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Weight(,) trouble and intersectional subjectivities

Capturing children's corporeal experiences with body normativities
in Austrian schools

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I dedicate this to my family and the amazingly witty and wise children whom I had the pleasure to work with.

Abstract

This study looks at school children's intersectional experience with weight norms and tries to give insights on the issue of body normativities, from a feminist sport scientist point of view. Its purpose is to inform good practice in juvenile health education on the one hand and to contribute with intersectional feminist insights to the interdisciplinary dialogue on body weight and health on the other.

The here presented research project has been conceived as a pilot study for the juvenile health program *The Club of Strong Friends*.

It aims to answer the question how troubled subject positions in a curricular setting come to be and how children use their intersectional corporeality to navigate in and out of different positionings.

Using workshops as a method, a workshop series called *Self-worth, Body Weight and Health* was carried out with children between 11 and 13 in 3 different public schools in the most eastern province of Austria in spring 2015. Four of these sessions constitute the material for the analysis which has been realized by using Staunaes' conceptualisation of intersectionality and troubled subject positions.

Results:

It has been found that many children who conformed to normative body weight ideals drew attention to this fact. This was inter alia to claim an untroubled position within the group or overshadow a troubled position as an ethnic minority in a dominant Austrian school context.

Being of non-normative body weight on the other hand often hindered children to connect with others and aggravated the participation in in-group activities.

The data demonstrate that body weight plays a significant role in negotiating one's intersectional position within the peer group. Non-normative body weight can thereby be a barrier for children to take part in a learning community. The findings also suggest that a variety of intersections that constitute children's corporeal experiences within educational contexts are overlooked or insufficiently addressed within educational environments.

Conclusion:

Given this study's findings, it is recommended to start incorporating intersectionality as an analytical tool and methodology in health promotion and health education in order to address pupils' differences and intersections in a valuing non-oppressive way.

Keywords: Body weight, normativities, intersectionality, troubled subject positions, juvenile health promotion

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Introduction

Growing up in a society that judges people mainly by looks can be very challenging for children and teenagers. By being exposed to heteronormative gender roles and rigid body ideals children learn from a very young age which bodies are “good bodies” and which body attributes are shameful.

Like Frigga Haug states in her book *Female Sexualization*, “[our] attention is constantly being drawn to the fact that there is a proper height for girls, a proper time for their chest measurements to reach certain proportions, a proper waist measurement and so on” (Haug 1999: 118).

With the help of an intersectional lens this thesis seeks to take a deeper look at the issue of body normativities and tries to find out who and what is perceived as appropriate or inappropriate and troublesome in a lower grade school context in Austria.

Background

A variety of different studies show that children who fall outside the hegemonic weight norm experience significantly more discrimination than their “normal-weighed” peers (Weinstock and Krehbiel 2009). Weight stigmatization and bullying can have detrimental long term consequences like low self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety, behavioural problems, feeling unsafe at school, depression and suicidal thoughts. Children who do not fit weight norm(s) thereby not only experience stigma and weight bullying in their peer groups at schools. Often they are bullied by teachers, health professionals and even family members (ibid. 2009: 121).

Situating the problem

In Western medical and public health discourses, higher body weight has for several decades been emphasized as “major risk factors for various diseases”. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “excess” body fat is especially detrimental if prevalent at an early age. Thus the organization repeatedly points at the global rise in childhood obesity rates¹ as “the

¹ In medical terms the “abnormal” accumulation of body fat in children

most serious global public health challenge of the 21st century” and emphasizes its prevention as “top priority” for public health authorities around the world (Webpage of the WHO)².

In numerous Western countries, educational programs and concepts that would tackle “the problem” have thus been in high demand in the past twenty years. Institutions in intra- and extracurricular settings like kindergartens, schools and sport clubs have been entrusted not only to educate pupils about healthy living but also to carry out screening procedures like monitoring children’s height and weight to determine their health status. Such activities, despite their well-meant intentions and popularity, have a high potential of causing emotional and physical distress in children by promoting certain weight categories as “normal” and “healthy” and others as “un-healthy”. Thus, this approach is in need of alteration.

Various authors caution that being categorized as over-weight (outside the normal body weight-range) makes children more likely to fall victim to weight bullying and to face discrimination in school. Promoting rigid weight-ranges as healthy also creates an environment where the fear of being considered or becoming fat and the pressure to conform weight-wise can negatively affect all children, regardless their current weight (Bacon & Aphramor 2011; Kater 2004, Puhl & Heuer 2010).

However, in the frame of juvenile health promotion, how children experience and perceive these treatments and how they lead to the construction of troubled subjectivities is seldomly questioned. Little is known about how children’s intersectional experience with weight stigma influences their self-concept of embodied, balanced being in the world.

While academia and policy makers in the UK, USA and Australia started to address weight stigma as social issue, it has been rarely on the radar of Austrian academic scholars or health promotion program planners. National media frequently pick up the issue of supposed rising BMI³-rates in children, depicting those who fall outside the “normal weight range” as “the problem in need of being fixed”. How far weight bullying is an issue in Austrian intra- and extracurricular settings can so far only be estimated. How children in Austria deal with weight stigma experience and how far intersectional positioning intensifies these experiences is as yet unknown. To find out how school children deal with body weight norms and how intersectional

²Webpage of the World Health Organisation. Available at: <http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/faq/en/> (accessed 06 February 2017)

³ BMI = kg/m² where kg is a person's weight in kilograms and m² is their height in meters squared.

body weight influences children's positioning in a learning community shall therefore be the issue of this thesis.

Situatedness and aim

As a feminist sport scientist who was born and raised in Austria, my aim is to inform the implementation of body positive juvenile health promotion where children are allowed to be fully present in learning experiences regarding their own health and corporeality with all aspects of their intersectional subjectivity.

In my professional role as regional program coordinator for juvenile health promotion, I had been responsible for the development of an extra-curricular health program called *The Club of Strong Friends*. The idea behind this program had been to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for children and teenagers to experience sport and nutrition in a joyful way regardless their current body weight.

The project here presented had been conceptualized as a pilot study for this program. By utilizing workshops as a research method, a sequential workshop-series was carried out in three different schools. The selection of research sites and participants as well as the formulation of research questions has thereby been mainly driven by the endeavour to gain new insights that could help *The Club of Strong Friends* become more accessible and inclusive.

Like Haraway and Groz, I have a background in the natural sciences. Thus, my thinking is very much inspired by their intersectional post-constructionist onto-epistemology. I also aim to relate my approach to scientific knowledge production to the postulate of Judith Butler who argues that in theories of gender the body as the "most material dimension of sex and sexuality" matters (Butler: 1993).

Against this corpomaterial backdrop, I write and research from a very privileged position as a white abled educated female who weight wise passes as "normal" in most settings. Also, I benefited from a work environment and position that allowed me access to the research settings.

Contribution, purpose and research questions

With my research I aim to make a contribution to the field of sport science and public health by providing post-constructionist feminist insights on body normativities in children's intersectional experience.

The purpose of this thesis is to inform good practice in juvenile health education on the one hand and to contribute with intersectional feminist insights to the interdisciplinary scholarly and activist dialogue on body weight and health on the other.

I consider my pursuit as feminist in that it is critical towards body normativities in public health, pays attention to ethical considerations of health promoting practices and in that it aims to change and challenge the focus on body weight in juvenile health promotion. It is also infused by intersectional and post-constructionist thoughts as I conceptualize weight stigma as discursive issue while taking bodily facticity into account. According to my overall onto-epistemological perspective, theory and practice thereby melt to inseparable components of this project.

In this study I use workshops as my method. Precisely, the empirical material for this project is formed out of a workshop series which was conceptualized as a pilot study for *The Club of Strong Friends*. The workshop sequence was aimed at pupils in lower grade (age 11-14) and followed through in the framework of afternoon supervision and PE classes in three different schools in the most eastern province of Austria in spring 2015. I use the outputs of the workshops which is children's drawings, writings and collages as well as the experiences from my intra-active participation as material for the analysis.

To analyze the material, I will mainly use the post-structuralist and social constructionist concept of (troubled) subject position that has been developed together with post-constructionist intersectional thoughts by Dorthe Staunæs (2003). With this theoretical approach I hope to account for the issue of weight normativities in relation to children's intersectional experience within a learning community more thoroughly and to answer the following research questions.

1. How do troubled subject positions emerge in a health and size diversity focused workshop?
2. How do children use their intersectional corporeal subjectivity to navigate in- and out of different positionings?

To answer these questions I intra-actively analyze children's participation in the workshop-series. I consider experience as embodied and therefore pay attention to corporeal and bodily practices which the children use to negotiate body norms and subject positions.

This analytical step is inspired by Nina Rossholt who suggests using storylines to make sense of children's interactions. In her paper *Sweethearts- The body as a learning subject* she advises to not only look at the discursive, verbal aspects of children's interactions but to look at

storylines as “acted out, played out, lived out” whereby discourse and the material body are shaped and negotiated simultaneously (Rossholt 2008: 96).

In my study, I see it as relevant to examine the use of verbal and non-verbal practices respectively bodily practices like running, hitting, screaming or laughter that are displayed by a group or by an individual.

By doing so I hope to gain an understanding how children balance their intersectional subjectivity through weight norms and stigma experiences. Particular focus shall thereby be placed on the processes and contextual particularities that render certain subject positions troubled while others remain untroubled.

Previous research

The following review discusses critical literature conducted on juvenile health promotion practices and the discursive construction of weight norms. It combines different feminist sociologist accounts with studies from critical natural scientists which I consider to be consistent with my intersectional post constructionist feminist corpomaterial approach.

Size discrimination and weight stigma in the form of bullying, biased treatment, and inequalities in education due to negative stereotypes have been widely problematized in English speaking countries. An especially large body of literature is thereby available in the American and Australian context (Bacon and Aphramor 2011; O’Hara and Gregg 2012; Puhl and Latner 2007; Puhl and Heuer 2010). The available body of research inter alia addresses prevalence of discrimination and weight bullying (Hetrick and Attig 2009) causes and consequences of weight based bullying and examines biased attitude of teachers and peers towards larger pupils (Weinstock and Krehbiel 2009; Escalera 2009; Koppelman 2009).

In the last decades European scholars have also begun to critically account for weight stigma in juvenile health promotion and to speak out against stigmatizing effects of weight-focused health education (Cale and Harris 2011; Rich, Harjunen, and Evans 2006; Van Amsterdam 2012). Thereby, critical evaluations of popular health promotion practices come from social science scholars and natural scientists alike.

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising, that the terminology used to discuss body weight related issues differs widely from field to field and is often, even within disciplines, used very

inconsistently. Thus I would like to make myself accountable for the use of language and terms I incorporate within this thesis.

A feminist sport scientist's approach to the definitions

As the collection of texts within this review does not represent or stand for a single academic discipline the issue of handling inconsistently used terminology has been particularly challenging. The question on how to use certain terms is as such a highly debated topic even within disciplines. It is even further discussed with disagreement when scholars engage in transdisciplinary dialogues.

