Established and Outsider Relations among Students Involved in a Health Promotion Intervention in a Danish High School

Nielsen, Stine Frydendal; Ottesen, Laila; Thing, Lone Friis

Established and Outsider Relations among Students Involved in a Health Promotion Intervention in a Danish High School

Stine Frydendal Nielsen, Laila Ottesen & Lone Friis Thing [*]

Abstract: *»Etablierte- und Außenseiter-Beziehungen unter SchülerInnen – Ergebnisse einer Gesundheitsintervention an einem dänischen Gymnasium«*. The paper considers a study in a Danish high school in which students were involved in enhancing physical activity in their own school. International research points out that adolescents are not as physically active as recommended. Moreover, studies show that maintaining health promotion interventions is difficult. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for active participation by the target groups. The study is based on the interpretative, process-oriented methodology developed by Baur and Ernst. They base this approach on Norbert Elias' argument on involvement and detachment and the importance of theoretical pointers to insure that the researcher does not lose herself in the research field. Elias unfolds this methodological approach in "The Established and the Outsiders." By applying this conceptualization, this study shows that some of the involved students found their role and their identity as "sports-students" difficult, and it compromised their social life in the school, which relates to aspects that does not always correspond with the current health norms. The paper discusses the relations between the involved students and the other students in the school, and what consequences this may have for health and physical activity.

Keywords: Process-sociology, the established and the outsiders, youth, health, physical activity, student involvement.

1. Introduction

This paper considers a study in a Danish high school in which students were actively involved in a health promotion intervention in order to enhance physical activity in their own school. The paper discusses the consequences of this involvement for these students by applying the theoretical approach of Norbert

[*] Stine Frydendal Nielsen, Department of Exercise and Sports, University of Copenhagen, Nørre Allé 51, 2200 Copenhagen, Denmark; sfnielsen@nexs.ku.dk.
Laila Ottesen, Department of Exercise and Sports, University of Copenhagen, Nørre Allé 51, 2200 Copenhagen, Denmark; lottesen@nexs.ku.dk.
Lone Friis Thing, Department of Exercise and Sports, University of Copenhagen, Nørre Allé 51, 2200 Copenhagen, Denmark; lfthing@nexs.ku.dk.

Elias – more specifically a part of his figurational sociology concerning the idea of how all small communities are characterized by a power relationship between established and outsider groups (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). The paper discusses one part of a larger process-study conducted over five years in a Danish high school exploring the development of the attitudes among the students towards health and physical activity when students themselves take part in carrying out a health promotion intervention (Nielsen 2015). When students enter a Danish high school, they choose a study strand with a specific combination of subjects fitting their interests. One of the study strands at the school of this study focuses on body, culture and sports, which means that the students have more PE than the rest of the students, and, among other things, they deal with topics concerning sport, physiology, sports sociology and so forth in the rest of their subjects (math, social science, language subjects etc). The students of this study strand[1] were involved in a health promotion intervention at their own school. Five classes in total took part in the intervention, involving a new class every year as they started the school. The study is based on Elias' own methodological approach concerning the balance between involvement and detachment (Elias 1956, 1987), and hence the importance of combining an outsider perspective, where the researcher attempts to distance herself from the research field, with an insider perspective, in which the active involvement of the researcher is necessary to fully understand the research field. We have found the figurational approach valuable because it allows the researcher to view the research field as a constantly changing dimension, and because our intention has been to explore a long-term development process, which cannot only be demarcated to the years of this study. Instead it is affected by a longer historical development of both the health discourse in society, the understanding of the body[2] and physical activity as well as the Danish high school as an institution in the Danish society. Figurational sociology has therefore made it possible to study the processual development of health promotion in a figurational setting – here a Danish high school.

2. Research on Youth, Health and Physical Activity in Schools

In the following we will briefly outline the research field relating to the topic of this paper. In Denmark some research has been done on health in schools.

---

[1] We will refer to them as the sports classes and the sports students.

[2] The concept of body is understood as the hinge between agents and social processes (Elias 2001). Body and mind are therefore interdependent in the physiological, psychological and social constitution of the individual (Elias and Dunning 1986, Evans and Crust 2014).

However, this has mainly been studied in primary schools (Clift and Jensen 2005; Jensen 2000; Jensen and Lund 2008). This research however, shows that primary schools are able to take active part in the health promoting work. Especially the involvement of students and prioritising student-based decision-making are underlined as crucial factors. Students in primary schools would like to be involved in defining what health is, and this is stated as a precondition for action and change (Jensen and Jensen 2005). Previous to this study we carried out a survey at the high school in question, which showed that these students as well wanted to be involved in health promotion in their own school (Nielsen et al. 2011). Both national (Laub 2013; Pilgaard 2009, 2012) and international research (Strong et al. 2005; WHO 2004) points out that adolescents are not as physically active as recommended. Moreover, international studies show that maintaining health promotion interventions is difficult (Laitakari, Vuori and Oja 1996). Therefore, in contemporary health promotion research, there is an increasing demand for enhancing active participation by the community (Haug, Torsheim and Samdal 2009). Consequently there is a need to explore some of the results from primary school research in a high school setting. Green has done several studies in collaboration with other researchers on physical activity in schools using figurational theory (Green 2006; Green, Smith and Thurston 2009; Smith and Green 2004; Wheeler and Green 2014), exploring for example the connection between long-term sports participation and physical education (PE) in schools. This research shows that the effect of PE is difficult to detect (Green 2012), and furthermore it is important to organize PE on the students' terms so the subject makes sense to the students, which is important in a health promotion context (Smith and Parr 2007). Moreover, research in England and Wales show that students think they have too little influence on sport activities in their own school (Smith, Green and Thurston 2009). This corresponds with our early studies in the school, subject to this study (Nielsen et al. 2011). Consequently, we find it interesting to study how a health promoting intervention in a Danish high school can evolve, when the students take part in the planning and carrying out of the initiatives in their own school.

