O., Holstein, B., & Rasmussen, M. (2017). Trends in social inequality in physical inacivity among Danish adolescents 1991-2014. *SSM – Population Health, 3*, 534–538. doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2017.04.003

Jonsson, U., Bohman, H., von Knorring, L., Olsson, G., Paaren, A., & Von Knorring, A. L. (2011). Mental health outcome of long-term and episodic adolescent depression: 15-year follow-up of a community sample. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *130*(3), 395–-404. doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2010.10.046

Karvonen, S., Vikat, A., & Rimpelä, M. (2005). The role of school context in the increase in young people's health complaints in Finland. *Journal of Adolescence, 28*(1), 1–16. doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2004.05.006

Kay, T. (2016). Bodies of knowledge: Connecting the evidence bases on physical activity and health inequalities. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 8*(4), 539–557. doi-org.ezproxy.inn.no/10.1080/19406940.2016.1228690

Kerner, C., Haerens, L., & Kirk, D. (2018). Understanding body image in physical education: Current knowledge and future directions. *European Physical Education Review*, *24*(2), 255–265. doi.org/10.1177/1356336X17692508

Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Research, 43*(2), 207–222. doi.org/10.2307/3090197

Kidger, J., Araya, R., Donovan, J., & Gunnell, D. (2012). The effect of the school environment on the emotional health of adolescents: A systematic review. *Pediatrics, 129*(5), 925–949.

Kieling, C., Baker-Henningham, H., Belfer, M., Conti, G., Ertem, I., Omigbodun, O.,...Rahman, A. (2011). Child and adolescent mental health worldwide: Evidence for action. *The Lancet*, *378*(9801), 1515–1525. doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60827-1

Kirk, D. (2010). *Physical education futures*. London: Routledge.

Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 16*(1), 103–121. doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.ep11347023

Klakk, H., Grøntved, A., Møller, N. C., Heidemann, M., Andersen, L. B., & Wedderkopp, N. (2014). Prospective association of adiposity and cardiorespiratory fitness with cardiovascular risk factors in healthy children. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 24*, 275– 282. doi.org/10.1111/sms.12163

Kleppang, A., Hartz, I., Thurston, M., Hagquist, C. (2018). The association between physical activity and symptoms of depression in different contexts – a cross-sectional study of Norwegian adolescents. *BMC Public Health, 18*(1), 1368. doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6257-0 .

Knauss, C., Paxton, S. J., & Alsaker, F. D. (2008). Body Dissatisfaction in adolescent boys and girls: Objectified body consciousness, internalization of the media body ideal and perceived pressure from media. *Sex Roles, 59*, 633–643. doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9474-7

Kolle, E., Steene-Johannessen, J., Sãvfenbom, R., Anderssen, S. A., Grydeland, M., Ekelund, U.,…Solberg, R. B. (2019). *School in motion: Forsøk med økt fysisk aktivitet på ungdomstrinnet* [School in motion: Intervention to increase physical activity in secondary school]. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no

Kolle, E., Stokke, J. S., Hansen, B. H., & Anderssen, S. (2012). *Fysisk aktivitet blant 6-,9- og 15 – åringer i Norge: Resultater fra en kartlegging I 2011* [Physical activity among 6-, 9- and 15-years- olds in Norway: Results from survey 2011]. (Report 6/2012). Oslo: Helsedirektoratet.

Krueger, R. A. (1998). *Developing Questions for Focus Groups: Focus Group Kit 3*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kuiper, J., Broer, J., & van der Wouden, J. (2018). Associations between physical exercise and psychosocial problems in 96,617 Dutch adolescents in secondary education: A cross-sectional study. *European Journal of Public Health, 28*(3), 468-473.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(1), 25–53. doi.org/10.3102/00346543070001025

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Lagestad, P. (2017). Longitudinal changes and predictors of adolescents' enjoyment in physical education. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, *9*(9), 124–133. doi:10.5897/IJEAPS2017.0523

Larsson, H. (2016). *Idrott och hälsa: I går, i dag, i morgon* [Physical education: Yesterday, today, tomorrow]. Stockholm: Liber.

Larun, L., Nordheim, L. V., Ekeland, E., Hagen, K. B., & Heian, F. (2006). Exercise in prevention and treatment of anxiety and depression among children and young people. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews,* (3), https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD004691.pub2

Lawler, M., & Nixon, E. (2011). Body dissatisfaction among adolescent boys and girls: The effects of body mass, peer appearance culture and internalization of appearance ideals. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *40*(1), 59–71. doi.10.1007/s10964-009-9500-2

Leirhaug, P. E. (2016). Exploring the relationship between student grades and assessment for learning in Norwegian physical education. *European Physical Education Review*, *22*(3), 298–314. doi.org/10.1177%2F1356336X15606473

Leirhaug, P.E., & Annerstedt, C. (2016). Assessing with new eyes? Assessment for learning in Norwegian physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 21*(6), 616–631. doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2015.1095871

Leirhaug, P., & MacPhail, A. (2015). `It`s the other assessment that is the key`: Three Norwegian physical education teachers` engagement (or not) with assessment for learning. *Sport, Education and Society, 20*(5), 624–640. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.975113

Leirhaug, P. E., MacPhail, A., & Annerstedt, C. (2016). 'The grade alone provides no learning': Investigating assessment literacy among Norwegian physical education teachers. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*, *7*(1), 21–36. doi.org/10.1080/18377122.2016.1145429

Lewis, K. (2014). Pupils` and teachers' experiences of school-based physical education: A qualitative study. *BMJ Open, 4*(9), e005277. doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2014-005277

Lillejord S., Børte K., Ruud E. & Morgan,K. (2017). *Stress i skolen – en systematisk kunnskapsoversikt* [Stress in school- a systematic review]. Oslo: Kunnskapssenter for utdanning.

Lillejord, S., Vågan, A., Johansson, L., Børte, K. & Ruud, E. (2016). *Hvordan fysisk aktivitet i skolen kan fremme elevers helse, læringsmiljø og læringsutbytte: En systematisk kunnskapsoversikt* [How physical activity in school can promote pupils health, learning environment and learning outcomes: A systematic review]. Oslo: Kunnskapssenter for utdanning.

Lincoln, Y. C., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Lindwall, M., & Asci, F. H. (2014). Physical activity and self-esteem. In A. Clow and S-Edmunds (Eds.), *Physical activity and mental health* (pp. 83–104). Campaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Liu. M., Wu, L., & Ming, Q. (2015). How does physical activity intervention improve self-esteem and self-concept in children and adolescents? Evidence from a meta-analysis. *PLOS ONE 10*(8), e0134804. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0134804

López-Pastor, V. M., Kirk, D., Lorente-Catalán, E., MacPhail, A., & Macdonald, D. (2013). Alternative assessment in physical education: A review of international literature. *Sport, Education and Society, 18*(1), 57–76. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2012.713860

Lubans, D., Richards, J., Hillman, C., Faulkner, G., Beauchamp, M., Nilsson, M.,...Biddle, S. (2016). Physical activity for cognitive and mental health in youth: A systematic review of mechanisms. *Pediatrics, 138*(3), e20161642. doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-1642

Lyngstad, I., Hagen, P-M., & Aune, O. (2016). Understanding pupils' hiding techniques in physical education. *Sport, Education & Society, 21*(8), 1127–1143. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.993960

Løhre, A. (2012). School wellbeing among children: The dialogue and possibilities. In S.T. Innstrand (Ed.), *Health Promotion – Theory and Practice* (pp. 237–251). Retrieved from https://www.ntnu.edu/documents/16848459/0/Health+Promotion+-+Theory+and+Practice.pdf

Låftman, S. B., Almquist, Y. B., & Östberg, V. (2013). Students' accounts of school-performance stress: A qualitative analysis of a high-achieving setting in Stockholm, Sweden. *Journal of youth studies*, *16*(7), 932–949. doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2013.780126

MacLean, A., Sweeting, H., & Hunt, K. (2010). 'Rules' for boys, guidelines for girls: Gender differences in symptom reporting during childhood and adolescence. *Social Science & Medicine, 70*, 597-604. doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.10.042

Malcolm, D. & Gibson, K. (2018). Figurational sociological approaches to sport, exercise and health. In D. Malcolm & P.Velija (Eds.), *Figurational research in sport, leisure and health* (pp. 168–181). Oxford: Routledge.