Throughout literature, stigma, bias, bullying and discrimination in regards to body weight are common denominators. While conceptualisations of stigma are in various disciplines frequently based on Erving Goffman's theories (1963), this is rarely the case in interdisciplinary research dialogues on weight stigma. Here, the terminology is used very inconstantly (see Aphramor and Gingras 2009; Brown 2015; Weinstein 2014). Commonly agreed definitions have yet to be established.

My personal understanding and frame of the manifold issue taken here is based on the work of interdisciplinary scholars, for example Rebecca Puhl and Chelsea A. Heuer (2009). Their research found entrance in a brief statement published by the WHO Europe where weight bias is defined as "negative attitudes towards, and beliefs about, others due to their weight. Weight stigma is thereby understood as the "social sign or label" of people who are victims of prejudice in regards to body weight (WHO Europe 2017).

The use of terminology

As an intersectional feminist it is particularly of interest how to refer to people of different sizes in a non-oppressive manner.

In dominant public discourses for example, calling someone overweight instead of fat is supposedly considered more polite and politically correct (Wann 2009: xii). Therefore children are often rebuked and told off by their teachers when they call others fat. Or individuals who describe themselves as fat are told that they either weren't or should not talk that negatively about themselves (ibid.).

Within non-medical studies of body weight, in activist spaces and fat acceptance communities however, the use of the term "fat" is generally encouraged (Webpage of the German Society

against Weight Discrimination)⁴. There, describing oneself as “fat” is acknowledged as act of resignification. The terms “overweight” and “obese” on the other hand are perceived as reference to the medical discourse which is criticized by fat activists and body positive scholars to construct fatness as pathological condition (Harjunen 2009: 18). Many body positive feminists who perceive the act of resignification as an identity politics project emphasize non-medical terminology as empowering. Yet others acknowledge that many people of size struggle to use “fat” as a neutral description of their body and thus perceive it as offensive and hurtful (Harjunen 2009: 22). Generally speaking sport science scholars and public health researchers tend to prefer medical terminology like overweight and obese to refer to people whose BMI is higher than average.

In this study I try to approach body weight as something relational and contextual by using the terms slim, large, and larger than. The term fat will only be used sparingly throughout this thesis. The reasons for that are twofold. First, I do not identify as fat myself and my workshop participants who I read as larger than most of the group did not want to call themselves fat.

In German I used the word “dick” (thick, large) which I see suitable as neutral description of a persons’ body size in contrast to “übergewichtig” (overweight) which implies that there is a certain normal weight a person can be over or under.

Feminist approaches to body norms and weight

For decades feminist sociologists have been critically discussing the relation between patriarchy, body norms and the politics of appearance (Bordo 1993; Harjunen 2009; Van Amsterdam 2012). In feminist studies, there is a vast body of research available that demonstrates that in health and beauty discourses the issue of body weight matters differently for females and males and that weight norms are more narrowly constructed for women and girls. According to Finnish feminist sociology scholar Hannele Harjunen (2009) in societies where being fat is linked to derogatory moral characteristics, large women face significantly more stigma than men due to intersecting discrimination stemming from patriarchal orders and heteronormative gender roles (Harjunen 2009: 60).

⁴Webpage of the Gesellschaft Gegen Gewichtsdiskriminierung. Available at: <https://www.gewichtsdiskriminierung.de/> (accessed 26 August 2018)

In the following section, I will first look at selected sociologist accounts that are suited for my post-constructionist approach. After that I will discuss the academic endeavours of natural scientists who offer perspectives on weight loss regimes, assessment methods and juvenile health promotion programs that I see as feminist.

Contemporary scholars in the disciplines of fat studies, gender studies and sociology have inter alia been using female bodies, fat and the entangled neoliberal health and beauty discourse as a lens to critically account for weight stigma in different societal, organizational and institutionalized settings. Thereby, Susan Bordo's sociological conceptualizations of the slender body (1993; 1999) and Michael Foucault's theory of biopower (1972;1979;1998;2000) have often been utilized to build the basis for a feminist critique. Especially relevant for this thesis are those post-constructionist accounts that depict weight stigma as composition of gendered discourses where societal ideals on the one hand and medical beliefs on the other are acknowledged as interwoven and entangled components (Harjunen 2009; Van Amsterdam 2012).

One feminist scholar who writes from a social constructionist perspective is Finish sociologist Hannele Harjunen. In her dissertation papers she draws inspiration from Foucault's concept of biopower in order to scrutinize phenomena related to women and fatness (Harjunen 2009). Harjunen conceptualizes the body as a discursive category that is (re)produced in social interactions and practices such as health care and education. The starting point of her thesis is the conception of fatness as a multifaceted, gendered, and socially constructed phenomenon and experience. Through this she criticizes the fact that fatness in dominant discourses is predominantly seen as both "a medical problem and a medicalized condition" (2009: 6). Harjunen follows Foucault when she delineates (bio) power as "a network of power relationships that work through discourses and hegemonic knowledge." She especially expands on the "normalizing and excluding force" of power which needs to be understood as working through and within bodies instead of the idea that someone holds power "over" others. Thus individuals who, through "normalizing techniques", were able to internalize hegemonic messages are very likely to exercise self-control on their own bodies but also aim to control and discipline their environment (ibid. 2009: 35).

In an earlier paper Harjunen scrutinized the construction of acceptable female bodies in Finnish schools. She contests that health education in school acts as a controlling force on female bodies through the normalization of rigid body weight ideals ((Harjunen 2002: 78). According to Harjunen, those intra-curricular health education programs promote slim bodies as the only

acceptable size which furthers the negative focus on large bodies as those in need to be fixed. Especially girls would in this context be evaluated against very rigid body ideals (2002: 82). In the interview study she conducted for her article, the participating women experienced school as the one place where they learnt that their bodies were too fat and therefore somehow deviant to the norm. In Harjunen's view, it is very clear that schools are "the most central places" where girls learn what an acceptable female body needs to look like (2002: 78).

I find the idea to health education with the Foucauldian concept of bio power very intriguing. While I certainly find Harjunen's critiques on patriarchal body norms valid I see her exclusive focus on women rather problematic as the strategies and methods boys and men use to stay in an untroubled position which might reaffirm toxic masculinity and hegemonic gender norms are left out of the picture.

The construction, negotiation and reworking of body norms

In contrast to Harjunen, Van Amsterdam, Knoppers, Claringbould and Jongmans (2012) explored the media's effects on both adolescent females and males, and scrutinized attitudes toward body weight diversity (ibid. 2012: 293). In their paper the authors demonstrated that participants not only reproduced dominant media messages about body ideals they also resisted and reworked hegemonic discourses (2012: 300).

Thus the authors reason that knowledge about the body in relation to health and weight is also communicated, reproduced and challenged through interaction with others in everyday life. The study revealed that youths constructed the ideal female and male body as dichotomous counterparts. The desirable body for girls and women has thereby been constructed as slim, White, non-aggressive, and passive. In opposition desirable masculinity was associated with leanness, muscularity, competitiveness, strength and aggression (Van Amsterdam et al: 2012: 293). Although slenderness seemed to be the desirable ideal for both genders regardless of sexual orientation, Van Amsterdam et al. found that these youths often stated that being thin would be unmanly and therefore heterosexually unattractive. Yet, the "homosexual cuddle bear" was a positive association of fat men as well as a larger belly being described as something "natural" - even a status symbol for heterosexual men in their later years. Positive "fat identities", however, did not seem to be available for females. Females with a "muscular appearance" were considered athletic, yet heterosexually undesirable by the participants.

Additionally, fighting, physical contact, and aggression were deemed inappropriate for women and therefore a “lack of performed heterofemininity” (ibid. 2012: 300).

As my research is located in an environment where girls and boys are mostly educated in mixed-sex groups I find it important to consider accounts that also critically look at males lived experiences. Henceforth, the work of Van Amsterdam et al. is very valid for this thesis.

In a later paper that Van Amsterdam authored alone, she scrutinized the implications of neoliberal attitudes in health promotion practices. She reasoned that within the logics of a neoliberal health discourse, maintaining good health and a slender body is deemed the responsibility of the individual. Thus being (read as) “fat” is considered as the “marked” and inferior state of being. Although, slenderness is not the only opposing “unmarked” position it is perceived as “normal”. Maintaining an unmarked slender state is however not effortless. It needs self-discipline and self-surveillance (Van Amsterdam 2012: 10-11).

Yet, Van Amsterdam underlines the lack of sufficient accounts that focus on how people, who despite passing as slender and occupying an “unmarked” position, are affected by body size categorizations.

The reason I chose to incorporate the paper of Van Amsterdam in this review is that their work not only focuses on (the) marked position(s) but also questions the normativities that allow slenderness to become a hegemonic ideal.

Although Van Amsterdam approaches fat and slender as rather rigid dichotomous categories, I though find her paper very valid to build on as it provides in-depth discussions about the use of intersectionality to study the complexity of weight stigma. I agree with her that there is a lack of research that focuses on the “unmarked” positions. Together with Dorthe Staunaes “majority inclusive” approach that I will discuss below, I however hope that this thesis can address this lack of research.

Gendered body ideals

Niels Ulrik Sorensen’s chapter *Where the ordinary ends and the extreme begins - aesthetics and masculinities among young men* in the anthology *Learning Bodies* (2008) is particularly relevant for the matter of gendered body ideals. On the basis of qualitative life-form interviews he uses corpomateriality as thinking technology to analyze aesthetic practices such as hair and

skin care, exercise routines and diet behavior among young heterosexual Danish men (2008: 131-164). Sorensen describes how the males, through striving for the perfect body, negotiated mass cultural body normativities and reworked prevalent masculine body ideals (ibid.).

By using corporeal practices which in mainstream society are associated with femininity, these men are pushing the boundaries of gendered body roles and normativities (2008: 150). Yet, according to Sorensen's findings, his participants are well aware that these "feminized practices"⁵ of taking care of the body pose a threat to their heterosexual masculinity. For that reason the informants developed strategies to "balance" their identity by "coloring such mass culture esthetics", as Sorensen calls it, with masculinity (Sorensen 2008: 150-151). Sorensen notes that according to his interviewees, "too much femininity" is considered compromising and therefore "something to avoid" (2008: 152). It is however up to the individual to determine how much is *too much* and to balance it out accordingly by choosing one's individual style of self-expression (2008: 145).

Similar to Van Amsterdam et al., Sorensen allocates mass media as a strong force in adolescents' attitudes toward their own and the body of others. Yet he also underlines the power of individuals to choose which body ideals they would like to strive for. To his participants, balanced and unbalanced masculine identity is, according to his analysis a very individual experience and a question of individualized self-expression (2008: 147). Yet, despite the informants' efforts to set their own standards and establish their personal ideals, their embodiment is still interconnected and infused by dominant discourses that are difficult and sometimes impossible to escape (158). In his conclusion he writes: "We see that discourse still matters. [...]. It affects the concrete goals that are strived for, the way these goals are strived for and the way we evaluate our goal fulfillment [...]." (2008: 157). Sorensen's reasoning reminds of Butler's discussion of gender performativity and cultural intelligibility in *Bodies that Matter* where she describes the body's matter as "indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialization" (Buttler: 1999: xii).