3.   Figurational Sociology

Elias was occupied with the idea of exceeding the thoughts of traditional sociology and not looking at society and the individual as opposites but two sides of the same coin. His main contribution was his work on how Western civilisation has evolved over time, and he believed that society was defined by interdependencies between groupings or people and formed what he referred to as figurations (Elias 1994 [1939], 1978). In *The Society of individuals* (2001) he writes that people of later generations enter the civilizing process on a later

stage, and therefore also act differently from earlier generations when it comes to what is shameful and embarrassing. He writes that "the entire stock of social patterns of self-regulation which the individual has to develop within himself or herself in growing up into a unique individual, is generation-specific and thus, in a broader sense, society-specific" (Elias 2001, viii).

This difference between different generations emphasises Elias' argument on the society and the individual as inseparable. They are, however, a part the dynamic relational process that forms the society. The actions of individuals are part of a social context and hence the way a figuration changes is determined by what stage it enters the civilizing process in (Elias 2001). When studying young people in relation to health, body and sport, it is important to be aware of the contemporary time they live in, which differs from what we, their teachers as well as their parents remember as their youth. A figuration is therefore formed by the interdependencies between the people who inhabit it. According to Elias, it is not possible to comprehend individual *I-identities* within a figuration without understanding the complex web of social relations in the form of *we-* and *they-identities* (Evans and Crust 2014). Consequently, within figurations the actions of individuals are intertwined with each other, which cause unintended consequences and changes over time.

3.1   I-, We- and They-Identities

In order to understand Elias' notions on established and outsiders it is helpful to explore his use of personal pronouns as a model for the interdependency between individuals within a figuration (Elias 1978, 2001). His intention was to show that the traditional understanding of alter and ego is a simplification of the far more complicated human relations, which determines how we map out our own and others' position within the figuration. According to Elias the function of the pronoun 'I' in human communication can

> only be understood in the context of all the other positions to which the other terms in the series refer. The six other positions are absolutely inseparable, for one cannot imagine an 'I' without a 'he' or a 'she,' a 'we,' 'you' (singular and plural) or 'they.' The personal pronouns represent the elementary set of coordinates by which all human groupings or societies can be plotted out (Elias 1978, 123).

The purpose is to underline the fundamental relational idea of figurational sociology; we are nothing by virtue of ourselves, but only by virtue of our relations to the surrounding world. Our own 'I'-identity is defined by the chains of interdependence, which we are a part of. According to Elias, it is therefore impossible to speak of an 'I' without also speaking of a 'we' and a 'they.' We will apply this perspective in our analysis of the balance between 'I'-, 'we'- and 'they'-identities in relation to the sport and health culture at the school, and in that way map the interdependence within this figuration. This balance between 'I'-, 'we'- and 'they'-identities can render visible the existing tensions and

power relations, and hence show us how the relations between individuals are both restricting and enabling (Evans and Crust 2014; Evans and Sleap 2012). One group within a figuration can therefore stigmatize another group if its understanding of 'I,' 'we' and 'they' are more normative than the others' (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). Consequently it enables us to understand who sets the agenda within a figuration. Elias explores this dichotomy between groups and refers to it as the relations between established and outsiders. He shows us how groups in society create and adopt understandings of themselves and each other depending on what is believed to provide status and power.

3.2 Relations between Established and Outsiders

Elias and Scotson's work on *established and outsiders* identifies essential characteristics of group dynamics and group formations within local communities (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). We will use this conceptualisation of established and outsiders to study the dynamics, which are at stake between different groups within the school figuration when it comes to sport and health. The authors wrote that

> the use of a small social unit as a focus of enquiry into problems which one can also encounter in a great variety of larger and more differentiated social units makes it possible to explore these problems in considerable detail (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965], xvii).

This can help the researcher build up a small-scale explanatory model of the figuration, which can be tested in figurations on a larger scale. Elias explains that the dynamic between established and outsiders, which his studies in Winston Parva showed, creates an *empirical paradigm,* which can be transferred to all figurations in which there is interdependence between groups and individuals (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965], xvii). Elias' model for social relations was an opposition to the Marxists' focus on class relations. Elias believed that class was not always decisive for group relations in society, but the fact that some groups were more established than others (Van Krieken 2002, 147). Elias and Scotson's studies explored the relationship between three groups in a small English community – Winston Parva: a middle-class group, a respected working-class group (the village) and a group of newcomers (the estate) also belonging to the working class (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965], 14-5). Particularly the relationship between the two working-class groups became essential to the results of the study. There were no differences between class, religion, ethnicity or education within the two groups. However, the difference was the length of time the two groups had lived in Winston Parva. The established group saw themselves as superior to the newcomers, and the two groups also showed different levels of solidarity and integration as well as perspectives on values and status. Moreover, the authors noticed that the way the citizens of the village stigmatized the citizens of the estate, actually created a feeling of being

inferior within the estate (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965], xvii). This is because the established group creates a we-identity based on their best citizens, whereas the outsider group creates a we-identity based on their worst citizens (Van Krieken 2002, 150). Elias' understanding of stigma as a way of maintaining power within society will be the basis of our analysis of the culture of the school community in relation to health, body and sport, which this theoretical understanding can also be transferred to, because sport and the body are sometimes seen as excluding in stead of enabling factors in relation to others (Lake 2011; Velija 2012; Engh, Agergaard and Maguire 2013; Maguire 2011). We will apply the conceptualization of I-, we- and they-identities and how these determine the relations between established and outsiders in our analysis. We will study how the students involved in the health promotion intervention saw themselves in relation to the other students and how group dynamics affect the sport- and health culture among young people in a school context.