Malina, R., Cumming, S., & Coelho-e-Silva, M. (2016). The health-enhancing effects of physical activity among youth. In K. Green & A. Smith (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of youth sport* (pp.356–375). London: Routledge.

Malterud, K. (2011). *Kvalitative metoder i medisinsk forskning: En innføring* [Qualitative methods in medical research: An introduction] (3rd ed.). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Malterud, K. (2012). *Fokusgrupper som forskningsmetode for medisin og helsefag* [Focus groups as research method for Medicine and Health Sciences]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Martins, J., Marques, A., Rodrigues, A., Sarmento, H., Onofre, M., & Carreira da Costa, F. (2018). Exploring the perspectives of physically active and inactive adolescents: How does physical education influence their lifestyles? *Sport, Education and Society*, *23*(5), 505–519. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1229290 .

McKenzie, T. L., & Lounsbery, M. A. F. (2009). School physical education: The pill not taken. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, 3*(3), 219–225. doi.org/10.1177/1559827609331562

McKenzie, T. L., & Lounsbery, M. A. F. (2014). The pill not taken: Revisiting physical education teacher effectiveness in a public health context. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *85*(3), 287–292. doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2014.931203

McKercher,C., Schmidt, M. D., Sanderson, K, Dwyer, T., & Venn, A. J. (2012). Physical activity and depressed mood in primary and secondary school-children. *Mental Health and Physical Activity, 5*(1), 50–56. doi.org/10.1016/j.mhpa.2012.03.004

McLaughlin, C., & Clarke, B. (2010). Relational matters: A review of the impact of school experience on mental health in early adolescence. *Educational & Child Psychology, 27*(1), 99–103.

McMahon, E. M., Corcoran, P., O` Regan, G., Keeley, H., Cannon, M., Carli, V.,… Wasserman, D. (2017). Physical activity in European adolescents and associations with anxiety, depression and well-being. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 26*(1), 111–122. doi.org/10.1007/s00787-016-0875-9

Mennell, S., & Goudsblom, J. (1998). *On civilization, power and knowledge*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press

Metcalfe, S. (2018). Adolescent constructions of gendered identities: The role of sport and (physical) education. *Sport, Education and Society, 23*(7), 681–693. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2018.1493574

Ministry of Education and Research. (2015). *Fag – fordypning - forståelse En fornyelse av Kunnskapsløftet* (Meld. St. 28 (2015-2016)) [A renewal of the Knowledge promotion]. Retrieved from https://regjeringen.no

Ministry of Education and Research. (2017). *Verdier og prinsipper for grunnopplæringen - overordnet del av læreplanverket* [Core curriculum – values and principles for primary and secondary education]. Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no

Ministry of Health and Care Services. (2014). *Folkehelsemeldingen — Mestring og muligheter* (Meld. St.19 (2014-2015)) [Public Health – Mastery and opportunities]. Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no

Ministry of Health and Care Services. (2016). *#Ungdomshelse: Regjeringens strategi for ungdomshelse 2016*–2021[Youth health: Government's strategy for youth health 2016-2021].Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no

Ministry of Health and Care Services. (2018). *Folkehelsemeldinga – Gode liv i eit trygt samfunn* (Meld. St. 19 (2018-2019) [Public Health – Good lives in a safe society). Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-19-20182019/id2639770/sec2?q=fysisk%20aktivitet

Mitchell, F., Inchley, J., Fleming, J., & Currie, C. (2015). A socio-ecological approach to understanding adolescent girls' engagement and experiences in the PE environment: A case study design. *Graduate Journal of Sport, Exercise & Physical Education Research*, *3*, 44–62.

Moen, K. M., Westlie, K., Bjørke, L., & Brattli, V. H. (2018). *Når ambisjoner møter tradisjoner; En nasjonal kartleggingsstudie av kroppsøvingsfaget i grunnskolen (5.–10. trinn)*[When ambitions meet traditions; A national mapping of physical education in primary and secondary school]. Retrieved from https://brage.inn.no

Morgan, D.L. (1988). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Morgan, D.L. (1998). *The focus group guidebook: Focus group kit 1*.Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Morgan, K., & Carpenter, P. (2002). Effects of manipulating the motivational climate in physical education lessons, *European Physical Education Review*, *8*(3), 207–229. doi.org/10.1177/1356336X020083003

Murphy, P. (2019). *Reconfiguring figurational sociology*. Unpublished manuscript

Naylor, P-J., & McKay, H. A. (2009). Prevention in the first place: Schools as setting for action on physical inactivity. *British Journal of Sports Medicine, 43*(1), 10–13. doi.org/10.1136/bjsm.2008.053447

Nesti, M. S. (2016). Exercise for health: Serious fun for the whole person? *Journal of Sport and Health Science*, *5*(2), 135–138. doi.org/10.1016/j.jshs.2016.03.003

Nielsen, A. M., & Lagermann, C. L. (2017). *Stress i gymnasiet: Hvad der stresser gymnasielever og hvordan forebyggelse og behandling virker med `Åben og Rolig for Unge`; Sammenfatning af resultater og anbefalinger* [Stress in upper secondary: What stresses students in upper secondary and how prevention and treatment works]. Retrieved from http://edu.au.dk/fileadmin/edu/Udgivelser/E-boeger/Stress_i_gymnasiet_-_PIXI.pdf .

Nielsen, S. F., Ottesen, L., & Thing, L. F. (2016). Established and outsider relations among students involved in a health promotion intervention in a Danish high school. *Historical Social Research, 41*(3), 101–119. doi.org/10.12759/hsr.41.2016.3.101-119

Nielsen, S. F., & Thing, L. F. (2013). Fokusgruppeinterview [Focus group interviews]. In L.F. Thing (Ed.) & L.S. Ottesen, *Metoder i idrætsforskning* [Methods in sports research] (pp. 90–105). København: Munksgaard

Nielsen, S. F., & Thing, L. F. (2019). 'Who is zooming who?' A study of young PE-students in their figurations. *Sport, Education and Society, 24*(5), 480–490. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1415877

Nordbakke, S. (2019). Children's out-of-home leisure activities: Changes during the last decade in Norway, *Children's Geographies*, *17*(3), 347–360. doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2018.1510114

Nordfjæran, T., Flemmen, G., & Dahl, H. (2012). Psychosocial factors related to mental distress among Norwegian adolescents. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, *14*(3), 151–161. doi.org/10.1080/14623730.2012.732410

Nordtug, B., & Engelsrud, G. (2016). Boken som mangler, ord som går på tomgang og sykt flinke jenter: Kunnskap og helse [The missing book, words without meaning and insanely good girls: Knowledge and health]. *Tidsskrift for Kjønnsforskning, 03-04*(40).

Norwegian Centre for Research Data (2018, October 1). *Skoler og barnehager* [Schools and kindergartens].Retrieved from https://nsd.no/personvernombud/hjelp/forskningstema/barnehage_skole.html

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2015a). *Læreplan i kroppsøving* [Curriculum for physical education] (KRO1-04). Retrieved from http://www.udir.no/kl06/KRO1-04

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2015b). *Endringer i faget kroppsøving Udir-8-2012; Et tydeligere formål* [Changes in the subject PE Udir-8-2012; A clearer purpose]. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2015c, August 17). *Kroppsøving-veiledning til læreplan* [PE- guidelines to curriculum]. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2017, November 26). 8. 9. og 10.trinn [8th, 9th and 10th grade]. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2018a, November 26). *Hva er fagfornyelsen?* [What is renewal?]. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2018b, November 29). *Utdanningsspeilet 2018* [The education mirror]. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2019, August 28). *Analyse – grunnskolepoeng og karakterer i grunnskolen 2018 – 19* [Grades in elementary and secondary education]. Retrieved from https://udir.no.

Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2019b). *Høring - læreplan i kroppsøving* [Hearing- PE curriculum]. Retrieved from https://hoering.udir.no/Hoering/v2/342

Norwegian Directorate of Health. (2014). *Nasjonale anbefalinger. Fysisk aktivitet og stillesitting –13-17 år* [National recommendations. Physical activity and sedentary time- 13-17 years]. Retrieved from https://helsenorge.no

Norwegian Directorate of Health. (2015). *Trivsel i skolen* [School well-being]. (Report 6/2015). Retrieved from https://www.helsedirektoratet.no

Norwegian Media Authority. (2018). *Barn og medier 2018: Barn og unges (9 – 18 år) bruk og opplevelser av medier* [Children and media 2018: Children and young people`s (9 – 18 years) media use and experiences]. Retrieved from https://medietilsynet.no/barn-og-medier/barn-og-medier-undersokelsen

NOU 2003: 16. (2003). *I første rekke – Forsterket kvalitet i grunnopplæringen for alle* [First in line – Improved quality in the primary and secondary education and training]. Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no

NOU 2015: 8. (2015). *Fremtidens skole: Fornyelse av fag og kompetanser* [The school in the future; Renewal of subjects and competencies]. Retrieved from https://www.regjeringen.no

Nunn, A., Johnson, S. Monro, S., Bickerstaffe, T., & Kelsey, S. (2007). *Factors influencing social mobility.* (Report No. 450). Retrieved from http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/6057/1/rrep450.pdf

Nyberg, G. & Larsson, H. (2014). Exploring `what` to learn in physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 19(*2), 123–135. https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2012.726982

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2013). *Education policy outlook 2015: Making reforms happeni*g. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/norway

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015a). *Health at a glance 2015: OECD indicators*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-2015_health_glance-2015-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2015b). *PISA 2015 key findings from Norway*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/norway/pisa-2015-norway.htm

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017). *PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students' Well-Being*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019). *Implementing education policies. The new competence development model for schools in Norway: Highlights of a suggested implementation strategy.* Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/education/implementing-policies/Improving-school-quality-in-Norway-highights.pdf

O'Donovan, T., & Kirk, D. (2008). Reconceptualizing student motivation in physical education: An examination of what resources are valued by pre-adolescent girls in contemporary society. *European Physical Education Review*, *14*(1), 71–91. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1356336X07085710

Olivia. (2017).*What is trustworthiness in qualitative research?* Retrieved from https://www.statisticssolutions.com/what-is-trustworthiness-in-qualitative-research/

Ommundsen, Y. (2008). Danning eller helse: Om to ulike begrunnelser for faget og deres konsekvenser [Education or health: On two different justifications for the subject and their consequences]. In P. Arneberg & L.G. Briseid (Eds.), *Fag og danning; mellom individ og fellesskap* (pp. 19 –206). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget

Opdal, I., Morseth, B., Handegård, B., Lillevoll, K., Ask, H., Nielsen, S.,...Rognmo, K. (2019). Change in physical activity is not associated with change in mental distress among adolescents: The Tromsø study: Fit Futures. *BMC Public Health, 19*(1), 916. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7271-6 .

O'Reilly, M., Hughes, J., Adams, S., Whiteman, N., Reilly, P. J, & Dogra, N. (2018). Whose responsibility is adolescent's mental health in the UK? The perspectives of key stakeholders. *School Mental Health, 10*(4)*,* 450–461. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-018-9263-6

Ose, S.O., & Jensen, C. (2017). Youth outside the labour force - Perceived barriers by service providers and service users: A mixed method approach. *Children and Youth Services Review, 81*, 148 – 156. doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.08.002

Ottesen, L.S. (2013). Observationsstudier i idrætsfeltet [Observational studies in the field of sport]. In L.F. Thing (Ed.) & L.S. Ottesen, *Metoder i idrætsforskning* [Methods in sports research] (pp. 106–122). København: Munksgaard.

Ottová-Jordan, V., Smith, O. R., Augustine, L., Gobina, I., Rathmann, K., Torsheim, T., ... Vollebergh, W. (2015). Trends in health complaints from 2002 to 2010 in 34 countries and their association with health behaviours and social context factors at individual and macro-level. *European Journal of Public Health*, *25*(suppl_2), 83–89. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckv033

Paechter, C. (2003). Power, bodies and identity: How different forms of physical education construct varying masculinities and femininities in secondary schools. *Sex Education, 3*(1), 47–59.

Patalay, P., Giese, L., Stankovic, M., Curtin, C., Moltrecht, B., & Gondek, D. (2016). Mental health provision in schools: Priority, facilitators and barriers in 10 European countries. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 21*(3), 139–147. doi.org/10.1111/camh.12160

Patalay, P., Gondek, D., Moltrecht, B., Giese, L., Curtin, C., Stanković, M., & Savka, N. (2017). Mental health provision in schools: Approaches and interventions in 10 European countries. *Global Mental Health, 4*,(e10). https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2017.6

Patel, V. (2014). Rethinking mental health care: Bridging the credibility gap. *Intervention, 12*(1), 15–20.

Patel, V., Saxena, S., Lund, C., Thornicroft, G., Baingana, F., Bolton, P., Chisholm, D., ...Unützer, J. (2018). The *Lancet* on global mental health and sustainable development. *Lancet, 392,* 1553-98. https://doi-org.ezproxy.inn.no/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31612-X

Paulle, B., van Heerikhuizen, B., & Emirbayer, M. (2012). Elias and Bourdieu. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, *12*(1), 69–93. doi.org/10.1177/1468795X11433708

Peek, L., & Fothergill, A. (2009). Using focus groups: Lessons from studying daycare centers, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina. *Qualitative Research*, *9*(1), 31–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794108098029

Penney, D., Brooker, R., Hay, P., & Gillespie, L. (2009). Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment: Three message systems of schooling and dimensions of quality physical education. *Sport Education & Society, 14*(4), 421-442.

Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women's body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex Roles*, *71*(11-12), 363–377. doi.org/10.1007/s11199-014-0384-6

Phoenix, A., & Frosh, S. (2001). Positioned by "Hegemonic" masculinities: A study of London boys' narratives of identity. *Australian Psychologist, 36*(1), 27–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060108259628

Placek, J. H. (1983). Conceptions of success in teaching: Busy, happy and good? In T. Templin, & J. Olson (Eds.), *Teaching in Physical Education* (pp. 46–56). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Poitras, V. J., Gray, C. E., Borghese, M. M., Carson, V., Chaput, J. P., Janssen, I., ... Sampson, M. (2016). Systematic review of the relationships between objectively measured physical activity and health indicators in school-aged children and youth. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, *41*(6), 197–239. doi.org/10.1139/apnm-2015-0663

Potrebny, T., Wilum, N., Haugstvedt, A., Sollesnes, R., Torsheim, T., Wold, B., & Thuen, F. (2019). Health complaints among adolescents in Norway: A twenty-year perspective on trends. *PLOS ONE, 14*(1), e0210509. doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0210509

Pyhältö, K., Soini, T., & Pietarinen, J. (2010). Pupils' pedagogical well-being in comprehensive school – significant positive and negative school experiences in Finnish ninth graders. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 25*(2), 207–221**.** doi.org/10.1007/s10212-010-0013-x

Rasberry, C. N., Lee, S. M., Robin, L., Laris, B. A., Russell, L. A., Coyle, K. K., & Nihiser, A. J. (2011). The association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, and academic performance: A systematic review of the literature. *Preventive Medicine*, *52*, 10–20. doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.01.027

Redelius, K., Fagrell, B., & Larsson, H. (2009). Symbolic capital in physical education and health: To be, to do or to know? That is the gendered question. *Sport, Education and Society*, *14*(2), 245–260. doi.org/10.1080/13573320902809195

Redelius, K. & Hay, P. (2012). Students' views on criterion referenced assessment and grading in Swedish physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 17*(2), 211–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2010.548064

Reis, R. S., Salvo, D., Ogilvie, D., Lambert, E. V., Goenka, S., & Brownson, R. C. (2016). Scaling up physical activity interventions worldwide: Stepping up to larger and smarter approaches to get people moving. *The Lancet, 388*(10051), 1337–1348. https://doi-org.ezproxy.inn.no/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)30728-0