In that sense Sorensen is also in line with Van Amsterdam in that both authors describe the ambivalence of reworking and resisting norms while simultaneously reproducing them through everyday discourse and embodied practices (2008: 158).

⁵Practices that in mainstream societies are associated with femininity (ibid:150).

I find Sorensen's study very interesting as it shows how body norms apply for males and how men are also affected by and facing the boundaries of masculine body norms.

The many faces of resistance

To scrutinize acts of resistance to body normativities in children, one might need to look in different places than when dealing with adults. A very valid theory that thus supports my research endeavor is the concept of *Everyday resistance* brought forward by James C. Scott in his book *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of resistance* (1985 described in Vinthagen and Johansson 2013). Scott, looks at ways people undermine power through actions of everyday life (1-2). Practices of resistance therefore look very different depending on the context, the actors involved and the discourses at stake. Practicing acts of everyday resistance is commonly used by less powerful groups or individuals, typically hidden or disguised, and not openly articulated. He describes activities like foot-dragging, sarcasm, laziness, passivity or misunderstandings as "tactics" used by exploited people in order to both "survive and undermine repressive domination; especially in contexts when rebellion is too risky" (ibid. 5). What "counts" as resistance is thus not always as easy to recognize as acts of demonstration, vandalism or rebellion might be.

I find this concept very relevant as my research project is situated within the curricular contexts where the hierarchy between children and teachers are particularly uneven. In my point of view Scott's postulation encourage, on the one hand, scrutinizing how children may act out and display resistance in a school-based setting. On the other hand I see this theory as an invitation for sport scientists and project planners to self-critically review school based education programs and reflect on the power teachers, researchers and health practitioners hold over children.

Another author who takes an interest in how children discursively rework, resist and sustain normativities is Dorthe Staunaes. For her doctoral thesis she conducted fieldwork in Danish schools in order to scrutinize gender and ethnicity as experienced categories in pupils' social relations ((Staunæs 2003: 108).

Stauneas' work shows that there are different ways to negotiate subject positions. However, maintaining or establishing an unmarked and therefore privileged position is constrained by power relations in the given context. To understand these processes of resisting and reworking

of discourses from a feminist post-constructionist point of view, Staunaes suggests utilizing the Foucauldian inspired concept of subjectivication (Staunaes 2003: 104). The way Staunaes thereby draws attention on otherness and troubled positioning but at the same time accounts for the processes and struggles of maintaining an untroubled position is in my view a very valid addition to the weight stigma literature. The reason for this is that scholars who focus on body weight predominantly write from an identity political place (Harjunen) or focuses on the context of oppression and the oppressed (Bordo) but seldomly on the processes and practices of the unmarked and untroubled. Staunaes' approach does not make the subject disappear. Rather she shows how the destabilization, change and subversion of un/troubled positions is possible (Staunaes 2003: 109). Staunaes non-essentialist and non-determinist approach of incorporating the concept of intersectionality makes her work stand out from all the accounts on normativities above and thus very valid for my endeavour to produce new and creative feminist insights on weight stigma. I will use Staunaes' approach to intersectionality in my analysis and will therefore expand on her work in the following chapter more thoroughly.

Health education and bio pedagogics

To date, very few self-critical accounts are available that reflect on ethical considerations of health promotion and especially of school-based programs. While the sport and public health scientific community seems less critical toward common health educational practices, strong critique is however voiced by scholars who look at societal and psychological implications of curricular health interventions. One of them is New Zealand philosophy scholar Jan Wright in her introduction chapter to the anthology *Biopolitics and the 'Obesity Epidemic'*. Wright, who grounds her line of argumentation on Foucauldian thinking, takes a particular critical stance towards institutionalized health education for youth (Wright 2009: 13). By applying the key-analytical concept of bio-pedagogics she sketches health promotion programs as disguised "neo-liberal bio-pedagogical projects" (see also Wright & Halse 2014) and argues that popular public health practices depend on a range of bio-pedagogies that "enable the governing of bodies in the name of health" (Wright 2009:13). Yet, how children are affected by the dominant discourses surrounding body weight and health depends, according to Wright, also on personal experiences, skills and coping strategies.

In this regards Wright also reminds that according to Foucault's conceptualization of power, rebellion and resistance are always possible (2009: 13). Wright thereby especially names role

models and alternative knowledge as helpful and supportive agents that can help children to resist and rework hegemonic body normativities that are imposed on them (ibid.).

Besides institutionalized health education the author, also takes on a critical stance towards educational media. In the paper *The healthy child citizen: biopedagogies and web-based health promotion* Wright and Halse (2014) conclude that the more narrow the body ideals and the more alternative ways of looking and living are made invisible and inappropriate through media and biased health information, the more difficult and limited the possibilities for “being different” and exercising resistance become (ibid.: 852).

I find Wright’s elaborations on children’s possibilities to resist body norms a very valid reminder to look for alternative knowledge and inclusive teaching methods in health education.

Promoting a paradigm shift in health education

In the last decade an interdisciplinary movement called *Health At Every Size* (The HAES Movement) gained strength and recognition within the international dialogue on disease prevention and public health. One of its pioneers is exercise physiologist and psychologist Linda Bacon. With her critiques of the weight centred health discourses, she has been an often cited scholar in cross- and interdisciplinary papers on health and body weight. Bacon has been conducting research on size acceptance and health promotion and examined the correlation of dieting behaviors and health. In a study Bacon carried out together with nutritionist Lucy Apromore, they criticize that health education in curricular settings as they usually focus on body weight as the basis for health interventions. Therefore Bacon et al. coined the term *weight centered health paradigm* which comprises the approaches that recommend “overweight” and “obese” individuals should lose weight through engaging in lifestyle modification. They point at the questionable ethical implications of such recommendations building their argumentation on quantitative evaluations of physical and psychological health markers like blood pressure and blood lipids. The authors showed that these markers improved long term in individuals across all weight categories that were following a holistic approach to health. With these data they stress the importance of shifting the health care paradigm from a conventional weight focus to weight neutral approaches (Bacon et al.: 2001, 1).

While certainly not without controversial voices from medical professionals, the last years have seen a rise in health promotion concepts that increasingly took the *Health at Every Size* principles⁶ that were based on Bacon's claims – into account.

Due to their relevance for this study, I would like to mention two of them. First this is *Full of Ourselves: A Wellness Program to Advance Girl Power, Health, and Leadership* (2005) by Catherine Steiner-Adair (a clinical psychologist) and Lisa Sjostrom (a research associate at the Harvard Medical School). The second example is *Healthy Bodies* (2012) by psychotherapist Kathy Kater.

These programs provide resources for teachers and coaches, are aimed at children of all sizes and intended to be implemented into the curricular setting. The goal of these programs is to encourage children to engage in regular exercises for the sake of improved wellbeing, to make healthy food choices and teach tolerance for size diversity (Steiner-Adair and Sjostrom 2005; Kater 2012; Kater 2004; Satter 2005).

I found this approach very intriguing and useful for the conceptualization of the here presented workshop series. Henceforth, the work of Steiner-Adair et al. and Kater is largely found in the workshop plan presented below.

Institutionalized health promotion from a critical natural science perspective

Natural scientists have only recently started to present a differentiated look on medical weight assessment methods and intervention techniques (Bacon and Aphramor 2011: 9).

Cale and Harris are two of the few sport science scholars who have undertaken this task and who critically look at the practices of their own discipline (2006; 2011). In the following I would like to present two of their articles.

In their earlier paper, the authors compared various school-based physical activity programs in Australia and the UK and looked for best-practice interventions to give recommendations for a more ethical implementation. For them, effective and ethical programs need to incorporate

⁶ The formulation of the Health at Every Size (HAES) principles is a result of a transdisciplinary discussion of healthcare workers, scientists, and activists who reject both the use of weight, or BMI as proxies for health. These principles address the areas of *Weight Inclusivity; Health Enhancement; Respectful Care; Eating for Well-being and Life-Enhancing Movement*. (Webpage of ASDAH. Available at: <https://www.sizediversityandhealth.org/content.asp?id=152> accessed 30 September 2018).

physical activity that “recognize and responds to the multiple facets of intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects” of children’s personalities. Furthermore they recommend that school based health promotion should not merely strive to improve children’s fitness, but rather aim to promote and raise overall physical activity (2006: 401).

In addition, Cale et al. propose that physical activity intervention should follow a student-centered approach, non-oppressive teaching practices, and should be monitored via a long term follow up instead of celebrating the short lived weight loss “successes” (2006: 416).

I think Cale et al. bring a much needed critical perspective to the sport and health scientific debate on juvenile health promotion programs. I share their opinion that it is very problematic that the scientific community still heavily relies on weight loss programs that state short term “improvements” in physical health markers while ignoring emotional long term consequences for participants. I see Cale et al.’s article as a vital reminder for sport and health scientists to bear in mind that it is children’s complex embodied lives which are at stake after all and that it is not merely numbers on a BMI chart that need to be adjusted to fit the norm.

The second article from Cale et al. I would like to discuss is called *Every child at every size matters* (2011). Here, Cale et al. build on their earlier work in order to offer a critical self-reflection as health educators. They review school based health policies and practices and thereby critique how the issue of “obesity” is dealt with in different schools around the UK. Cale et al. inter alia mention public weighing, weight loss camps and singling large children out in specific weight loss groups as stigmatizing practices that unfortunately are deemed good practice in many educational settings (ibid. 2011: 27). Cale et al. stress that teachers, educators and schools play a key role in stigma reduction efforts and assign them the responsibility to provide pupils of all sizes, “with meaningful, relevant and positive physical education and physical activity experiences” (ibid.).

The studies of Cale et al. are not explicitly based on sociological or feminist theories. Yet, they refer in their own terms to the problematic implications of the normalization that respectively othering of certain body weight categories can have on children’s lived experience. Their critique derives from a self-reflexive and critical position that pleas for a more socially just approach which I would consider as feminist. I think that their pedagogical reflections are a valid addition to the above mentioned sociological critiques and thus very well suited for this multidisciplinary project.

While Cale et al. leave dominant social discourses and hegemonic weight norms rather untouched they do stress the responsibility of school authorities and educators to advocate against weight stigma. Thus their work is very well suited to serve as basis for my feminist sport scientist approach.

Summary

In this literature review I have focused on critical literature conducted on juvenile health promotion practices and the discursive construction of weight norms that lead to troubled subject positions.

I thereby discussed sociological accounts and studies from critical natural scientists. I have shown how Foucauldian thinking has been used to critically evaluate juvenile health education and presented possibilities of resisting and reworking dominant discourses on body weight.