4.   Methodological Reflections

The first rigorous methodological work by Elias was *The Established and the Outsiders* (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). This approach to the research field has been studied by Baur and Ernst (2011), and they propose a way to apply the work of Elias analytically. We have been inspired by their process-oriented methodological approach, which is reflected in our abductive approach to the research field. We have structured our research based on theoretical terms, but in process-oriented research it is important to be open to the development within the research field, and hence, a totally deductive approach would not make any sense. Baur and Ernst (2011) have attempted to put this into a more systemized and application-oriented framework, which became the main inspiration of how our process study was structured. Baur and Ernst proposes three steps in an interpretive process oriented methodology (2011, 123-6):
-   Reconstructing the macro-level: the rules and social structure of the figuration
-   Reconstructing the micro-level: the individual's placement within, perception of and ability to change the figuration
-   Reconstructing the sociogenesis of the figuration

This paper concerns a smaller part of our study mainly referring to the reconstruction of the micro-level of the school figuration. Therefore we will mainly focus on that part of the analysis in this paper. However, it is important to mention that the results of the reconstruction of the micro-level are connected to the results we found in reconstructing the macro-level of the figuration, but we will not go into depth with them in this paper. Below we will briefly outline the three steps.

4.1   Reconstructing the Macro-Level

Baur and Ernst (2011) define this part of the analysing process as mapping the framework of the figuration. This is necessary because it is crucial to the actions of groups and individuals because it regulates and orientates their behaviour and communication and thereby renders visible the positions, rules, norms and values that connect the individuals of the figurations. This part of the analysis reveals the chains of interdependence of a figuration. To do this, Elias studied landscapes, maps and buildings to understand the physical dimensions of the figuration. For example we have studied how and why the school has been built the way it has. This has been compared with different documents of historical character concerning school policy and legislations on education.

4.2   Reconstructing the Micro-Level

Because the figuration prescribes specific power relations, and thereby frames the individuals' actions, Baur and Ernst (2011) believe it is important to analyse how the individuals perceive the figuration they are a part of. In addition, one must analyse the individuals' position in the figuration, how the actions of the individuals are embedded in other members' actions, and how and why they either enter or leave the figuration. Eventually it is important to examine how their position within the figuration changes through life. Baur and Ernst say that "individuals can influence the figuration, thus not only changing their position within the figuration, but also changing the figuration itself (both concerning its rules and social structure)" (Baur and Ernst 2011, 124). We will analyse how individuals and groups perceive the school, as well as how they see their position within the school structure, especially in a health promotion perspective. Furthermore, we will examine how members of the school figuration influence each other's actions. That is the interdependence between the members of the figuration. Moreover, we will analyse how their position or status changes in their effort to change the sport, body and health culture at the school.

4.3   Reconstructing the Sociogenesis

The micro level and macro level are not static, though it may seem that way when analysed separately. On the contrary, Baur and Ernst (2011) say that with Elias' process sociology both individuals and their figurations change constantly over time and are interwoven with each other. In figurational sociology, analyses are therefore always aiming to explain the social processes, which are both influenced by individuals in the figuration (micro), and the figurations' structure (macro). There are, according to Baur and Ernst, not yet developed sociological methods to analyse the relationship between the micro and macro level, but a compromise can be to examine the sociogenesis of the figuration, "that is to say the long-term development of social and personality structures

[…] without pre-emptive dogmatism – a figuration's becoming, change and ending, which usually unfolds over several centuries" (Baur and Ernst 2011, 126). In the reconstruction of the sociogenesis of the figuration the micro and macro levels are linked, and this is where the becoming, changing and ending of the figuration becomes visible.

5.   Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data source of this study has been focus group interviews. Baur and Ernst argue for the importance of using process-produced data, if the purpose of the study is to explore a processual development over time. That is data produced continuously during the time the research process is supposed to cover and therefore reflect the processual development (Baur and Ernst 2011). We have conducted 19 focus group interviews (N=136) over 4 years in order to understand how perceptions, values and norms develop among the students involved in the health promoting work at the school. Every year we interviewed all the new students who had been involved as stakeholders in the health promoting work. The methodology of focus group interviews is inspired by Heldbjerg et al. (2009), and is referred to as *comprehension broadening group interview*. Focus group interviews differ from individual interviews in several ways. Using this method empirical data is produced on group level about an issue that the examiner has determined in advance. This allows the researcher to obtain knowledge about how social life unfolds in a concrete interaction (Halkier 2009). Unlike the individual interview, which, among other things, can illustrate a particular person's understanding of a problem or how this person orientates himself in the world in relation to this particular problem (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), the core value of the focus group interview is its explicit use of group interaction to produce data which would otherwise not be available if the interaction was not a factor (Morgan 1997). The focus group interview can be used both as a primary source of data, but also to gain in-depth knowledge acquired through questionnaires, observations or preliminary studies prior to a major research design (Brown 1999). In the present study, focus group interviews have been used as the primary data source along with field notes and document studies. By using focus group interviews the researcher obtains knowledge on a conversational level through exchange of opinions and consequently knowledge about the interpretations, interactions and norms of social groups. Due to the relational focus of this study, we have found this type data collection very valuable.