Reneflot, A., Aarø, L., Aase, H., Reichborn- Kjennerud, T., Tambs, K., & Øverland, S. (2018). *Psykisk helse i Norge* [Mental health in Norway]. (Report 1/ 2018). Retrieved from https://www.fhi.no/globalassets/dokumenterfiler/rapporter/2018/psykisk_helse_i_norge2018.pdf

Resaland, G. K., Andersen, L. B., Mamen, A., & Anderssen, S. A. (2011). Effects of a 2-year school-based daily physical activity intervention on cardiorespiratory fitness: The Sogndal school-intervention study. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports, 21*(2), 302–309. doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0838.2009.01028.x

Riekie, H., Aldridge, J. M., & Afari, E. (2017). The role of the school climate in high school students' mental health and identity formation: A South Australian study. *British Educational Research Journal*, *43*(1), 95–123. doi.org/10.1002/berj.3254

Ridgers, N. D., Stratton, G., Fairclough, S. J., & Twisk, J. W. (2007). Long-term effects of a playground markings and physical structures on children's recess physical activity levels. *Preventive Medicine*, *44*(5), 393–397. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2007.01.009

Roberts, K. (2007). Youth transitions and generations: A response to Wyn and Woodman. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *10*(2), 263–269. doi.org/10.1080/13676260701204360

Roberts, K. (2009). *Key concepts in sociology.* Houndsmills: Palgrave.

Roberts, K. (2012). *Sociology: An introduction.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

Roberts, K. (2016). *Social theory, sport, leisure*. London: Routledge.

Roberts, K., & Brodie, D. (1992). *Inner city sport: Who plays and what are the benfits*?

Culemborg: Giodano Bruno.

Robinson, D. B. (2018). Religion as an other(ed) identity within physical education. A scoping review of relevant literature and suggestions for practice and inquiry. *European Physical Education Review*, *25*(2), 491–511. doi.org/10.1177/1356336X17747860

Rogers, A., & Pilgrim, D. (2014). *A sociology of mental health and illness* (5th ed). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Rugseth, G., & Standal, Ø.F. (2015). Kroppsøving og overvekt [PE and overweight]. In Ø. F. Standal & G. Rugseth (Eds.), *Inkluderende kroppsøving* (pp. 44–56). Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Rutter, M. (1991). Pathways from childhood to adult life: the role of schooling. *Pastoral Care in Education, 9*(3), 3–10. i

Ruud, M. (2018 August 17). *Skolepress og stress øker, særlig blant jentene* [School pressure and stress increase, especially among girls]. Retrieved from https://www.utdanningsnytt.no

Røset, L., Green, K., & Thurston, M. (2019). Norwegian youngsters` perceptions of physical education: exploring the implications for mental health. Sport, Education and Society. Advance online. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1634043

Sagatun, Å., Heyerdahl, S., Wentzel-Larsen, T., & Lien, L. (2014). Mental health problems in the 10th grade and non-completion of upper secondary school: The mediating role of grades in a population-based longitudinal study. *BMC Public Health*, *14*(1), 16. Retrieved from http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/16

Sallis, J. F., McKenzie, T. L., Beets, M. W., Beighle, A., Erwin, H., & Lee, S. (2012). Physical education's role in public health: Steps forward and backward over 20 years and HOPE for the future. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 83*(2), 125–135. doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2012.10599842

Samdal. O., Wold, B., & Bronis, M. (1999). Relationship between students' perceptions of school environment, their satisfaction with school and perceived academic achievement: An international study. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 10*(3), 296–320. doi.org/10.1076/sesi.10.3.296.3502

Scheerens, J. (2013). The use of theory in school effectiveness research revisited. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *24*(1), 1–38. doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2012.691100

Scheff, T. J. (2003). Shame in self and society. *Symbolic Interaction, 26*(2), 239–262. doi.org/10.1525/si.2003.26.2.239

Shildrick, T., & MacDonald, R. (2006). In defence of subculture: Young people, leisure and social divisions. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *9*(2), 125–140. doi.org/10.1080/13676260600635599

Shucksmith, J., Spratt, J., Philip, K., & McNaughton, R. (2009). *A critical review of the literature on children and young people's views of the factors that influence their mental health*. Retrieved from http://www.healthscotland.scot

Skogen, J. C., Smith, O. R. F., Aarø, L. A., Siqveland, J., & Øverland, S. (2018). *Barn og unges psykiske helse: Forebyggende og helsefremmende folkehelsetiltak. En kunnskapsoversikt* (Report 6/2018) [Children and young people`s mental health: Preventive and health promoting public health interventions. A review]. Retrieved from https://www.fhi.no

Sletten, M.A. (2015). Psykiske plager blant ungdom. Sosiale forskjeller og historien om de flinke pikene. [Mental problems among youth. Social inequality and the story about the good girls]. *Barn i Norge*, 8-25.

Sletten, M. A., & Bakken, A. (2016). Psykiske helseplager blant ungdom – tidstrender og samfunnsmessige forklaringer. En kunnskapsoversikt og en empirisk analyse [Mental health problems among youth – timetrends and societal explanations. A systematc review and empirical analysis] (NOVA Note 4/2016). Retrieved from http://www.hioa.no/Om-OsloMet

Smith, A., & Parr, M. (2007). Young people's views on the nature and purposes of physical education: A sociological analysis. *Sport, Education and Society, 12*(1), 37–58. doi.org/10.1080/13573320601081526

Smith, M. A., & St Pierre, P. E. (2009). Secondary students' perceptions of enjoyment in physical education: An American and English perspective. *Physical Educator*, *66*(4), 209–221. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.inn.no

Sotardi, V. (2017). Exploring school stress in middle childhood: Interpretations, experiences and coping. *Pastoral Care in Education, 35*(1), 13–27. doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2016.1269360

Standahl, Ø. F. (2016). *Phenomenology and pedagogy in physical education*. London: Routledge.

Stathopoulou, G., Powers, M. B., Berry, A .C., Smits, J. A. J., & Otto, M. W. (2006). Exercise interventions for mental health: A quantitative and qualitative review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 13*(2), 179–193. doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2850.2006.00021.x

Steffensen, K., Ekren, R., Zachrisen, O. O., & Kirkebøen, L. J. (2017). *Er det forskjeller i skolers og kommuners bidrag til elevenes læring i grunnskolen?En kvantitativ studie* [Are there differences in schools` and municipalities` contribution to pupils` learning

in elementary school? A quantitative study] (Report 2/2017). Oslo: Statistisk sentralbyrå.

Steinberg, L., & Morris, A. S. (2001). Adolescent development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 83–110. doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.83

Stengård, E., & Appelqvist – Schmidlechner, K. (2010). *Young people- an investment for the future*. Retrieved from https://www.consaludmental.org

Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P. N. & Rook, D. W. (2007). *Focus groups: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Stolz, S. (2014). *The Philosophy of Physical Education. A New Perspective*. Oxon: Routledge.

Strandbu, Å., & Kvalem, I. L. (2014). Body talk and body ideals among adolescent boys and girls: A mixed-gender focus group study. *Youth & Society, 46*(5), 623–641.