The review revealed that there is a significant gap in the understanding of how school children experience body normativities and how they navigate their intersectional subjectivity through dominant discourses. Therefore exploring how children use their intersectional corporeal subjectivity to navigate in- and out of different positionings can hopefully lead to a more comprehensive understanding of intersectional weight stigma. The theoretical thinking technologies I used for the data analysis will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.

Theoretical thinking technologies

In this section I will lay out the theories and concepts that will form the framework of my analysis. First I will explain my understanding of intersectionality by linking important perspectives of feminist post-constructionism and feminist corpomaterialism. I will then introduce the Foucauldian inspired concepts of subjectification, subjectivity and troubled subject position and discuss how I incorporate them into my analysis.

Intersectional analysis

To approach the topic of intersectional weight normativities and to answer the posed research questions, I am inspired by feminist post-constructionists and feminist corpomaterialists and their approach to intersectionality as analytical thinking technology.

Considerations of intersectionality have for a long time been an important part of feminist inquiry. As a concept, intersectionality has already been incorporated in scholarly work, for example in black liberation activist and sociologist Anna Julia Cooper's papers in the nineteenth century (Cooper reprinted in 1882/1988 cited in Pausé 2014). It also found entrance in the accounts of the Combahee River Collective as a theoretical framework to demonstrate that black women face a unique struggle due to the overlaps of racism and sexism (1977 cited in Pausé 2014). The term intersectionality was, however, coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 (Pausé 2014: 81).

In Crenshaw's piece *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color* she argued that identity politics of women and POC failed to recognize the lived experience of women of color (Crenshaw 1991).

The road crossing metaphor which is the basis of Crenshaw's concept has however been seen as problematic, especially by post-structuralist scholars (Staunaes and Sondergaard 2010 in Lykke 2010: 73). According to the post-structuralist critique the conceptualization of intersectionality as a junction where roads cross and then depart in separate directions may promote the idea that intersecting categories "just clash and depart like billiard balls" without mutually interfering (Lykke 2011).

In a post-structuralist/post-constructionist analysis, the different categorizations should be seen as mutually transforming and interdependent and thus impossible to be analyzed separately (Lykke 2010: 73).

For the purpose of this thesis I will draw on Staunaes' post-structuralist approach to the concept as analytical tool. She suggests relating to Crenshaw's concept with Foucauldian thinking in order to understand how power relations and normativities work in the actual lived experience of individuals (Lykke 2010: 73-74).

Therefore, she suggests taking an interest in individuals' meaning making processes and the diverse ways people find to rework categories and normativities that frame their everyday life (Staunaes 2003: 104-105).

Lately feminist writers have also started to acknowledge the concept of intersectionality as important aspect within the discourse on body weight and health (Van Amsterdam 2012; Pausé 2014; Rothblum 2009; Harjunen 2009).

Harjunen for example sees the study of fatness as an "identity political project" and recognizes intersectionality and intersectional thought to be a beneficial complementation to the identity

politic approach (2009: 60). To her, body size significantly effects a person's treatment and experience but can rarely be isolated from other social categories like gender, race/ethnicity, disability, and class – to which people belong or identify with (2009:60). In the introduction to her dissertation Harjunen elaborates on the benefits of an intersectional approach for studying fatness whereto she writes:

“If fatness is paired up with one of the other social categories, its social meaning and effects change; being a fat woman is different from being a fat man. Being a fat black woman is different from being a fat white woman and so forth. In other words, intersectional thought enables recognition and exploration of several identity political projects simultaneously.” (2009: 60).

In a similar vein, the sociologist Van Amsterdam who draws on Lykke's conceptualization of intersectionality (2011) advocates seeing intersectionality as thinking technology to “broaden the horizon of thinking in intersectional terms beyond mere identity politics.” (Van Amsterdam 2012: 2)

In her article on weight-based inequalities and thin privilege she takes an intersectional perspective on body weight. Here, Van Amsterdam gives an exploratory overview to exemplify different ways in which body weight categorizations – being read as fat or slender – intersect with other social categories. Contrary to Harjunen, Van Amsterdam does not start from an identity political place. While she also critically focuses on weight norms, her research also delves into the aspects of “unmarked” positionings. Van Amsterdam is thereby one of the few scholars who explicitly use intersectionality as thinking technology in an attempt to transgress the very common “add on approaches” in the field of weight stigma research (2012: 2).

By looking into literature from a variety of research fields, Van Amsterdam thereby postulates that the positions of ‘fat’ and ‘slender’ are, in western societies, mainly constructed through two dominant discourses. These are the beauty discourse on the one hand and the neoliberal health discourse⁷ on the other. Against this backdrop, Van Amsterdam stresses body weight as an “increasingly important axis of signification” that together with age, class, sexuality, race and gender produces layered power differentials that lead to complex inequalities (2012: 2-3).

⁷ While Bell and Green (2016) underline that there are various understandings and approaches to the term and concept of neoliberalism in critical health studies (ibid 2016: 240), Van Amsterdam describes the “neoliberal idea” in health discourses as the claim that body weight and good health are the mere results of lifestyle choices. Against this backdrop, people of size become “marked” as they are failing to take responsibility for their health. According to neoliberal thinking, large people are “not only considered to be a risk for themselves [...], they are also constructed as a risk for society by increasing costs of medical care” (Evans and Davies 2004 in Van Amsterdam 2012: 3-4).

Post-structuralist thinking technologies

In the following I will sketch out the components that Dorthe Staunaes suggests to incorporate in a post-constructionist inspired intersectional analysis.

According to feminist post-constructionists an intersectional analysis should follow a non-additional approach. This approach demands that categories should be analyzed simultaneously as they are conceptualized as interlocked entities. Analytically however, one must select a perspective. Staunaes solves this issue by defining intersectionality on a subject level as a process of `doing´ (Staunaes 2003: 105).

In order to analytically engage with individuals´ experience and the processes that render certain subject positions (in)appropriate, Staunaes aims to study the relations between categories and the results this `doing´ of intersectionality provokes in terms of troubled or untroubled subject positions in a specific context (ibid). Inspired by Foucault, Staunaes advises raising post-constructionist intersectional thinking together with the concepts of subjectivity, subjectification and “troubled” subject positions (Staunaes 2003: 102-105).

Subjectification

In Foucault´s understanding of subjectification one must look at the “human actor” from two different angles. While according to this concept an individual has the ability (power) to influence contextual conditions it is at the same time determined by them respectively being subject to them (Foucault 1979, 1988 in Staunaes 2003: 103). I think this concept is very suitable for studying resistance to body normativities in the conducted workshops. Therefore, I will apply it in the analysis.

Subjectivity

In a social constructionist view of intersectionality, the focus shifts from identity politics towards the complexity of lived experience. Subjectivity can thereby be understood as a sense of self which is in an ongoing process of becoming intra-acts with its contexts. In contrast to the (post)modern concept of identity, which is conceptualized as a rather stable component, subjectivity pays, along with stability, attention to rupture and change (ibid. 103). I find that identity is much more frequently used in previous academic accounts on weight stigma. Henceforth it makes the concept of subjectivity even more interesting to bring forth new insights and knowledge with this study.

(Troubled) subject positionings

Although social constructionists see people as “active” and “engaged agents” of their lives they also recognize that discourses limit the possibilities of what can be said and done. Staunaes writes that it is through the interaction in discourses that subject positionings are established. Some of these positionings thereby become troubled or marked (Staunaes 2003: 103-104).

Post-constructionist scholars therefore pay additional analytical attention to the processes in which individuals embody, resist or refuse to enter discourses and in doing so establish an intersectional subjectivity (Staunaes 2003: 103). The way Foucault’s conceptualization of power is interwoven into this post-structuralist line of thought is insofar that it focuses on how a person becomes un/marked, non/privileged, how these processes are produced, sustained and subverted and how power is part of this. (Staunaes 2003: 105).

Thus the possibility to resist, subvert or take up an offered position is always more or less available to a person at a given time in a given context. To take an interest in both, the processes of becoming marked and unmarked is inspired by Foucault and called the *majority inclusive* approach. According to Stuart Hall (1997 paraphrased in Staunaes 2003) this means to analytically distance oneself from the “exotic spectacle of the Other” and rather take an interest in the contextual and discursive conditions that produce inferiority and superiority, appropriateness, and inappropriateness (Minh-ha 1989). A majority inclusive approach implies the knowledge that social categories do not only count for those who are marginalized and othered. Furthermore, the hegemonic majority and mainstream society is framed by social categories. Following this logic every subject position can become troublesome. Yet the distribution of power among certain actors and dominant accepted practices of the given time and space renders certain positionings more troublesome than others (Staunaes 2003: 104).

For me it is therefore relevant to examine how certain discourses contribute to children’s positioning and also how adults, such as me and the teachers, contribute to these processes.

Feminist corpomaterial thinking technologies

In order to think through the links between discursivity and bodily materiality I will incorporate feminist corpomaterialist thinking in my analysis (Lykke 2010: 134). Therefore I inter alia turn to Elisabeth Grosz’s conceptualization of embodied subjectivity. The feminist post-constructionist Grosz suggests talking about subjectivity as corporeal and embodied (ibid.). As described in Rossholt, Grosz (1993) conceptualizes the surface of the body as “binding individuals to systems of significance” in which they become coded as signs to be read by

others as well as interpreted by themselves (Rossholt 2008: 96). By looking at the body as the surface of inscription while taking the lived body's materiality into account, Grosz challenges the passive-active dichotomous understanding of the body (ibid.).

Taking embodied subjectivity with all its particularities and specificities as the point of departure in an intersectional analysis enables the researcher to talk about differences without reproducing hierarchies, binaries, essentialist stereotypes or dualistic splits like nature/culture mind/body (Lykke 2010: 111-112).

Summary

In this section I drew parallels between post-constructionist aspects of intersectional enquiry and corpomaterial feminist conceptualizations of the body.

I have discussed Staunaes' idea of "doing intersectionality" as an analytical tool and presented the Foucauldian concepts of subjectivity, subjectification and troubled subject positionings to think through layered power differentials that lead to complex inequalities in certain contexts. In order to analytically engage with individuals' experience and the processes that render certain subject positions (in)appropriate the above presented cartography of concepts will be the foundation of my analysis.

Methodologies, Methods, Empirical Material and Ethics

In this section I will first explain my post-constructionist onto-epistemological and ethical approach together with the methodological principles of siting and sighting. After that I will lay out my methodology and methods which I will later on discuss and hold myself accountable for.

Onto-epistemological ethical thinking technologies

As feminist scholar rooted in the natural sciences I am very much inspired by post-constructionist thoughts and feminist corpomaterialist ideas. In order to transgress the dichotomous split between the mind and the body, discourse and materiality I build my thesis on post-constructionism where ontology and epistemology are approached as entangled, inseparable and mutually shaping each other. I will therefore use Barad's terminology of "onto-epistemology". This means that not only epistemology and ontology should be understood as

interrelated but also methodologies and methods. Furthermore the set up of research environments, the experimental apparatus and research technologies should be considered as entangled parts that mutually shape each other. Henceforth this way of thinking, acting and researching also influences the way I deal with ethical issues (Lykke 2010: 140, 144-145).