   In process oriented methodology the importance of both theory and empirical data are emphasized for the researcher to be able to balance between involvement and detachment (Elias 1987; Baur and Ernst 2011). We as researchers must also recognize that we are part of the same contemporary context and

have some prior understanding of the area, but by applying a theoretical framework we are able to distance ourselves from our inevitable emotional commitment to the research field. Thus, our theoretical framework has guided our approach to the empirical data, and the theoretical notions have formed the basis of the analysis process. We have linked this approach to Grethe Halkier's (2009) proposition for analysing qualitative data. Halkier divides data processing into three stages: coding, categorization and conceptualization. In the *coding* process we have put preliminary labels on smaller pieces of text data. In that way we are able to condense long pieces of data by giving them a thematic headline, which summarizes the meaning of longer passages. This is a way for the researcher to gain a general view of the main features of the conversation. Subsequently, we have *categorized* the data, which means we have looked at the various codes in relation to each other to see if some of them are connected or clashes with each other, or if they have an impact on each other. The categorization means further condensation of the data putting multiple codes under a single category. The categories are, as described above, theoretically driven. Based on our interview guides, some categories have been determined beforehand, because the overall theoretical framework has been with us from the start. *Conceptualization* is the last of the three stages. In this phase the codes and categories are ones again linked to the data material and to the theoretical notions. We have searched for themes, repetitions and patterns, but also variations, contrasts, breaches and paradoxes. This is done to validate our own assumptions about the data material. According to Kristiansen and Krogstrup (1999) the data analysis process should reflect the scientific paradigm of the entire study. Overall, we have been inspired by the interpretive process methodology of Norbert Elias (Baur and Ernst 2011). The processual character of this study means that the ontological perspective is that the researcher is in constant interaction with the research field, and the research field is constantly changing (Elias 1956). Our intention is therefore not to pinpoint static characteristics, but rather to draw attention to a processual development within the research field.

6. Results – Discovering Relations between Students in a Health Promotion Setting

The following outlines the essential elements of the microanalysis showing how the individuals perceive the school figuration, how they interact with each other and how they perceive their position within the figuration (Baur and Ernst 2011, 130). This concerns the students' understanding of and placement within their own school, which will expose the 'I'-, 'we'- and 'they'-identities which are at stake, and how these affect the internal understanding of the figuration. This is supposed to the render visible the interdependence between the individuals and how this influences the power balance between the groups of the fig-

uration. Subsequently we will analyse how the students' effort to change the figuration in relation to the sport- and health culture at the school affects their status and position, and study how established and outsider groups are formed over time within the figuration.

A repeating theme throughout all the years we interviewed the students of the sports classes was the importance of being part of the social culture at the school, which is characterized by a party culture. A culture which is sometimes hard to be a part of if the students practice sport on a higher level, which many of these students do in their spare time. This strengthens the sense of solidarity among the students in the sports classes, which tells us something about the balance between 'I'- and 'we'- identities (Elias 1978) among the sports students. According to Elias, all figurations are powerful and there will always be unequal balances of power between individuals and groups within a figuration (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). The sports students believe that the other students at the school do not see health and physical activity and the implications of having an active lifestyle as prestigious. There is room in the sports classes for the 'I' identity, which follows being a sports person because it corresponds with the 'we'-identity that the students of the sports classes have created together. Laura explains how she has felt a shift when switching from primary school to high school. Before she did not always feel that her 'I'-identity was understood by the 'we' identity which prevailed in her old class.

> When I was in primary school, I experienced how the people you hang out with can affect you. Because I hung out a lot with some girls, who were NOT into sports. So they ditched PE a lot, and I was sort of 'outside,' because I liked PE. That's like […] in a way that got to me a bit. I think it's much easier now, that I'm in a sports-class. Because, I also think, it motivates you, I mean in some ways […] you're in a sports class, maybe you should be a bit more fit. It keeps you going (Laura, 1st-year student 2010).

The 'we'-identity in Laura's class harmonizes with the 'I'-identity she attaches to herself. She is motivated by it and it is easier to be who she is – a sports person. Hence, there is a mutual understanding within Laura's class of what it means to be a sports person. This has meant a construction of a 'we'-identity, which creates solidarity, but also gives us an idea of the relation to the rest of the school. The sports classes stand out in this school and the values in these classes seem to be further away from the overall norms and values at the school. Below Johan explains how he finds more understanding about an active lifestyle within the sports classes.

> I mean, I think we have more understanding in our class, and in other sports-classes if you say 'I'm not going to the party tonight, I have an important competition tomorrow.' Then people are more like 'Well ok, good luck,' and they just go to the party. But if you were in the drama-class, and were the only one who practiced elite sport, and you then, didn't go to that many of the parties, then I think you would […] not be looked down on, but I think people would be like 'Come on.' And I don't think they would understand in the

same way, that you prioritize your sport. I think that has a big impact, who you spend time with (Johan, 1st-year student 2010).