Straatmann, V., Lai, E., Lange, T., Campbell, M., Wickham, S., Andersen, A. M. N., …Taylor- Robinson, D. (2019). How do early-life factors explain social inequalities in adolescent mental health? Findings from the UK Millennium Cohort Study. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 73*(11), 1149 –1060. doi:10.1136/jech-2019-212367

Strong, W. B., Malina, R. M., Blimkie, C. J., Daniels, S. R., Dishman, R. K., Gutin, B., ... Rowland, T. (2005). Evidence based physical activity for school-age youth. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, *146*(6), 732–737. doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2005.01.055

Suldo, S. M., McMahan, M. M., Chappel, A. M., & Loker, T. (2012). Relationships between perceived school climate and adolescent mental health across genders. *School Mental Health*, *4*(2), 69–80. doi.org/10.1007/s12310-012-9073-1

Svennberg, L., Meckbach, J., & Redelius, K. (2014). Exploring PE teachers'‘gut feelings’: An attempt to verbalise and discuss teachers’ internalised grading criteria. *European Physical Education Review*, *20*(2), 199–214. doi.org/10.1177/1356336X13517437

Svennberg, L., Meckbach, J., & Redelius, K. (2018). Swedish PE teachers struggle with assessment in a criterion-referenced grading system. Sport, Education and Society381, 23(4), 381 –393. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2016.1200025

Swain, J. (2003). How young schoolboys become somebody: The role of the body in the construction of masculinity. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *24*(3), 299–314. doi.org/10.1080/01425690301890

Sweeting, H., West, P., Young, R., & Der, G. (2010). Can we explain increases in young people’s psychological distress over time? *Social Science & Medicine, 71*(10), 1819–1830. doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.08.012

Sweeting, H., Young, R., & West, P. (2009). GHQ increases among Scottish 15 year olds 1987–2006. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, *44*(7), 579–586. https://doi.org/ 10.1007/s00127-008-0462-6

Sæle, O.O. (2017). *Danningsperspektiver i kroppsøvingsfaget* [Perspectives on education in PE]. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget

Säfvenbom, R., Haugen, T., & Bulie, M. (2015). Attitudes toward and motivation for PE. Who collects the benefits of the subject? *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, *20*(6), 629–646. doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2014.892063

Thagaard, T. (2009). *Systematikk og innlevelse: En innføring i kvalitativ metode* [Systematics and empathy: An introduction to qualitative methods] (3rd ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Thapar, A., Collishaw, S., Pine, D. S., & Thapar, A. K. (2012). Depression in adolescence. *The Lancet*, *379*(9820), 1056–1067. doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60871-4

The Education Act. (1998). *Lov om grunnskolen og den vidaregåande opplæringa (opplæringslova)* (LOV-1998-07-17-61). [Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training]. Retrieved from https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61

The Lancet. (2017). Better understanding of youth mental health. *Editorial, 389*(10080), 10080. doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)31140-6

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. (2016). *Forskningsetiske retningslinjer for samfunnsvitenskap,humaniora, juss og teolog*i [Guidelines for research ethics in social sciences, humanities, law and theology]. Retrieved from https://www.etikkom.no

Thing, L. F., Nielsen, S. F., & Ottesen, L. (2015). Are young people caught in the time bind? A sociological analysis of how young people in an upper secondary school view the issue of finding time to do sports or exercise in their spare time. *Annals of Leisure Research*, *18*(1), 9–24. doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2014.924075

Thomas, W. I., & Thomas, D. S. (1928). *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs*. New York: Knopf.

Thorjussen, I. M., & Sisjord, M.K. (2018). Students` physical education experiences in a multi- ethnic class. *Sport, Education and Society, 23*(7), 694–706. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2018.1467399

Tiggemann, M., & Slater, A. (2013). NetGirls: The Internet, Facebook, and body image concern in adolescent girls. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, *46*(6), 630–633. https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.22141

Tilley, S. A. (2003). "Challenging" research practices: Turning a critical lens on the work of transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(5), 750–773. doi.org/10.1177/1077800403255296

Tolgfors, B. (2018). Different versions of assessment for learning in the subject of physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, *23*(3), 311–327. doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2018.1429589

Tolonen, T. (2005). Locality and gendered capital in working-class youth. Young, 13(4), 343–361. doi.org/10.1177/1103308805057052

Trekels, J., Karsay, K., Eggermont, S., & Vandenbosch, L. (2018). How social and mass media relate to youth's self-sexualization: Taking a cross-national perspective on rewarded appearance ideals. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, *47*(7), 1440–1455. doi.org/10.1007/s10964-018-0844-3

Trudeau, F., & Shepard, R. J. (2008). Physical education, school physical activity, school sports and academic performance. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 5*(10). doi.org/10.1186/1479-5868-5-10

Tudor, K., Sarkar, M., & Spray, C. (2019). Exploring common stressors in physical education: A qualitative study. *European Physical Education Review, 25*(3), 675–690. doi.org/10.1177/1356336X18761586

Tveit, S. (2014). Educational assessment in Norway. *Assessment in education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 21*(2), 221–237. doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2013.830079

Tveit, S. (2016, February 11). Testing and assessment in Norway. *International Education News*. Retrieved from https://internationalednews.com/2016/02/11/testing-and-assessment-in-norway/

Van Dijk, M. L., De Groot, R. H., Savelberg, H. H., Van Acker, F., & Kirschner, P. A. (2014). The association between objectively measured physical activity and academic achievement in Dutch adolescents: Findings from the GOALS study. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *36*(5), 460–473. doi.org/10.1123/jsep.2014-0014

Van Dijk, M. L., Savelberg, H. H. C. M., Verboon, P., Kirschner, P. A., & De Groot, R. H. M. (2016). Decline in physical activity is not associated with changes in mental health. *BMC Public Health, 16*(1), 1–9. doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-2983-3

van Krieken, R. (1990). The organisation of the soul: Elias and Foucault on discipline and the self. *European Journal of Sociology/ Archives Europeénes de Sociologie, 31*(2), 353–371. doi.org/10.1017/S000397560000610X

van Krieken, R. (1998). *Key sociologist: Norbert Elias*. Oxon: Routledge.

van Krieken, R. (2010). Childhood in Australian sociology and society, *Current Sociology*, *58*(2), 232–249. doi.org/10.1177/0011392109354243

van Krieken, R. (2014) Norbert Elias and emotions in history. In D. Lemmings & A. Brookes (Eds.), *Passion, power and Elias: Emotional styles and historical change* (pp.19–42). London: Routledge.

van Sluijs, E. M. F., & Kriemler, S. (2016). Reflections on physical activity intervention research on young people: Dos, don`ts, and critical thoughts. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 13*(25). doi.org/10.1186/s12966-016-0348-z

Verduyn, P., Ybarra, O., Résibois, M., Jonides, J., & Kross, E. (2017). Do social network sites enhance or undermine subjective well-being? A critical review. *Social Issues and Policy Review, 11*(1), 274–302. doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12033

Vinje, E. E. (2016). Kroppsøvingsfaget i dag og i morgen: hva, hvordan og hvorfor? [PE today, and tomorrow: What, how and why?] In E. E. Vinje (Ed.), *Kroppsøvingsdidaktiske utfordringer* (pp. 11–31). Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk.

Vinje, E. E., Brattenborg, S., Aasland, M., & Aasland, O. E. (2019). Hvor unike er de norske bestemmelsene for inkludering av elevenes forutsetninger og innsats ved vurdering i kroppsøving? [How unique are Norwegian regulations that predispositions and effort should be included when assessing in PE]. In E.E. Vinje & J. Skrede (Eds.), *Fremtidens kroppsøvingslærer* (pp. 96–113). Oslo: Cappelen Damm.

von Soest, T. (2012). Tidstrender for depressive symptomer blant norske ungdommer fra 1992 til 2010 [Secular trends in depressive symptoms among Norwegian adolescents from 1992 to 2010]. *Tidsskrift for Ungdomsforskning*, *12*(2). Retrieved from https://journals.hioa.no/index.php/ungdomsforskning/article/view/1019

von Soest, T., & Wichstrøm, L. (2014). Secular trends in depressive symptoms among Norwegian adolescents from 1992 to 2010. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 42*(3), 403–415. doi.org/10.1007/s10802-013-9785-1

Waddington, I., Malcolm, D., & Green, K. (1997). Sport, health and physical education. *European Physical education Review, 3*(2), 165–182. doi.org/10.1177/1356336X9700300206

Walseth, K., Aartun, I., & Engelsrud, G. (2017). Girls' bodily activities in physical education How current fitness and sport discourses influence girls' identity construction. *Sport, Education and Society*, *22*(4), 442–459. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2015.1050370

Walseth, K., Engebretsen, B., & Elvebakk, L. (2018). Meaningful experiences in PE for all students: An activist research approach. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, *23*(3), 235–249. doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2018.1429590

Wang, M.-T., Brinkworth, M., & Eccles, J. (2013). Moderating effects of teacher – student relationship in adolescent trajectories of emotional and behavioral adjustment. *Development Psychology, 49*(4), 690–705. doi.org/10.1037/a0027916

Webb, L., Quennerstedt, M., & Öhman, M. (2008). Healthy bodies: Construction of the body and health in physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, *13*(4), 353–372. doi.org/10.1080/13573320802444960

Weber, M. (1904/1949). Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy. In E.A. Shils & H.A. Finch (Eds and transl.), *The methodology of the social sciences*. New York: Free Press.