Feminist post-constructionist methodologies and ethics

In line with Haraway and Barad, I approach knowledge and knowledge production as located respectively situated. In order to profile and contextualize my research project I draw on the methodological principles of siting and sighting (Haraway) and thereby account for my agential cuts and hold myself accountable for my ethical considerations (Barad) (Lykke 2010: 142).

Situated knowledge and partial (localized) objectivity

Following Lykke referring to Haraway, I consider it to be a vital feminist move to assume objectivity as always situated and “scientific knowledge” to never be value-neutral (Lykke 2010: 4).

I strongly agree with Haraway (cited in Lykke 2010) who pleads for acknowledging that the researcher body shapes the outcomes of her study as the power relations s/he is entangled in, the technologies at her hands, the time and space in which the study is conducted have great influence on the research project.

To assume that none of these aspects matter and a researcher can from a disengaged outside position conduct universal objective research is a positivist epistemological idea that Haraway critically calls the “god trick” (Lykke: 116). Yet, Lykke underlines Haraway’s postulate that it is possible to assume objectivity however only partially. The concept of situated knowledge means that the researcher shall make herself accountable for the used technologies and methods as well as s/he should situate her researcher-self in the time, space and historical/social context s/he is doing research in. I will thus try to achieve partial and localized objectivity by consciously reflecting on my embeddedness in the context and by lying open the research technologies I applied (Lykke: 2010: 5).

Ethical considerations

Following Haraway and Barad, situating my study respectively accounting for my embodied situatedness needs to go hand in hand with ethical considerations (Lykke: 2010, 160). This implies explicitly accounting for the research interests involved in my project (ibid: 151).

In my case the main reason for carrying out this study was the wish to conduct a pilot study that could inform the health promotion program I have been working on.

In this study, the participants and informants are children. I find that reflecting on my position as both researcher and workshop leader is thus especially important.

As an adult leading the workshop I am placed in a position of power in relation to the workshop participants. I thus saw it as my responsibility to make myself familiar with legal requirements in school settings and to educate myself on possible psychological consequences my actions could provoke.

In order to engage minors as research participants, parental consent needs to be ensured. Therefore, I designed a consent form to be signed by the parents or legal guardians. In addition, I also prepared specific information sheets for teachers and children to accompany my personal explanations of research endeavours, the purpose of the workshop-series and my plans of how the collected data would be used (see below). When first introducing the workshop-idea to the children in person, I tried to convey the aim and content in child-friendly language. I made sure that they understood that participation was voluntary and opting out was possible at any time during the session.

In order to ensure a safe and size inclusive workshop atmosphere I included material and contents that have been evaluated as “good practice” by the *Association for Size Diversity and Health*⁸ in my workshops (see Kater; Steiner-Adair et al.).

It was never my intention to deliberately lead the children into a crisis in order to evoke reactions that would mean promising research outcomes. I consider this as unethical and immoral. Thus I was prepared to make changes to my workshop plan or end an activity should it turn out to be unsafe or trigger negative emotions. For example: After experiencing considerably unsafe situations in Workshop 2, I asked the teachers/supervisors to be present throughout the workshops to ensure children’s safety.

Constructing cuts

In order to meet Haraway’s demand for “siting” I will now explain the cuts I draw between research objects and subject.

⁸ Association for Size Diversity and Health (ASDAH). The Association for Size Diversity and Health is a non-profit organization with an international membership. It’s members are experts and practitioners from various disciplines who are committed to the Health At Every Size® (HAES®) approach. (Webpage of ASDA: Available at <https://www.sizediversityandhealth.org/> accessed 29 September 2018).

According to Barad and Haraway, who sees research objects and subjects as entangled, and Haraway who underlines that cuts between these two shall only be perceived as provisional, it is crucial to account for the cuts researchers make. These cuts also relate to the discussion of methods which I shall present below. Also interwoven in the construction of cuts is the delineation of my situatedness and further reflections on the power relations implicated in my research process (Lykke: 152-153).

Research objects

I define the children who participated in my workshops as the objects of research or research participants. Their participation was a crucial prerequisite for my project. Without them the workshop would not have been possible. Their presence, actions and produced material constitute the main part of my research. Although it was me who provided the preliminary structure of the workshop, the children took part on a voluntary basis. Thus it was them who defined the course through their choices for or against my provided activities. In doing (or not doing) so they co-constructed the agenda and outcome of the workshops. Nonetheless, it was me who got to decide what will happen with the collected material.

I see the children as participants in my research and first and foremost focus on their embodied role as school children. The decision to meet them where their student-bodies are predominantly present - respectively my presupposition that this would be the case- limits my analysis and leads it in a specific direction.

My research environment was set up in a time and place where the student-body of the boys and girls who took part in my research was very present. This is because all the workshops took place within the school setting (see also sighting).

My decision to visit schools rather than inviting people to my workplace or any other more neutral location certainly has implications that need to be acknowledged.

Yet, I chose this setting for several reasons. First, I am interested in children's intersectional experiences with normativities which I see very much influenced by the context: school. From studying the literature I assumed that the negotiation of body norms would to a great extent manifest in and through situations of formal education. The second part of my research interest is driven by the question how school children negotiate normativities amongst each other. Therefore, I found it vital to scrutinize situations in which children interact and that the context of interaction is rather familiar to them. Yet, the research environment needs, according to agential realist thoughts, to be seen as set up, as artificial (Barad: 1996: 183 in Lykke 2010: 159). This was the case as my presence and activities hadn't been integral parts of their

curriculum, nor are my workshops part of their day to day school life. Henceforth, the interactions that occurred and that I was able to observe need to be perceived as a product of this set up. It needs to be assumed that their participation and thus the outcome would have been different if they had have been participating in another time and space outside their school environment where other aspects of their embodiment are allowed/encouraged to come forth.

Research subject

As I am the one who conducted this study, I define myself as the research subject. As such I embody different intra-related roles. First, in my role as researcher, I am responsible for the data collection and the gathering of empirical materials.

Second, I am the workshop leader who is responsible for creating the agenda and guiding the participants through the different workshop activities.

Third, as an “external” expert I am allocated the responsibility of supervising minors in an intra-curricular setting. In this role I need to make sure that above all, the children are safe at any time, that my actions are in line with school laws and regulations and that no physical or emotional harm is caused by the activities I introduce. This need not be limited to the actual session but also applies to the time after the workshop when the children are left to their own terms again.

These roles are not without friction but conflicting and compromising each other on certain occasions. For example the supervisor’s responsibility of ensuring physical and emotional safety interfered with the researcher-body’s idea that participants should express their feelings and thoughts freely.

These different aspects of my embodiment in this particular place and time have specific implications in terms of power differentials and relations. As an embodied researcher subject I thus have the moral responsibility to think about and hold myself accountable for the consequences of my research.

As students in the compulsory school system, my participants – as long as they are within the building - can never step outside their role as students. My workshops were not intentionally conceptualized to serve any other purpose than connecting with children and collecting research material. However, within the school context my workshops were read as educational material and my researcher body thus was read as a teacher body. As an adult who delivered certain kind of information to the children, I respectively positioned myself in the role of the teacher. This enabled certain interactions with the children and made others impossible in this given time and space.

Also, my visible attributes which are that I am a white, physically abled, nor fat nor slender grown-up female whose first language is German enables and at the same time limits the means through which I can intra-act and connect with the children. All together these aspects of situatedness influences, creates and produce certain realities.

In my position as researcher I hold power over the children in that sense that I am able to decide how I interpret and process the collected material. To balance these uneven power relations, I made sure to have parental consent and to account for my research process in the most transparent way possible. I inter alia handed out my contact information so that children and parents could contact me should they have questions and informed them that names would be changed and data anonymized.

Research process and technologies (sighting)

To meet Haraway's demand for sighting I will now lay out the research process of this study and account for the used research technologies.

First I will discuss the potential of workshops for doing unconventional transformative research in feminist studies and thus describe the benefits of this method for this project. After that I will map out the process of data collection, preparation and analysis.

The workshop as a method

In regards to methods, Lykke writes that "the innovative force of Feminist Studies will only operate in optimal ways if it maintains an experimental, unorthodox and open approach to the issue of methods." (Lykke 2010: 161)

Against this backdrop, I find workshops as a method extraordinary suitable for the feminist strive for embodied knowledge as it opposes traditional positivist onto-epistemological practices of reason and universal objectivity. Lykke further advises that the selection of suitable methods depends on the individual research project (ibid). In my case I see the use of workshops as particularly appropriate for several reasons.

The initial spark for this thesis was the wish to gather knowledge for the development of *The Club of Strong Friends*. Educational workshops about body image and health for children are planned to be the core of this juvenile health promotion program. To incorporate workshops as a method in this study to serve not only the data collection but also as a sort of pilot for this program thus seemed very beneficial.

Secondly, it seems better suited to grasp children's embodied experience as physical expression, movement and creative ways of solving tasks is encouraged.

Thirdly, participants are free to choose the level and extent of engagement which is very important given the prior discussed voluntary participation of minors in research studies.

Fourthly, it allows individuals to choose their preferred mode of expression (e.g. writing, drawing or talking) which shall enable them to share and interact more comfortably than it would be possible in a one on one interview. Interviews and focus groups could have been an alternative. These methods however, didn't seem capable of capturing the richness of children's interactions comprehensively enough which is however important to me since one of my research interests is to find out how children handle and negotiate body normativities. Further, bodily expressions would get lost or at least would be compromised through interviews and focus groups which are traditionally rather speech and language centered. When conceptualizing the workshop series for this study I was guided by my overall research interest in intersectional body normativities and the research questions above. In order to gather relevant material to answer these questions, the workshops were followed through in sequential sessions (two in each school) termed *Self-worth, Body Weight and Health*. Below, I will account for my selection of locations and the sampling process.

The research process

After accounting for my choice of methods I shall now continue my "sighting" by mapping out the steps of my research process. In the following sections below, collection, preparation and analysis of the empirical material will be explained in more detail.

Sampling

The selection of appropriate settings to follow through the workshop series has been informed by different considerations.

First, in regards to my research endeavour I saw it as vital to look into settings where children spend time and interact with peers. In my view this is first and foremost the case in educational settings and schools in particular. Second, as the workshops were intended as a pilot study for a particular program, the selected locations should be within the area where this health program is actually followed through. Third, being able to account for different societal backgrounds and to achieve a diversity of the group was another consideration that guided my decision. In order to fulfil these requirements, I chose to visit public schools as I found them to be the most

appropriate settings. An alternative would have been to invite people to my workplace. However, visiting schools holds many benefits over this option. One benefit is that in schools, space and facility requirements (restrooms, chairs, tables, boards, assisting supervisors) are already provided. Although my presence would cause a certain disruption to their day to day school life, they could easily choose to opt out and return to their scheduled activities. Visiting during school hours should minimize the risk of excluding children who would not be able to follow my invitation to join a workshop at my workplace after school.