The 'we'-identity of the sports-class becomes the fulcrum of what is thought of as valuable. Living a life where sport defines your 'I'-identity is easier when you are part of a *sports-'we.'* The students talk about the common understanding that characterizes the sports classes concerning how the students choose to prioritise their spare time. However, they also problematize sport as a status symbol, which has changed as they became older.

> I just wanted to say, that even though we're in a sports-class, I still think that when you were younger, there was a connection between, for example, being good at football and prestige. Back then you were popular if you were good at football. Then you were the popular one in class. Anyway, that was the case in my school, and I know others who have had the same experience. But after the 7th grad that changed a bit, and then it was like 'Ok, now it's not that cool anymore,' because you started drinking, for example, right. And then it was […] then that was a more important social arena than football. And, I mean, even though we're in a sports-class, it's not that extreme anymore, because when you were younger, then you just had to be good at football, then you got prestige […] or status (Peter, 1st-year student 2010).

Peter explains how sport – which has had a large impact on his life – has gone from being a prestigious asset, which defined *who the cool kids were,* to being part of a figurational context in which other assets are valued higher. It is prestigious to be part of a drinking culture, which characterizes the social party arena in a Danish high school (Beck 2006; Thing and Ottesen 2013). Thus, alcohol and parties are a big part of the youth culture in this particular school and an aspect which is hard to opt out of. Therefore, it has certain consequences if the students want to continue with sport as a part of their life, and this is why they find confidence in being part of the sports classes. Elias writes that in earlier stages of the civilizing process 'we'-identities were more dominating than the 'I'-identity, but now we have a greater focus on maintaining our 'I'-identity and this is more powerful (Elias 2001, 157). Still, Elias says this development is not only logical, and when it comes to sport and health in this school, it seems like the 'we'-identity is more dominating, and there is a need for a 'we'-identity to compare your 'I'-identity to. Furthermore, this has meant that the sports students constructed a 'they'-identity – referring to the rest of the students at the school – a 'they' that is scared of the implications of having an active lifestyle..

> In the beginning, if you were at a social event, it was a bit like […] 'Are you in the sports-class? – It's past 9, can you still be here, don't you have practice or something? [...] Wow are you smoking, are you drinking, what's up with that?' It was kind of like […] we couldn't do that because we're jocks […] I mean, I also think that's what scares the rest of the students in the school to not be in to sports, because they have this idea that if you're in to sports, then you're like the us who isolate ourselves completely (Lisa, 1st-year student 2011).

Lisa talks about how she thinks that some of her classmates isolate themselves, which scares the rest of the students away from involving themselves in sport and also in the health promoting work which the sports students are involved in. She believes that the rest of the students are scared by the consequences of being interested in sport and a healthy lifestyle. Oscar agrees with her on this, and points at "not being able to have a social life" as an important factor in why the other students opt out of sport and the health promoting work.

> I think, a lot of people feel like they lose their social life if they do sports, because they have to opt out of a lot of social events. I mean, Peter and I, we practice on Fridays, and we've had to […] if we fell and hit our leg or something, and had to say 'Well, that party at school, I won't make it to that today, because this hurts too much.' Or if you're just tired or something. I think they're scared of opting out of stuff they also like to do (Oscar, 1st year student 2011).

Oscar's experience is that as a sports person it is easier to accept the consequences of practising at odd times, or that the body can be injured and stop you from participating in a party. Likewise, his story reflects the way the sports students experience the 'they'-identity of the rest of the students at the school. 'They' are afraid that sport will cost them too much. Not only does it tell us something about Oscar's justification of his own 'I'-identity, and that he is capable of making sacrifices for his sport. It also tells us that some of the sports students opt out of the social life at school, and they do not have the time to party as much as the other students. The 'we'-identity they create amongst themselves are therefore significantly different than the 'they'-identity created about the rest of the students. Moreover the 'they'-identity is seen as more dominating than their own 'we,' and therefore they find it important to be a part of both arenas.

A figuration sets a framework for the actions of the individuals. Depending on their position within the figuration they possess more or less power, which is reflected in their actions (Baur and Ernst 2011). By changing their position in the figuration, the students of this school may also change the rules and social structure of the figuration. Below, we will show how the sports students' status at the school in some contexts can be characterized as an outsider culture (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]), and consequently, what it takes to establish a new sports and health culture at the school. Likewise, this will give us an understanding of the enabling and constraining power relations that are at stake (Elias 1978). The creation of a common identity is enabling because the students of the sports classes support each other in being different from the rest of the students. But it is also constraining because the sports students believe this 'we'-identity strengthens their reputation as being anti-social. This affected their willingness to involve themselves in the health promoting work in the long run. Taking part in this was experienced as both enabling, because the

students valued the fact that they had a say in the matter. But as the same time it constrained them, because being part of this created a negative reputation.

> It's not that they look down at us, but on the other hand […] we just talked about it quite a lot […] we are kind an internal class, and we don't talk that much with the rest of the school. And the thing about this school having a sports profile, that seems like it's kind of odd to most students, because they don't do sports at all, and don't want to. And then there's our class who do, and then it's like we keep a bit to ourselves, or like […] And then there's the rest of the school, who are those drama and music hippies, that eat brunch instead of doing sports, and then there's us. So in that way I think we're kind of divided. But I don't think it's because they look down at us, I just think […] I mean we just don't talk.
>
> [one of the boys (interrupt)]: They just think we're weird.
>
> I just think, they think, 'Well ok, they're not interested in us' because we don't talk to them, but yes (Nina, 1st-year student 2012).