West, P. (2009). Health in youth: Changing times and changing influences. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of youth and young adulthood: New perspectives and agendas* (pp. 331–343). London: Routledge.

West, P., & Sweeting, H. (2003). Fifteen, female and stressed: Changing patterns of psychological distress over time. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *44*(3), 399–411. doi.org/10.1111/1469-7610.00130

Westerhof, G. J., & Keyes, C. L. (2010). Mental illness and mental health: The two continua model across the lifespan. *Journal of Adult Development, 17*(2), 110–119. doi.org/10.1007/s10804-009-9082-y

Wibeck, V. (2010). *Fokusgrupper: Om fokuserade gruppintervjuer som undersökningsmetod* [Focus Groups: On focused group interviews as research method].Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Wichstrøm, L., & von Soest, T. (2016). Reciprocal relations between body satisfaction and self-esteem: A large 13-year prospective study of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, *47*, 16–27. doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2015.12.003

Wiklund, E., Jonsson, E., Coe, A-B., & Wiklund, M. (2019). 'Strong is the new skinny': Navigating fitness hype among teenagers in northern Sweden. *Sport, Education and Society*, *24*(5), 441–454. doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1402758

Wiklund, M., Malmgren-Olsson, E. B., Öhman, A., Bergström, E., & Fjellman-Wiklund, A. (2012). Subjective health complaints in older adolescents are related to perceived stress, anxiety and gender: A cross-sectional school study in Northern Sweden. *BMC Public Health*, *12*(1), 993. Retrieved from http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/12/993

Wiltshire, G., Lee, J., & Evans, J. (2017). 'You don't want to stand out as the bigger one': Exploring how PE and school sport participation is influenced by pupils and their peers. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, 22*(5), 548–561. doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2017.1294673

World Health Organization. (2001). *The World Health Report 2001. Mental health.* Retrieved from https://www.who.int

World Health Organization. (2018a). *Mental health: Strengthening our response*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int

World Health Organization. (2018b). *Adolescent mental health in the European region.* Retrieved from http://www.euro.who.int

Wouters, C. (1989). Flight attendants and the sociology of emotions: Hochschild's managed heart. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *6*(1), 95–123. doi.org/10.1177/026327689006001005

Wright, J. (2009). Biopower, biopedagogies, and the obesity epidemic. In J. Wright & V. Harwood (Eds.), *Biopolitics and the "Obesity Epidemic": Governing Bodies* (pp.15–30). New York: Routledge.

Wyn, J. (2009). Education for late modernity. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of youth and young adulthood: New perspectives and agendas* (pp. 97–104). Oxon: Routledge.

Wyn, J., & Woodman, D. (2006). Generation, youth and social change in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *9*(5), 495–514. doi.org/10.1080/13676260600805713

Yang, C. C., Holden, S. M., Carter, M. D., & Webb, J. J. (2018). Social media social comparison and identity distress at the college transition: A dual-path model. *Journal of Adolescence*, *69*, 92-102. doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2018.09.007

Öhman, M., & Quennerstedt, M. (2008). Feel good—be good: Subject content and governing processes in physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, *13*(4), 365–379. doi.org/10.1080/17408980802353339

Öhman, M., & Quennerstedt, M. (2012). Observational studies. In K. Armour & D. Macdonald (Eds.), *Research methods in physical education and youth sport* (pp. 189–203). London: Routledge.

Östberg, V., Almquist, Y. B., Folkesson, L., Låftman, S. B., Modin, B., & Lindfors, P. (2015). The complexity of stress in mid-adolescent girls and boys. *Child Indicators Research*, *8*(2), 403–423. doi.org/10.1007/s12187-014-9245-7

Appendices

Appendix 1: NSD evaluation

Appendix 2: Letter to school leaders

Appendix 3: Letter to PE teachers

Appendix 4: Information letter to students and parents

Appendix 5: Project time schedule

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Appendix 7: Overview of schools and focus groups

Appendix 1 NSD evaluation

Linda Røset
Avdeling for folkehelsefag Høgskolen i Hedmark
Postboks 400
2418 ELVERUM

Vår dato: 23.08.2016 Vår ref: 49218 / 3 / BGH Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 08.07.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

49218	*Skoler, læring og psykisk helse: - en studie av kroppsøvingsfagets betydning*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Høgskolen i Hedmark, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Linda Røset*

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

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

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

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

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 31.12.2019, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Belinda Gloppen Helle

Kontaktperson: Belinda Gloppen Helle tlf: 55 58 28 74
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

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

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS Harald Hårfagres gate 29 Tel: +47-55 58 21 17 nsd@nsd.no Org.nr. 985 321 884
NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data NO-5007 Bergen, NORWAY Faks: +47-55 58 96 50 www.nsd.no

Appendix 2 Letter to school leader

Hei,

Skoleåret er godt i gang, og 8-trinnselevene på skolen din skal i løpet av høsten delta i akselerometerundersøkelsen og spørreskjemaundersøkelsen i Arbeidspakke 1. Dere har også stiftet kjennskap med Arbeidspakke 3 og PhD-kandidat Ellen Nesset Mæland. Det er gledelig at prosjektet «Skole, Læring og Psykisk helse» blir så godt mottatt av lærere og elever.

Som prosjektansvarlig for Arbeidspakke 2, håper jeg å få besøke din skole i løpet av vinteren og våren for å bli kjent med 10.klassingene på skolen. Arbeidspakke 2 har til hensikt å finne ut mer om hvordan elevene på ungdomsskoletrinnet opplever kroppsøvingstimene. For å undersøke dette ønsker jeg å samle inn data i to trinn; først ved observasjon av en kroppsøvingstime – og deretter ved å invitere 10.klassinger til å delta i et til fokusgruppe intervju. For at elevene skal kunne ha med seg så mye erfaring fra ungdomstrinnet som mulig, vil det være svært hensiktsmessig å få mulighet til snakke med dem mot slutten av skoleåret. Observasjon av kroppsøvingstimen vil det imidlertid være hensiktsmessig å gjennomføre i løpet av perioden november 2016 – mars 2017.

Jeg har forståelse for at denne henvendelsen kommer som et tillegg i en allerede hektisk skolehverdag, og for å sikre minst mulig ekstra arbeid for skolen lurer jeg på om det vil hensiktsmessig å få kontaktinformasjon til en av kroppsøvingslærerne på 10.klassetrinn. Jeg vil selvfølgelig tilpasse skolebesøkene ut ifra hva som passer best for dere og deres skole.

Jeg er svært takknemlig for at dette videreformidles til lærerteamet for 10.klasse, og jeg ser frem til å få besøke dere i (forhåpentlig) nær fremtid!

På forhånd takk!

Mvh

Linda Røset

PhD stipendiat, Avdeling for Folkehelsefag

Tlf: +47 62 43 08 99/Epost: linda.roset@hihm.no

Appendix 3 Letter to PE teachers

Hei [navn på KRØ-lærer];

Takk telefonsamtalen. Jeg følger opp med å sende et forslag på hvordan jeg, med hjelp fra dere, ser for meg at prosessen med å identifisere grupper til intervjuene kan gjennomføres

Det ville være til stor hjelp dersom dere kunne identifisere grupper på fire til åtte elever som kan defineres som «sporty» eller «ikke – sporty». Med «sporty» mener jeg de som, ut ifra hvordan dere kjenner dem, deltar i idrett eller fysisk aktivitet jevnlig (f eks fire ganger eller mer ukentlig) på fritiden. «Ikke – sporty» vil da være dem som enten i*kke* er aktive med idrett eller fysisk aktivitet på fritiden, igjen ut ifra hva dere kjenner til, - eller veldig sjelden (for eksempel månedlig eller mer sjelden).

Ideelt sett bør disse gruppene være «vennegrupper». Dette innebærer at elevene, slik dere kjenner dem, ikke bare er «sporty» (eller ikke – sporty), men også at de «henger sammen» enten det er i eller utenfor skoletid. Disse «sporty» eller «ikke – sporty» gruppene, som da også er vennegrupper, bør også deles i rene jente – og guttegrupper – med mindre dere anbefaler å mikse jenter/gutter. Altså ideelt sett 4 grupper totalt.