My wish was to go into different schools located in the province, in order to reach out to children from a broad range of social and socio-economic backgrounds. My aim was to make sure that the data gathered reflected the diverse voices and lived experience of the children attending school in the region where the program *The Club of Strong Friends* is offered.

In order for the school to be considered it needed to fulfill all of the following criteria:

- Public schools in the given political district
- open to every socio-economic background, ethnicity and religion
- without tuition fees
- open to boys and girls with and without physical and mental impairments

Within the region, 10 schools met these criteria. 3 of them were selected as they seemed promising, taken together, for reflecting the diversity of voices, experiences and backgrounds. In the following section I am going to describe the three schools in more detail. To preserve their anonymity, I assigned them numbers that reflected the chronological order the workshops were held.

School 1

This school is a junior high school for children between 10 and 14 years old. In this school, afternoon supervision is provided free of charge by supervisors who are trained for this occupation. They usually do not hold a position as teachers. I chose to include this school for two reasons: First, there is great diversity in regards to the ethnic background of children. Second, the school is in close proximity to the *Club of Strong Friends*' facilities and I was very positive that some children from this school would be interested in joining the program. Both, workshop 1 and 2 were held during afternoon supervision.

School 2

This school is the furthest away from the *Club of Strong Friends*' sites. Yet, it was brought to my attention as a potential research setting by a gym teacher who has been working in this school. I was informed that there was one particular class where size bullying was, amongst other issues, a problem. While this school also provides afternoon supervision, I here took the opportunity to visit during a PE class in order to seize the possibility of working with this particular class (as opposed to afternoon supervision where children from different classes participate).

School 3

This school provides education for 10 to 14 year olds as well as senior classes for students between 14 and 18 who can study for their A-levels (Matura). It also provides afternoon supervision which is led by school teachers. The afternoon supervision costs a monthly fee of 88 Euros for 5 days a week which can be an issue for low income families. Also this school is in close proximity of the *Club of Strong Friends*. I chose this school due to its' proximity and the comparably different socio-economic background of children. I however was well aware that the socio-economic background and eventually the experiences of participants could be very different compared to the other schools.

Contact development

At the end of April 2015, I reached out to the principle of school 1 and 3 via e-mail with my request to follow through the workshop series in March 2015 preferably in afternoon supervision or PE class. Both principals were very positive about the idea and forwarded my request to the persons in charge of the afternoon supervision. With them I then arranged times and dates for the sessions and ask for their help in collecting the signed parental consent forms. In the case of school 2, a colleague of mine helped to establish contact with the girls' PE teacher of the school. She offered for me to hold the workshops during PE classes and to get to know the group of children prior to the workshop. I agreed and took this opportunity to hand out the parental consent forms and to introduce myself personally one week before the first workshop was scheduled.

Content and structure of the workshop

I will now reflect upon relevant components of the workshop and relate them to my overall onto-epistemological perspective.

Workshop schedule

The workshop series has been conceptualized to consist of two subsequent sessions of 90 minutes each. To structure the session and to organize the given time sufficiently I created a schedule that would support the implementation. The workshops were conceptualized as a sequential series of two sessions in each setting. Both workshop 1 and workshop 2 followed the same overall structure. They consisted of three main parts (Opening, Core and End) which in practice should build on each other in a flexible and fluent manner.

Workshop contents

The selection of activities for the workshops was inspired by workshop curricular established by HAES scholars Kater (2004) and Steiner-Adair et al. (2005) and guided by my overall research questions.

Throughout the research process I however made several adaptations to the incorporated set of activities. The main reason for this was that some activities revealed to be unsafe in physical or emotional terms. I agree with Lykke who underlines that ethical considerations are an essential part in the profiling of research designs (Lykke 2010: 145). Thus I saw it as a moral responsibility to rework the workshop plan after each session and to critically reflect upon the consequences of every activity in order to decide if it should stay part of the workshop.

Workshop 1

In the first workshop of the sequence, my opening consisted of a short verbal introduction of myself and my research, as well as an overview of the session. To get to know each other better and to “break the ice” I used different simple ball games.

To begin with the “core activities”, I invited the children to formulate “ground rules” for our time together. I handed out a large white paper and provided pens, stickers, glue etc. so they could write and draw their wishes and ideas about how this workshop could become a safe space for everyone. The idea behind this activity was to establish a secure respectful environment. We discussed what they formulated and why respecting these rules would be important. I used their reflections to engage them in a further discussion on weight bullying which lead to the next topic, namely size diversity. These discussions were mainly intended to answer my initial research questions about weight stigma experiences. After that I handed out pictures to facilitate a debate, using pictures of people of different sizes and shapes. To end the

session, I used their discussion inputs to introduce different creative writing or drawing exercises they could choose from.

Workshop 2 (the follow up session)

The second workshop was followed through one week after the first session. In the follow up workshop I started off by restating the ground rules and a brief reflection of session 1.

The idea behind holding a sequential workshop was to capture the thoughts and ideas the first session evoked. In the second workshop, thus more time was dedicated to creative writing and drawing so that the children could bring their thoughts and own reflections to paper.

The detailed layout of the workshop schedule, where estimated time and required support materials are listed, can be found in the appendix below.

Workshop statistics

The workshops were followed through between March 18 and March 26. All in all, I conducted six workshops in three different schools, which means two sessions per setting.

In school 1 and 3, the workshops took place during afternoon supervision. In school 2, the workshop series was followed through during PE class.

I chose to exclude the follow-up sessions in school 1 and 3 from the analysis. This is as in school 1 not all children who took part in the follow-up session, returned the signed parental consent forms. In school 3, many children who had not attended the first session took part in the follow-up workshop. Hence it was impossible to pick up where we left off in session 1. Rather we had to start from a new which did not lead to the intended in-depth discussions I hoped and planned for.

Workshop participants

In school 1 five boys, at the age of eleven, from two different classes⁹ took part in the first workshop. The session was followed through during afternoon supervision while the female supervisor was present.

In school 2 twenty-one pupils, 12 boys and 9 girls at the age of eleven took part. Both session 1 and 2 were held during PE class. The boys' gym teacher was available but not in the room with us.

⁹The school system in Austria is not organized in courses. Children attend a "Klasse" together.

In school 3, twelve children from three different classes, 4 boys and 8 girls, participated in sessions 1. All of them were at the age of eleven. The afternoon supervisor, a female teacher, was present.

The workshop rehearsal

In order to see if I estimated the duration of each activity accurately, I performed a workshop test run with my work colleagues on March 2nd 2015. I wanted to rehearse the schedule in order to finalize the routine for the actual sessions and to get feedback from my colleagues who hold children's sport courses themselves on the appropriateness of planned activities.

The Empirical material

Here I will present the data that I collected through the workshops and elaborate on its use within the analysis. The empirical material comprises my intra-active workshop participation, my field diary and the creative art work (pieces of writing, drawing and painting) the children produced during the workshops. The organization of materials is realized through a thick description, a thematic analysis and an interpretation based on the theoretical thinking technologies of this study.

Intra-active research participation

The first part of the material I would like to discuss is my participation in the workshop sessions. I consider my taking part in this process as intra-active, following Barad's idea that intra-actions are capable to mutually form and transform "non-bound phenomena" (Lykke 2010: 51). This line of thought goes very well together with my post-constructionist approach to social categories as something fluid and non-rigid. As researcher and workshop leader I was very much in charge of guiding the sessions so that they fit my own needs. I was thus affecting the participants while at the same time being affected by them. Through our engagement in the workshop we produced the empirical material while forming and transforming each other through our embodied actions. Thus, I find Barad's concept very appropriate to apply as one of my methodologies of data collection.

Field diary

The second part of my material is my field diary which consists of notes and reflections that I wrote during and after the workshops. My field notes were written with pen and paper and

include key-words, phrases, thoughts and observations in regards to the sessions. After the workshops, I used my field notes to reflect further on my role and performance as workshop leader. I transferred these notes and reflections to the computer the same day the workshop was held in order to document my bodily and emotional experience as vividly as possible. By employing Haraway's methodological principle of diffraction (Lykke 2010: 154), I tried to bring as many aspects of my embodied being into the description. I found this particularly useful to become aware of the many intersections I moved through in the process but at the same time to become aware of the limited perspectives my embodied situatedness allowed for. I chose to use my field diary as a component of the empirical material as I find it a valuable instrument to collect and prepare material for the thick description later on. The main purpose of the field diary has thus been to inform the thick description of the research process but it also served to adjust the agenda for upcoming sessions. An alternative could have been to record and/or video tape the workshops. However, I chose not to record it for practical reasons like the issue of placing the microphone during the non-stationary workshop activities. Also I felt writing from my memories more in line with my claim for intra-action than analyzing video tapes from a seemingly disengaged observer position outside. Furthermore, I think that the use of a field diary and the way it was prepared aligns my research very well with the agential realist thought about the self-reflexive researcher. The document is stored together in my computer. I will refer to the field diary as (FD [date]).

Creative art work (Materials produced during the workshops)

The last part of my empirical material consists of the creative art pieces (drawings, writings and collages) that were produced during the workshops. The first creative writing task was conducted in the form of collectively creating a poster with common ground rules. I will refer to these materials as *Mind Maps* (MM [Workshop-chiper]).

On the second occasion, I asked the participants to reflect upon the question "I feel happy in my body because..." and "I feel happy in my body when...". Here, the children could state their answers in written form, create drawings or do both.

In the third "creative art task" I asked the children to reflect on their idols or the person they look up to. I encouraged them to think about what this person or non-human being looks like, his character, attitude etc. and to bring it to paper in their preferred form.

As an optional activity, the pupils also had the possibility to create a life size collage of their own bodies. Therefore one child laid down on a large sheet of paper that was placed on the floor so that another child could trace his or her body frame. The children could then decide if

they wanted to write something positive about themselves “on their bodies” or draw or glue pictures on it. I will refer to these *Creative Writing materials* as (CW [Workshop-chiper, task number]).

The reasons I chose to collect creative work pieces and to include them in the analysis are several. First, I hoped that I could evoke and capture emotions and feelings which are usually not encouraged to share in a class room setting. Also, I envisioned these writing and drawing tasks to be a safe way to learn about personal experience as they could choose how far they wanted to share it with the group. Secondly, I see “art” as a tool for communicating that which cannot be verbalized. Parts of this material that I considered as relevant found entrance in the thick description to support the narrative of the workshops. Especially pieces that addressed weight or body size or expressed thoughts about body norms were of particular interest and therefore included in the thick description to be analyzed as part of the workshop. The foto protocol of these materials is stored in my computer.

Thick description

The thick description consists of my field diary and the material from the writing tasks the children performed during the workshops. It is a detailed elaboration on what I observed and heard in the field which should also serve to paint a picture of the context. Thus I will lay out information I deemed relevant such as what the space looked like, perceived quality of social relations and intra- and interactions within the group.