Nina tells how the sports students feel like they are an outsider class (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]), and hence they create a strong division between their own 'we'-identity and the 'they'-identity among the rest of the students. As we have only interviewed the sports students the analysis can only provide us with the perceptions among the sports students and their understanding of the other students. This is interesting because the sports students' perception of who 'they' (the other students) are and how 'they' think about the sports students is triggered by the sports students' own 'I'- and 'we'-identity (Elias 1978), because an 'I,' according to Elias, is only an 'I' by virtue of our idea of who 'we,' 'you' and 'they' are. Throughout the years we were part of the school as researchers, it became obvious that the sports students adapted to existing norms and rules under which their identity did not have that much value. This also created an internal power struggle among the sports students in which they use blame and praise gossip (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]) to manifest their own placement within the figuration. There is a need to speak positively about their identity as sports students, but sometimes they also speak negatively about their own identity because they have a need to be a part of the general school culture – the social party culture. This can be interpreted as a process of stigma in which the sports students take over norms and values from the rest of the students, stating that sport and health are not prestigious assets. At the same time we can trace blame gossip among the sports students towards the other students at the school.

> Some of the students we interviewed said that in their class they didn't call it PE but brunch class. And it seemed like that was cool – not wanting to do sport. That it was cooler to go out for an ice cream or something. Not that they go around saying 'Do you do sport, that's so lame' or something, but it was just something you did in that class. And if someone in that class of a sudden stated doing sports, people would look at them funny, like 'Why are you doing that? Aren't you going with us for an ice cream? What's happening?' Whereas

in our class it's more like, of course you practice sport, that's obvious (Ella, 1st-year student 2010).

[…]

I was looking at some of the results from your survey, and I saw those diagrams about that thing, about whether it is popular to do sports. And I thought about how many said NO. I don't understand how that can be. It like, seems so weird. I mean, it's not like […] I don't think it's like that in our class. It's not like […] like you are looked down at if you didn't do sport. But more like 'cool that you do.' I mean I can't image at all why someone would find it uncool to do sport (Michael, 1st-year student 2010).

The survival strategy of the sports students as an outsider group is to use blame gossip towards the other students. Elias' theory on established and outsiders denotes the paradox in the fact that the stigmatisation of one group is not necessarily based on race, economy, education or gender. On the contrary, most students in this school belong to the higher middle class (Nielsen et al. 2011). According to Elias and Scotson processes of stigma is about how established a group is in society (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). The sports students enter a power ratio, in which they feel that they have to take over norms and values given to them by the more established part of the school. The profiling of health and sport at the school is rather new, and the extra focus on sport and the sports students as a norm-bearing group is therefore not an established part of the school culture, where other values have had prestige. In this school, where health and sport has not been part of the culture that long, it is hard to integrate it in the established youth culture.

7.   Discussion – Sport and Health as an Outsider-Culture

Referring to *Sport Matters* by Eric Dunning (1999), Velija (2012) emphasises three crucial characteristics about Elias and Scotson's (1994 [1965]) theory on established and outsiders: 1) There are divisions within outsider groups, and this fragmentation is a general characteristic, which means that there is a greater sense of solidarity within established groups. 2) Another characteristic about outsider groups is that they often identify more with the established groups than the other outsiders. 3) A third central aspect in Elias and Scotson's theory on relations between established and outsiders is the nature of power between the two groups, and to what extension the power balance changes between the two groups through a *functional democratisation*, where the power difference is reduced but not necessarily equalized. Functional democratisation is a process where the chains of interdependence between the groups are prolonged, and the individuals become more dependent on each other. Below I will discuss how the results from the analysis reflect some of these characteristics about the relations between established and outsider groups in the school.

The study has shown a division among the sports students, as they want to be part of the we-culture of the sports classes because it corresponds with their I-identity. However, they experience that it is important to be part of the social party and drinking culture which influences the school culture in general and therefore also the sports students' perception of the they-identity of the rest of the students. Paulle og Kalir (2013, 12) says that within all figuration there are *processes-in-relations,* which allow the established group to obtain dominance and to exist all together. We have not interviewed the students that are considered to be the established, but we have studied a discourse over several years at the school, and through fieldwork we have had conversations with the other students and functioned as teachers in some of their lessons. This has given us an understanding that corresponds with the sports students' own perceptions of their relations to the other students. What is considered to be the established youth culture at the school exists and is maintained by virtue of the relational processes, that evolves and changes over time and in which the sports students are torn between their own 'we'-identity and the urge of wanting to be part of the general 'we'-identity at the school.

This brings us to the second characteristic underlined above: how outsider groups often identifiy more with the established groups than with the other outsiders. Elias and Scotson (1994 [1965]) showed that the strong sense of solidarity within established groups first of all is characterised by an unequal power balance, which does not necessarily have a function in other social contexts. There is an increasing interdependence between the sports students and the other students because of the sports students' involvement in health promotion at the school. This, however, can also create a stronger sense of solidarity among the established group of students and a greater sense of division among the sports students. Because of the greater sense of solidarity and control, the established group is able to create an image of themselves based on their "best citizens," whereas image of the outsider group is created based on their "worst citizens" – in spite of more or less the same behaviour (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965], xix). The sports students' perspective on their own status within the school figuration symbolises how values that are defined as less prestigious by the other students are adopted as general values in the sports classes. It is important to the sports students that sport and health are combined with the dominating youth culture, which is based on a social aspect where partying and drinking are essential factors. This is because the sports students in some contexts have a need to identify themselves with the established youth culture and not only the culture of the sports classes (Velija 2012). Consequently, they have a need to fit in to the established group culture at the school. This division between the two groups have, as Elias and Scotson points out, nothing to do with social class, gender or race (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965], xvii), but occurs because one cultural norm has existed longer than the other. Traditionally there has not been much focus on sport and health in the school, and the

sports culture is therefore not as established as other norms and values at the school.