Det ville vært til stor hjelp dersom dere kunne sende meg navn (fornavn er tilstrekkelig) på disse elevene innen fredag 21. Januar.

Så snart jeg har fått etablert grupper i hver skole i prosjektet, vil jeg sende ut samtykkeskjema som jeg håper dere kan være behjelpelig med å sende ut til aktuelle elever og foresatte/foreldre. Her vil det bla være informasjon om at all data som blir samlet inn under intervjuet både vil være konfidensiell og anonymisert.

Når det gjelder selve gjennomføringen av intervjuene, lurer jeg på om dere har mulighet til å finne en uke (eventuelt uker) som kunne passe. Som et utgangspunkt kan jeg foreslå intervju i uke ...

Jeg håper å få observere en typisk kroppsøvingstime [dag og dato], som avtalt. Observasjonen er tenkt å være helt uformell, men den hensikt å få et inntrykk av kroppsøving ved [navn på skolen]

Igjen må jeg få takke for bidraget deres inn i dette prosjektet. Ikke nøl med å ta kontakt pr mail eller telefon dersom dere har spørsmål eller innspill!

Vennlig hilsen

Linda Røset, PhD stipendiat v/Avdeling for folkehelsefag Tlf: 41450687 /linda.roset@inn.no

Appendix 4 Information letter to students and parents

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

«Skole, læring og psykisk helse» -en studie av kroppsøvingsfagets betydning

Kjære elev og foresatte,

Jeg er doktorgradsstipendiat ved Høgskolen i Innlandet, Avdeling for folkehelsefag, hvor jeg er involvert i prosjektet «Skole, læring og psykisk helse». Målet med prosjektet er å få mer kunnskap om hvilke faktorer og prosesser i skolen som fremmer og hemmer ungdommers psykiske helse og læring. Målet med delprosjektet som jeg er involvert i er å finne ut mer om *hvordan elever på ungdomsskolen opplever kroppsøving.*

Du som går i 10. klasse har erfaring med kroppsøving gjennom tre år på ungdomsskolen, og derfor ønsker jeg å invitere deg til å delta i denne delen av forskningsprosjektet, som vil foregå som et fokusgruppeintervju.

Et fokusgruppeintervju innebærer at 4- 6 elever deltar i en gruppesamtale. Samtalen vil foregå i skoletiden og varer i ca. en time. I løpet av samtalen vil vi snakke om erfaringene deres knyttet til kroppsøving på ungdomsskolen. Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp på bånd.

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og all informasjon vil bli behandlet konfidensielt og materialet vil bli anonymisert. Anonymisering betyr at verken dine foreldre, læreren din eller andre som ikke har deltatt i observasjon eller intervju vil få vite hva du har svart eller hva vi har snakket om i intervjuet. Dette innebærer også at de elevene som deltar i intervjuet ikke kan fortelle til andre elever som ikke har deltatt, hva medelever fortalte i intervjuet. Lydfilene fra intervjuet vil bli slettet så snart datamaterialet er transkribert. Transkripsjoner vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt 31.12.2019. Det er kun min veileder og jeg som vil ha tilgang til informasjonen underveis.

Dersom du velger å delta i studien, men på et senere tidspunkt ikke ønsker å delta lenger, kan du informere meg direkte eller via læreren din slik at vi kan slette den informasjonen som du allerede har gitt til undersøkelsen. Hvorvidt du ønsker å være med i studien eller ikke vil ***ikke*** påvirke forholdet til skolen og læreren din. Dersom du har noen spørsmål angående prosjektet, ta kontakt med Linda Røset (41450687) eller mail linda.roset@inn.no

Din deltakelse i studien er høyt verdsatt, og jeg ser fram til å treffe deg!

Vennlig hilsen

Linda Røset,

Stipendiat v/ Høgskolen i Innlandet, Avdeling for Folkehelsefag

Studie: «Skole, læring og psykisk helse» -en studie av kroppsøvingsfagets betydning

Prosjektansvarlig: Linda Røset

FORESATTES SAMTYKKEERKLÆRING

Jeg, ________________________ har lest informasjonsarket, og jeg forstår hensikten med prosjektet. Undersøkelsen har blitt forklart for meg, og jeg forstår at all informasjon min sønn / datter gir fra seg vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Jeg vet at min sønn / datter når som helst kan trekke seg fra studien uten å oppgi noen grunn og uten at dette får noen konsekvenser, ved å informere lederen av studien eller læreren hans / hennes.

Signatur: ________________________________

Dato: ________________________________

ELEVENS SAMTYKKEERKLÆRING

Jeg, ________________________ har lest informasjonsarket, og jeg forstår hensikten med prosjektet. Undersøkelsen har blitt forklart for meg, og jeg forstår at all informasjon jeg gir fra meg vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Jeg vet at jeg når som helst kan trekke meg fra studien uten å oppgi noen grunn og uten at dette får noen konsekvenser, ved å informere lederen av studien eller læreren min.

Signatur: ________________________________

Dato: ________________________________

Appendix 5 Project time schedule

School	Number Groups	Forms of groups	Contact persons	Info Heads	Visit info	Agreed particip.	Cons out	Cons in	Propsed Observation	Scheduled Observation	Proposed Focus Groups	Scheduled focus groups
A	4	Sporty/nonspor	PE-teacher	16 Oct 2016	Phone 23.11	Ok	week 3	week4	week 5	Tue31st Jan	Wed 15.2+22.2	Tue 14.02+Fri 17.02
B	2	Girls/boys	PE-teacher	16 Oct 2016	Text with PE (08.	Ok	week 3	week4	week 4	Wed 01st Feb	Mon 13.2	Wed 15.02+ 22.02
C	6	spor/nons/mix	PE-teacher /teamleader	16 Oct 2016	01.11.2016	Ok	week 3	week4	week 5	Mon 30th Jan	Tue 14.2+Thu 16.2+Fri 17	Mon 13.02+ Thur 16.02
X				16 Oct 2016	Not Responded							
Y				16 Oct 2016	Not Responded							
D	4	Sporty/nonspor	PE-teacher	16 Oct 2016	14.11.2016	Ok	week 3	week4	week 6	Mon 6th Feb	Tue 28.2 + Wed 01.3	confirmed
G	4	Sporty/nonspor	PE-teacher/Head	16 Oct 2016	January 2017	Ok	week 3	week4	week6	Mon 27.2	Mon 27.2+Mon 06.3	Mon 06.03 +08.03
E	4	Sporty/nonspor	Head	16 Oct 2016	26.10.2016	Ok	week 46	week4	21.11.2016	21.11.2016	Mon 20.2+21.2	Thu 16.03 +(09 or 23)
H	4	Sporty/nonspor	PE-teacher	16 Oct 2016	07.11.2016	Ok	week 3	week4	week 11	Thursd 9th March	week 14	Thur 27.04+04.05
F	6	spor/nons/mix	PE-teacher/teamleader	16 Oct 2016	Phone 28.11	Ok	week 3	week4	week 10	Tuesd 14th March	Tue 21.3 + Thu 23.03+Tu	Flexible

Appendix 6 Interview guide

Innledning:

Det dere sier her vil ikke kunne spores tilbake til dere. Ingen utenfor dette rommet vil kunne kjenne igjen hvem som har sagt hva. For at jeg skal huske hva som blir sagt, så må jeg ta opp samtalen på denne lydopptakeren. Opptaket blir slettet når jeg har skrevet ned det som ble sagt og dette prosjektet er ferdig. Still spørsmål om det er noe dere lurer på underveis, og be meg stoppe lydopptakeren hvis dere føler det er nødvendig. Det er frivillig å delta, så hvis dere underveis finner ut at dere vil gå, er det helt greit. Er det noe dere lurer på før vi begynner?

Oppfølgingsspørsmål

Hva mener du/dere med..

Hva er det som gjør at du/dere mener/tror..

Kan du/dere gi eksempel på..

Kan du/ dere forklare

Har du/dere lyst til å forklare/ beskrive

Kan du/dere fortelle mer om..