Inspired by Polkinghorne’s *Narrative knowing* (1988) I consider and treat the thick description as a “narrative” that tells the story of the workshops. Thus, the description shall not be seen as a “factual account” but rather a reflection of my personal focus and my interpretations from a limited and intra-active perspective. I chose to apply this method as I find it fitting to the feminist researcher’s aspiration for accountability.

Thematic and theoretical analysis

On the basis of the narratives that are created through the thick description, a thematic analysis has then been performed. Therefore, the text has been divided into themes. After that, I approached the material from a theoretical analytical perspective that links the overall aims and research questions of this study to the theoretical thinking technologies presented above.

Analysis

I shall now introduce the storylines of the four workshops that I selected for the analysis. I will account for the sessions in the chronological order they took place. Each workshop is followed by a short reflection which is excerpted from my field diary.

Workshop I (Session 1, School 1)

The first workshop was arranged to be followed through in the afternoon supervision classroom. When I entered, I found that it was a bright room with a black board, a sofa and several student desks which however were not organized in rows like in usual classrooms. Three boys, each sitting on an individual desk, were occupied with homework. Irene¹⁰, the afternoon teacher with whom I arranged the workshop was already awaiting me. She welcomed me and informed me that five boys from three different classes would participate in the workshop. For two semesters, they had been spending several afternoons together which meant that they knew each other quite well. Two boys, Hari and Attila were lounging on the sofa playing with their mobiles. They were whispering in each other's ears, laughing and giggling. "Jungle!", Hari burst out. "Jungle!" Attila repeated even louder and both broke out into laughter. They would have their "special phase", Irene explained, where everything was sexualized and therefore incredibly funny for them. "Jungle" was their latest synonym for vagina. Irene instructed them to put the mobiles away. As they did not follow her instructions, Irene told them a couple more times and the boys finally let the mobiles slide into their pockets.

Andreas, one of those who were sitting over their homework, approached me and asked what we were going to do. He was shorter and heavier than the other children. When Hari and Attila saw Andreas talking to me, they seemed to take notice of me for the first time. Both came over and start to tickle Andreas, on his belly. Andreas was obviously very annoyed and displeased by it. He tried to make them stop by pushing their hands away.

Irene who witnessed the scene, clapped her hands to announce that the workshop was about to begin and that the boys should be quiet.

Introduction and workshop outline

¹⁰ The names of all persons have been changed.

I told the group to form a circle with chairs. My instructions were obviously not clear enough and the setting up was rather chaotic. Me and Irene were busy directing children with their chairs. Attila and Hari seized the moment to start another tickling “attack” which was again directed towards Andreas’ belly. As the boys finally sat down on their chairs, I introduced the purpose and agenda of the workshop and ask if there were any questions. Hassan raised his hand and asked if we would also talk about the issue of drinking Vodka. The others laughed. Hassan was obviously stressed by the fact that some of his class mates have been experimenting with drinking alcohol.

Safe space – ground rules

I introduced the task of creating a poster where they should write down ideas and rules of a) how they imagined a safe space where they would feel comfortable and b) what it would take to make this workshop such a place. I placed the sheet of paper on the floor in the middle of our circle. We got up from our chairs and the boys started to draw and write. The answers they wrote were quite different. Attila and Hari wrote about what they would find cool to have in an actual room. For example a TV set or a trampoline. Andreas mainly reflected on “safe space rules”. He wrote: “No fooling around”, “No teasing”, “Not insulting others”, “Get along well with each other”. He turned to me and explained that some in the group would be fooling around which he did not like.

Hassan wrote “No Vodka drinking”.

Group discussion

To facilitate and start the group discussion I had planned to provide green sticker patches so they could indicate which statements were especially important to them. Hassan asked if they could also have some of the red stickers from my box. I handed them some red stickers which I regretted immediately when I noticed that they start to put red dots all over Andreas’ comments. Hari and Attila read out loud what had been written on the poster. I noticed that their reading skills were rather poor. Especially Hari frequently got stuck and needed help from Attila in grasping the sense of the whole phrases. Hari and Attila laughed about some comments and voiced their disagreement about others. When they came across Andreas’ statements, they ran over to him and tickled him on his belly again which Andreas tried to avoid by telling them off and covering his belly with his arms. Irene told them to stop immediately.

I suggested getting back on our chairs to discuss the poster. I noticed that they got calmer and more attentive when they were sitting in their chairs. The tickling and teasing stopped and they

were actually very attentive. After discussing our wishes and needs in regards to the workshop space I lead the discussion over to the topic of body weight teasing and their experience with it. Andreas stated in a manner that should leave no doubt that neither discrimination nor teasing or laughing due to body size would take place here in this school.

He explained that there would be many fat kids in his PE class but no one would ridicule them due to their size or weight. This was a fact that he was absolutely certain about. He reckoned that maybe in school X and school Y – he named two other schools in the area – this might be the case but for sure not in this school. I looked around if anyone wanted to add something to Andreas' comment but Attila only shrugged and Hari also shook his head. Although I had hoped for further discussions I moved on to the next task.

Discussing pictures

I presented the pictures of models, athletes and celebrities where some did, and others did not, conform to hegemonic gendered body ideals. I asked the boys to go through the pile of pictures and informed them that they should share their thoughts about whether or not and why these people could or couldn't be role models or idols and how these pictures would make them feel about their own bodies. Hari and Attila put their heads together and looked at the pictures while Andreas said that he would look at the pictures later. Attila stopped at the photo of a young white male boxer in fighting pose with no shirt on. Attila complimented the guy's "six-pack" and stated that he would want to look like that.

When the picture of a female weight lifter was passed on to them, Hari broke into furious laughter. Attila joined in by jumping up from his chair, yelling "fat cow! Oh god! So fat! What a fat cow!". Telling them about the woman's achievement at the Olympics and her weight lifting career seemed to fall on death ears. So I put the picture away and they continued flicking through the rest of the pile. They came across a photo of a large black male baseball player. Hari described the athlete as nigger, Attila nodded and they continued without further commenting on the man's body weight or size. When they looked at a photo of soccer player David Beckham posing for an underwear campaign Attila emphasized that "this was gay". He showed it to Hari who confirmed that posing like that was "absolutely gay". He turned to me to ask if I knew what "gay" meant but did not wait for my response as the picture of Paris Hilton had already caught their attention. Attila stated that she was "hot". Hari agreed and stated that he wanted to have babies with her when he was grown-up. To a male model posing in underwear Attila referred to as porn star and both boys shook their heads and laughed. They passed the

pictures back to me and announced that they would rather go out and play football now. So I thanked them and sent them off with Irene.

Andreas, who had sat beside us watching what was going on in silence, now also started to take a closer look at the pictures. He scrutinized the picture that showed the actress Melissa McCarthy on the red carpet. I asked him what he was thinking. He seemed indifferent when he concluded that although she would be quite pretty, she was too fat for TV. Her weight would be something she needed to work on, he said. Time was already almost over so I said thanks to everybody. We scheduled the second workshop for the upcoming week. Irene assured me that the next workshop would presumably be very different. In the Monday group there are more girls. It's always different when there are not exclusively boys in the group, Irene said.

Reflection

I was puzzled about the many occasions children used to tease each other. I felt sad that I had not been able to provide a safer space and I was very insecure about how to go about the exercise of discussing pictures. I had hoped for more room for discussions. As an adaptation for the next workshop, I decided to give clearer instructions on how to give each other feedback and to allow for less turmoil through keeping the discussions stationary and children seated in the circle of chairs.

Workshop II (Session 1, School 2)

I arrived about fifteen minutes prior to the workshop to meet the gym teacher whose class the workshop was supposed to be followed through in. In PE class, the pupils were separated in a girl and a boy group and accordingly supervised by a female and a male teacher. On that day, only Patrick, the boys' teacher, was present.

For the purpose of the workshop the two groups were united which meant that more than twenty children – twelve boys and nine girls would participate. They knew each other well as they had been attending the same class for two years.

I remember from my school days, having PE with the boys was always somehow exciting and extraordinary for everyone involved. Usually those who were good in PE were looking forward to it while others dreaded the co-educative lessons. Patrick filled me in that in this particular group many did not get along so well with each other. Especially one boy, Noah, would cause a lot of trouble.

Having decided after workshop 1 to stay mainly seated in a chair-circle during the workshop, I asked Patrick for chairs. He told me that there would be none and that the children should sit on the floor. Remembering the turmoil from workshop 1, I noticed that this made me nervous. Me and Patrick picked up the children from their classroom and guided them to the gym locker rooms. The girls and boys lined up in a row outside the classroom while Patrick was yelling instructions. It felt quite intimidated as he was very loud and looked very serious. The children themselves, however, did not seem to be too bothered by it although they payed close attention. We headed to the gym and after changing, the children lined up against the wall of the gym, waiting for further instructions.

Introduction and workshop outline

I introduced myself and asked the children to sit down in a circle in the middle of the gym. Patrick instructed the children that after the workshop they would get the chance to play dodge ball if they behaved well. If they did not they would do some of the well-known “wrist training” – which meant copying the school policy by hand. He told me that he would be next door and that I could call him anytime should I need something.

I introduced the first game which was intended for learning names and breaking the ice. In the first round, the children were very calm and attentive. They seemed to enjoy the game which made me feel relaxed and relieved as the workshop flowed was smoothly.

However, less than five minutes into the workshop, some children started to “break out” of the circle. Some of the boys started running around, kicking and hitting each other. From that point on countless incidents of teasing and name calling occurred. The mediation of conflicts took up a lot of the time which frustrated me. Also, some of the girls seemed very annoyed by the turmoil that was created by the fighting boys. Klara and Lisa who still wanted to continue the game we had started voiced their discontent.

Safe space – ground rules

I tried to follow the agenda through as far as possible and introduce the next task to get their attention back. I asked them to design a collective “safe space/ground rules”- poster. However, not everyone wanted to engage in this activity. Some boys opted out saying that they did not see the point in creating such rules. Instead they were running around hitting each other with the pencils I handed out. Klara and Lisa asked if they could create their own poster as they did not want to contribute to a collective one. Some other children chose to create their own too.

Group discussion

After a while I called everyone back to sit down in a circle in order to discuss the posters they created. “No bullying” was written on one paper. “Not calling anyone a bullying victim”, on another. Simon, one of the boys who did not participate in writing the posters, yelled out grumpily that this would not even be an insult and that the teasing should just be seen as a kind of joking. Sarah, who wrote the statement yelled back that it would of course be an insult. Some girls and boys jumped in to defend their friend’s position. They were getting louder and louder while they kept throwing their arguments in each other’s faces. I tried to facilitate a discussion by emphasizing that even if a comment was just intended to be funny, others could find it offensive and be hurt by it. I asked the group if they could think of an example for that. Paul, the largest boy in the group raised his hand to answer. He said he had been teased due to his weight. He taped on his belly and sighed.