The third characteristic concerns to what extent the power balance changes between the groups through a *functional democratisation* (Velija 2012, 40), where the power difference are reduced, but not necessarily equalized. Velija argues that it is important as a figurational sociologist to remain critical to the theory of established and outsiders. She questions which processes maintain a position as either established or stigmatised, especially when the power relation between two groups is subject to a functional democratisation. She writes that firstly it is important to focus on what makes people established in a figurational setting and outsiders in another. Secondly, she argues that it is important to consider the circumstances under which a lacking sense of solidarity helps characterise an outsider group and whether a new established-outsider relation rises as well as to what extent it is possible to comprehend the complex power relations between established and outsider. Our study shows that being part of the health intervention was difficult to the sports student, because it is not easy telling others what to do with their lives. Therefore it is important to consider the role of the students if one wants them to take active part in the health promoting work. Even though the student perspective can provide valuable knowledge on how to approach health among young people, it also strengthens their sense of being outsiders in some contexts. Such a functional democratisation process in which the power balance between the students is reduced because of the active involvement of the sports students is therefore both enabling and restricting (Elias and Scotson 1994 [1965]). There is a ruling culture at the school which the sports students find difficult to change, and a critical perspective on this study is therefore that this active involvement of the students in the health promoting work actually stigmatises them more than it establishes them as a group. Due to the functional democratisation process a complex power relation is created (Velija 2012) in which the sports students are part of an establishing process as a group in the school and which draws more attention to their position in the figuration. At the same time their experience is that this attention and the reduction of the power differences are stigmatising them even more.

8.   Conclusion

In this paper we have studied a processual development over five years concerning an active involvement of students in carrying out a health promotion intervention in a Danish high school. By applying the theoretical approach of Elias and Scotson concerning relations between established and outsider groups in small communities, we have discovered that this involvement has certain consequences for the students' position and status at the school. Sport and health are not considered as very valuable assets in this school and therefore

being involved in health promoting work creates an outsider culture among the involved students. We have shown this by analysing the 'I'-, 'we'-, and 'they'-identities among the sports students. The study showed that the sports students have an easier time coming to terms with their 'I'-identity when it is juxtaposed to the 'we' of the sports class, because the 'we' of the sports class understand the reasons for living your life a bit differently. Likewise, the sports class students form a 'they'-identity of the rest of the students as *scared of their lifestyle*. Moreover, the study has shown that the students in the sports-class have to adapt to *new norms and values* in high school, where drinking and partying are more prestigious assets now. At the same time, the sports-class adopt the other students' perceptions of *what it is like* to be interested in sports and part of the health promoting work: that they are anti-social and weird. The sports-students at this school therefore define themselves as *outsiders*, because being healthy and being interested in sport is not part of the *established* identity of the school.

References

Baur, Nina, and Stefanie Ernst. 2011. Towards a process-oriented methodology: modern social science research methods and Norbert Elias's figurational sociology. In *Norbert Elias and Figurational Research: Processual Thinking in Sociology*, ed. Norman Gabriel and Stephen. Mennell, 117-39. Malden: Wiley- Blackwell.

Beck, Steen. 2006. En ny myndighed - Gymnasieelevers rusmiddelkultur og skolekulturelle forandringsprocesser. PhD-afhandling, Institut for Filosofi, Pædagogik og Religionsstudier, Syddansk Universitet.

Clift, Stephen, and Bjarne Bruun Jensen. 2005. *The Health Promoting School: International Advances in Theory and Practice*, 1 ed. Copenhagen: The Danish University of Education Press.

Dunning, Eric. 1999. *Sport Matters: Sociological Studies of Sport, Violence and Civilization*. London: Routledge.

Elias, Norbert. 1978. *What is sociology?*. London: Hutchinson.

Elias, Norbert. 1994 [1939]. *The Civilizing Proces*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias, Norbert. 2001. *The Society of Individuals*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Elias, Norbert, and Eric Dunning. 1986. *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Elias, Norbert. 1987. *Involvement and detachment*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias, Norbert, and John L. Scotson. 1994 [1965]. *The Established and the Outsiders*. London: SAGE.

Engh, Mari Haugaa, Sine Agergaard, and Joseph Maguire. 2013. Established – outsider relations in youth football tournaments: an exploration of transnational power figurations between Scandinavian organizers and African teams. *Soccer & Society* 14 (6):781-98. doi: 10.1080/14660970.2013.843907.

Evans, Adam Brian, and Lee Crust. 2014. 'Some of these people aren't as fit as us …': experiencing the ageing, physically active body in cardiac rehabilitation.

Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health 7 (1): 1-24. doi: 10.1080/215 9676x.2014.908945.

Evans, Adam Brian, and Mike Sleap. 2012. You feel like people are looking at you and laughing: older adults' perceptions of aquatic physical activity. *J Aging Stud* 26 (4): 515-26. doi: 10.1016/j.jaging.2012.07.004.