Tema

1. Å være 15 (16) år

1. 1 Hvordan vil dere beskrive det å være 15 (16) år?

Hva er bra med å være 15/16?

Hva er utfordrende med å være 15/16?

1.2 Hvordan trives dere på skolen?

1.3 Hva liker dere å gjøre på fritiden?

2. Helsen til 15 –åringer

2.1 Hvordan vil dere beskrive helsen til 10.klassingene på skolen?

Hva vil det si å ha god helse?

Hva vil det si å ha dårlig helse?

2.2 Hva tenker dere på når jeg sier «psykisk helse»?

Hva vil det si å ha god psykisk helse?

Hva tenker dere er viktig for å ha god psykisk helse?

2.3 Er «psykisk helse» noen gang et tema på skolen?

2.4 Hva vil dere si er viktig for å føle at dere har det bra?

3. **Opplevelsen av kroppsøving**

3.1 Hvordan vil dere beskrive kroppsøving her på skolen?

Hva liker dere spesielt godt med kroppsøving?

Hva liker dere spesielt dårlig med kroppsøving?

3.2 Kan dere beskrive hvordan dere føler dere i kroppsøving?

3.3 Har kroppsøving noen påvirkning på dere (f eks helsen, humøret)?

3.4 Hva tenker dere er hensikten med å ha kroppsøving?

3.5 Hvis dere kunne forandre noe i kroppsøving hva ville dere forandre på?

3.6 Hvis dere skulle gitt læreren råd om hvordan han/hun skal gjøre kroppsøvingstimen til en bra opplevelse for alle, hvilke råd skulle det ha vært?

Hvordan vil dere beskrive «Drømmetimen»?

Til slutt:

- er det noe dere har lyst til å si mer om?
- er det noen spørsmål dere savner?
- har dere spørsmål til meg?
- hvordan synes dere dette var?

Takk for at dere stilte opp. Om det er noe dere lurer på i etterkant - eller ikke fikk sagt, så må dere bare ta kontakt.

Appendix 7 Overview of schools and focus groups

School	Region	Number of Focus Groups	Number of girls	Number of boys
A	Western region	4	7	8
B		5	7	14
C		4	12	13
D	Eastern region	4	10	10
E		4	11	12
F		4	9	11
G		4	8	8
H		2	4	4
Total		31	68	80

Total number of students in the secondary schools involved in this study varied from approximately 600 to 100. Numbers of 10th graders varied accordingly from approximately 210 to 35. In order to ensure anonymity, schools are not identified by number of students or 10th graders.

Høgskolen i Innlandet

Errataliste

Doktorand: Linda Røset

Avhandlingstittel: *Physical education and mental health: A study of Norwegian 15-year-olds*

Prøvetrykket er noe forskjøvet sammenliknet med pdf-filen som ble send ut. Lista er derfor satt opp med to lokaliseringer.

Forkortelser for typer av rettelser:
Kor – korrektur (Cor – correction of language)

Side/ avsnitt/ linje		**Original tekst**	**(type rettelse) Korrigert tekst**
Prøvetrykk	**Pdf**		
i / 1 / 1	i / 1 / 1	"Unge menneskers psykiske helse fått stadig økende oppmerksomhet"	(Kor) "Unge menneskers psykiske helse har fått stadig økende oppmerksomhet»
i / 3 / 3	i / 3 / 3	" … kroppsøving påvirke kan unge menneskers habitus"	(Kor) "… kroppsøving kan påvirke unge menneskers habitus."
4 / 1 / 6	4 / 1 / 6	" …decrease from 9th grade an onwards"	(Kor) "…decrease from 9th grade and onwards".
4 / 2 / 6	4 / 2 / 6	" …perceptions of PE tin order to elucidate …"	(Kor) "…perceptions of PE in order to elucidate…"
12 / 2 / 4	12 / 2 / 4	"OECD, 2015"	(Kor) "OECD, 2015b"
17 / 2 / 11	17 / 2 / 11	"OECD, 2015"	(Kor) "OECD, 2015a"
55 / 3 / 11	56 / 2 / 11	"…the needs to be a tension – balance between emotional control and emotional stimulation"	(Kor) "…there needs to be a tension – balance between emotional control and emotional stimulation"
61 / 2 / 3	62 / 2/ 3	"Charmaz emphasized the processual characteristic …." (p. 10).	(Kor) "Charmaz (2014) emphasized the processual characteristic …." (p. 17).
89 / 1/ 2	91/ 1/ 2	"…because I`m even if it`s good…"	(Kor) "…because I`m 16. Even if it`s good…"
100/ 3/2	102/ 3/ 2	"Harald, A_3…"	(Kor) "Harald, A_4…"
101/ 1/ 7	103/ 1/ 7	"You yourself who you want to…"	(Kor) "You know with yourself who you want to…"

106/ 2/ 6	108/ 2/ 6	"…-as Magne (C_1)"	(Kor) "…as Jarle (C_1)"
108 / 2/ 5	110/ 2/ 5	"…you don`t see what yourself has."	(Kor) "…you don`t see what yourself have."
112 / 3/ 8	114/ 3/ 8	"…PA I need in the course of a day"	(Kor) "…physical activity I need in the course of a day".
125/ 1/ 11	127/ 1/ 9	"Endre (A_3)…"	(Kor) "Endre (B_3)…"
126/ 2/ 6	128/ 2/ 6	"Elin`s (C_1) consideration…"	(Kor) "Elin`s (D_1) consideration…"
127/ 2/ 7	129/ 2/ 7	" (Stein, F_1)"	(Kor) " (Øyvind, F_2)"
128 / 2 / 4	130 / 2 / 4	"…should at least be in PA…"	(Kor) "…should at least be in physical activity…"
128 / 3 / 3	130/ 3 / 3	" This awareness had, in turn, led them to start dread having PE instead o of their shortcomings"	(Kor) " This awareness had, in turn, lead them to start dread having PE instead of looking forward to it"
130/ 3/ 9	132/ 3/ 9	"…dead boring".	(Kor) "…dead boring. (C_2)"
133/ 1/ 3	1 35/ 1/ 1	"…tended to provide movement for tended to provide movement for some…"	(Kor) "… tended to provide movement for some…"
134/ 2/ 3	136/ 2/ 3	" Stig (B_1)…"	(Kor) "Stig (B_2)…"
169/ 3/ 11	171/ 3/ 11	"(Even, B_3)"	(Kor) "(Endre, B_3)"
170/ 1/ 1	171/ 4/ 4	"(Even, B_3)"	(Kor) "(Endre, B_3)"
171/ 1/ 2	172/ 5/ 7	"Trude (B_3)…"	(Kor) "Trude (B_4)…"
178 / 1 / 3	180/ 1 / 3	"…exposed to those sports involving PA …"	(Kor) "…exposed to those sports involving physical activity…"
189/ 1 / 10	191/ 1 / 10	"…results they and being the best possible…"	(Kor) "…results and being the best possible…"
196 / 2 / 7	198 / 2 / 7	"Aasland et al. (2019) refer to as 'gender performativity', "Being perceived as a 'spunky girl' results in a positive evaluation, while being timid or shy is not similarly valued".	(Kor) "Aasland et al. (2019) refer to as "gender performativity": "Being perceived as a 'spunky girl' results in a positive evaluation, while being timid or shy is not similarly valued" (p.1).
219 / 2 / 11	221 / 2 / 11	"…while well as medicalizing…"	(Kor) "…as well as medicalizing…"

219 / 2 / 13	221 / 2 / 13	"OECD, 2015"	(Kor) "OECD, 2015a"
224 / 13 / 1	226 / 13 / 1	"*Constructing grounded theory*"	(Kor) "*Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.)
235/ 1/ 1	237/ 1/ 1	"Lincon, Y.C., & Guba, E.G."	(Kor) "Lincoln, Y.C., & Guba, E.G."
239 / 6 / 1	241/ 5/ 1	"Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2015)".	(Kor) "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2015b)".

Tilleggsoppføring som ønskes i referanselista:

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2015a). *Health at a glance 2015: OECD indicators*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-2015_health_glance-2015-en