Green, Ken. 2006. Physical Education and Figurational Sociology: An Appreciation of the Work of Eric Dunning. *Sport in Society* 9 (4): 650-64. doi: 10.1080/17 430430600769031.

Green, Ken. 2012. Mission impossible? Reflecting upon the relationship between physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation. *Sport, Education and Society* 19 (4): 357-75. doi: 10.1080/13573322.2012.683781.

Green, Ken, Andy Smith, and Miranda Thurston. 2009. Busy doing nothing? Physical education teachers' perceptions of young people's participation in leisure-sport. *Sport, Education and Society* 14 (4): 401-20. doi: 10.1080/13573320903 217109.

Haug, Ellen, Torbjørn Torsheim, and Oddrun Samdal. 2009. Local school policies increase physical activity in Norwegian secondary schools. *Health Promotion International* 25 (1): 63-72. doi: 10.1093/heapro/dap040.

Heldbjerg, Grethe, Henrik Damgaard-Hansen, Lars Schmidt Hansen, and Arve Kråkenes. 2009. *Kulturforståelse og forandring*. Sanfundslitteratur.

Jensen, Bjarne Bruun. 2000. Health knowledge and health education in the democratic health-promoting school. *Health education research* 100 (4): 146-54.

Jensen, Bjarne Bruun, and Bente Jensen. 2005. *Unges tanker om ulighed, sundhed og handling for sundhed*. Copenhagen: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag.

Jensen, Bjarne Bruun, and Jens H. Lund. 2008. *Den ulige sundhed – en opgave for skolen?* Copenhagen: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag.

Kristiansen, Søren, and Hanne Kathrine Krogstrup. 1999. *Deltagende observation – Introduktion til en forskningsmetodik*. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Laitakari, Jukka, Iikka Vuori, and Pekka Oja. 1996. Is long-term maintenance of health-related physical activity possible? An analysis of concepts and evidence. *Health Education Research – Theory & Practice* 11 (4): 463-77.

Lake, Robert J. 2011. 'They treat me like I'm scum': Social exclusion and established-outsider relations in a British tennis club. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 48 (1): 112-28. doi: 10.1177/1012690211424523.

Laub, Trygve B. 2013. *Danskernes motions- og sportsvaner 2011*. Copenhagen: Idrættens Analysesinstitut, IDAN.

Maguire, Joseph. 2011. Power and global sport: zones of prestige, emulation and resistance. *Sport in Society* 14 (7-8): 1010-26. doi: 10.1080/17430437.2011. 603555.

Nielsen, Stine Frydendal. 2015. Gymnasieskolen som Innovativt Sundhedslaboratorium – Et processtudie om idræt og demokrati i en ungdomskultur. PhD diss., University of Copenhagen.

Nielsen, Stine Frydendal, Marianne Brandt-Hansen, Glen Nielsen, Laila Susanne Ottesen, and Lone Friis Thing. 2011. *Unges syn på Idræt, bevægelse og sundhed i gymnasieskolen – en kvantitativ undersøgelse af Rysensteen Gymnasium*. Depertment of Exercise and Sport Science, University of Copenhagen.

Paulle, Bowen, and Barak Kalir. 2013. The Integration Matrix Reloaded: From Ethnic Fixations to Established Versus Outsiders Dynamics in the Netherlands.

Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 40 (9): 1354-74. doi: 10.1080/136 9183x.2013.847783.

Pilgaard, Maja. 2009. *Sport og Motion i Danskerne Hverdag*. Idrættens Analyseinstitut, IDAN.

Pilgaard, Maja. 2012. Teenageres idrætsdeltagelse i moderne hverdagsliv. *Scandinavian Sport Studies Forum* 3: 71-95.

Smith, Andy, and Ken Green. 2004. Including pupils with special educational needs in secondary school physical education: a sociological analysis of teachers' views. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25 (5): 593-607. doi: 10.1080/ 0142569042000252080.

Smith, Andy, Ken Green, and Miranda Thurston. 2009. 'Activity choice' and physical education in England and Wales. *Sport, Education and Society* 14 (2): 203-222. doi: 10.1080/13573320902809096.

Smith, Andy, and Michael Parr. 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: 10.1080/13573320601081526.

Strong, William B., Robert M. Malina, Cameron J. Blimkie, Stephen R. Daniels, Rodney K. Dishman, Bernard Gutin, Albert C. Hergenroeder, Aviva Must, Patricia A. Nixon, James M. Pivarnik, Thomas Rowland, Stewart Trost, and Francois Trudeau. 2005. Evidence based physical activity for school-age youth. *The Journal of pediatrics* 146 (6): 732-7. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2005.01.055.

Thing, Lone Friis, and Laila Susanne Ottesen. 2013. Young people's perspectives on health, risks and physical activity in a Danish secondary school. *Health, Risk & Society* 15 (5): 463-77. doi: 10.1080/13698575.2013.802294.

Van Krieken, Robert. 2002. *Norbert Elias*. Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Velija, Philippa. 2012. 'Nice girls don't play cricket': the theory of established and outsider relations and perceptions of sexuality and class amongst female cricketers. *Sport in Society* 15 (1): 28-43. doi: 10.1080/03031853.2011.625274.

Wheeler, Sharon, and Ken Green. 2014. Parenting in relation to children's sports participation: generational changes and potential implications. *Leisure Studies* 33 (3): 267-84. doi: 10.1080/02614367.2012.707227.

WHO. 2004. *The World health 2004 – Changing History*. The World Health Organization.