Just as I started to make a round to discuss such experience further, I got interrupted by Noah who reported that someone had hidden his wallet. He seemed very desperate and frustrated so I felt that I had to help him sort this out. A group of girls reminded me that they still hadn’t had the chance to present their posters which made them feel very annoyed and disappointed. I tried to give them the floor while half of my attention was going to solve the “hidden purse issue”. “Don’t bad mouth anyone as ugly, fat or slim”, Alice, the largest girl in the group had written. This kind of teasing would just not be right, she explained. Being over-weight would be something a person just could not help. She did not identify herself as being large, describing her figure as a little bit heavier but still ok. Unfortunately, we could not discuss this further, as some of the boys who threw and kicked balls through the gym frequently hit those who were still sitting in the circle. One of the boys who were running around came over to me and asked me when we would finally play doge ball as promised. I explained that there was only one more workshop activity planned and asked them if they would be willing to sit down in a circle for this very last task. They agreed and sat down.

Discussing pictures

I passed the pictures around and tried to make a round to make sure that the girls would get a chance to talk and be heard this time. Peter took a pile of pictures and flicked through them as if he was very pressed for time: “Fat, gay, fat, fat, hot, a bitch,” he commented. “Alright Let’s play dodge ball” he yelled jumped up grabbed a ball and called on his mates to play with him. Three boys followed his request and left the circle. Meanwhile the girls discussed the pictures among each other. Also Paul remained seated holding some pictures in his hands. I tried to take

up the round again with those children who were still motivated to discuss. However, some of the boys who were running around started to tease Noah who was also already waiting for the dodge ball game to begin. Noah defended himself by hitting and kicking them so I had to call the discussion off. I promised to take this activity up again in the next workshop and we started to make arrangements for the dodge ball game.

Reflection

After the workshop I felt overwhelmed and sad for not being able to follow through as planned. The children in this group were obviously used to yelling teachers and punishment and someone in power who guarded the boundaries for them. I found out later that the male gym teacher – although yelling and punishing - was one of their favorite teachers. As a consequence, I planned to ask Patrick to be present in the follow up session in order to ensure safety.

Workshop III (Session 1, School 3)

The workshop was planned to take place in the class room of the afternoon supervision. Silvia, the teacher and afternoon supervisor awaited me in the hall. We shook hands and proceeded to the classroom of the afternoon supervision to meet the children. Eight girls and four boys from three different classes were about to take part. They seemed to know each other well.

While afternoon supervision is still a school-based program it seemed to me more relaxed than regular classes. As far as I understood from the talks with Silvia, afternoon teachers are usually more “laid-back” and children are encouraged to have fun and play outside after their homework is finished. Silvia agreed to participate and to oversee the workshop.

Introduction and workshop outline

In the class room chairs and desks were organized in rows to face the black board. After welcoming the children, I thus asked them to arrange a circle with the chairs. Two girls, Sandra and Elli were very curious and excitedly asking what we were going to do. Ben, one of the boys also came closer and scrutinized my prepared posters thoroughly.

As we were all settled, we played a quick ball game to get to know each other. I was very pleased that the game was running smoothly, the way I had intended it.

Safe space – ground rules

After that, I introduced the task of the safe-space poster creation. I placed the big sheet of paper in the middle of the circle and asked what a safe space meant to them. After about 5 minutes I asked them to finish so that we could discuss what they had written.

Some comments caused disagreement as some children found them irrelevant, not important or just “plain stupid”. I asked what we should agree on if someone violated the rules and what they usually do in school if the class rules are not followed. Silvia who had been taken a seat in the circle too sighed and said that teachers would usually ignore violations as they “could not do anything”. So the group agreed that we would remind the person violating the rules and tell him off.

Group discussion

I tried to open a discussion on body weight diversity by asking what came to their mind in regards to bodily variety.

“Sumos are fat”, Ben blurted out. While most of the children laughed, some were looking rather uncertain to me and Silvia. Silvia herself seemed not quite sure how to intervene and started out to tell Ben off and calm those who laughed down.

I jumped in and said that though it would be correct that some people would have more fat some less fat on their bodies. Reassured by my comment, Ben defended himself by saying that it was just an observation to state that Sumos are fat. I nodded and asked what he thinks about why people would find comments like this still unjust. Ben answered that it would be not right to ridicule people for being fat but that fat was not a swearword per se. There would also be kids who were sumo athletes and therefore fat.

“Yes, I AM FAT!”, Elli interrupted the so far calm conversation, which made everyone look at her. As she had the attention from the group, she jumped up from her chair, threw her arms in the air and yelled that she would need to lose weight. Ben shook his head in disagreement and told her that she wasn’t fat and that she was fine.

Klara and Sandra, both slim as well joined Elli’s rant. Klara declared that she was fat too which Sandra commented by moaning that she would be fatter than Elli and Klara together. “No, look! I am fat!”, Elias, a very slim boy stated. He pulled up his shirt half-way and squeezed his naked belly. Some boys laughed and Elias laughed too. Elli, Klara, and Ben also started to lift their shirts to grab their bellies with both hands showing the others how much fat there presumably was. The children obviously enjoyed the acting out and had fun showing their bellies. While some of the other children who did not lift their shirts laughed, Celine, a larger girl and Jonas, a short slim boy did not chime in the laughter nor the shirt lifting. While Celine attentively

watched what was going on she crossed her arms and hands in front of her belly. After observing what was going on among his mates, Jonas turned to me, so that only I could hear when he said that he actually wish that he would not to be so thin.

Group discussion 2

I introduced the next activity and the scene of showing bellies ended. We made a round and I asked about experiences with being different, worries about one's appearance and how participants would handle negative comments.

Jonas had been ridiculed because he was too thin. Elli said that she had been laughed at because she was Russian. Silvia recalled that she had been very tall when she was young which made her a target for bullies. Klara said that others had laughed about her new t-shirt. Sandra told us that she defended a girl who was teased and thus became the bullies' target herself.

Most of the children seemed very eager to share their thoughts. Yet Celine remained rather silent and passed when it was her turn. One girl said that pimples would also be a reason why people would be ridiculed. I asked what they thought could be the actual reason why people ridicule others. "Looking different. Not normal", Sandra answered. I asked what "not normal" would mean. "Not like the others", Sandra was quick to answer.

Optional activities

I introduced the activity to trace one's own body frame on paper and fill it out with five things one liked about oneself. The alternative option was the creative writing task where children were asked to reflect on the statements "I feel good in my body when..." and "I feel good in my body because..."

Klara, Sandra and Elli opted for the drawing task. I assisted them in drawing each others contours on paper. Klara, who's frame was drawn first looked at it and commented:" Oh god! Am I fat!" She turned to me to tell me her weight loss story where she once went on a diet because she considered herself too fat. Then she thought that she was too thin and gained weight and then she thought that she was too fat again which led her to end up very confused. Sandra who overheard the conversation told us that she is on a diet right now. I asked her what this implied. "Trying to eat less candy, more vegetables and fruits", she explained. Klara said that she would definitely need to go on a diet too. When I asked her why she should do that she sighed and replied in a theatric tone that she could not fit in her jeans anymore. Elli picked up on Klara's moaning tone and stated that she was also getting fat lately. When I asked what made

her think so she grabbed her thighs to demonstrate that what she said was true. “Well it’s true! Look! I am fat! Fat and ugly”.

Creative writing

Elias, who chose the writing activity wrote: “I feel good in my body because.... I am very thin.”

Discussing pictures

In the last group activity we discussed the pictures of models, athletes and TV stars. Ben pointed out that these pictures were digitally altered and therefore not real. Klara added that people in magazines always looked young, stylish, thin, with flawless skin and white shiny teeth. Sandra looked at the pile of pictures I handed out and stated that female celebrities would always be thin tall and beautiful while the men would be ugly. Klara and Elli giggled. When the pile of pictures was passed on to Elli I asked her what she was thinking. She was rather quickly sifting through the pictures of large people but scrutinized the pictures of very slim light skinned actresses. I asked her what she was thinking. She looked up and said: “I feel fat”. Rather, she would like to look like the singer Ariana Grande who would have a fabulous slim physique, Elli contemplated. The bell rang. I forgot to look at the time. Other children came flogging in and Silvia had to rush off and also some of the children were already out the door.

Reflection

I was exhausted but happy that parts of the workshop were going very smoothly. I was pleased and deeply stunned by the depth of the discussions we had. Yet I was frustrated that I did not manage to connect with Celine who remained more or less completely silent throughout the entire workshop. I was wondering how I could have better handled the “fat talk” of the slim girls. I was also annoyed that I ran out of time.

Workshop IV (Session 2, School 2)

Workshop IV was the follow up session I conducted with the children from workshop 2. Like for the first session, the workshop had been intended to be held during PE class. Thus, I met Patrick, the boys’ gym teacher prior to the lesson and we went to pick up the children from their classroom. Patrick waited till all of the children had lined up in front of him and started yelling the instructions. In order to have a productive session he wanted the children to form two groups. One group would have the workshop with me while the other group should occupy

themselves silently in the other half of the gym. Patrick and I accompanied the children to the locker rooms and waited for them in the gym. When they were readily dressed they lined up in a row as they had in the first session.

Introduction and workshop outline

I explained the outline of the workshop and repeated that taking part was on a voluntary basis. Patrick urged those who wanted to opt out of the workshop to be quiet. Otherwise they would have to do some wrist training, he yelled. The children started to gather in the two groups. It did not take long till all the girls were seated in one half of the gym and the boys in the other with a two-meter-wide gap between the groups. Paul, the larger boy who talked about his weight bullying experience in the first session seemed interested to participate in the workshop. Yet the workshop group was constituted only by girls. So Paul eventually stayed with the boys. Patrick provided the boys with balls, skate boards and mats, reminded them to be quiet and left.

Group discussion

I asked the girls to sit down in a circle in “our half” of the gym. For the first activity I asked them to put their ideas about body diversity onto a collective poster. They came up with descriptions like tall, short and thin. Alice, the largest girl in the group discussed with Klara how to describe people of size. Both were thinking that the word “fat” would be offensive. Alice asked if it was ok if she wrote “Some people are too thin and some people are slightly too...”. She hesitated for a second and then continued: “...slightly too robust?” She turned to me and said that she was looking for a word other than fat because calling someone fat would be offensive. She then decided to go with robust. Underneath her comment she added in big capital letters: “All people are alright just the way they are.”

I emphasized that we are indeed all different which should be a great thing. At that point, Bianca, a tall slim girl who had been very silent so far wanted to comment on that. She said that while this might be true, she had been repeatedly bad mouthed for being very slim. She said that she had been desperately trying to gain weight so that others would stop mocking her as beanpole, but had not succeeded. I did want to go in to further detail on that but we were interrupted by the boys. They had been getting very loud in “their half” and balls were frequently kicked towards the workshop group. Two of the girls rushed off to report to Patrick who arrived and assigned the boys with “wrist training”.

After Patrick had left again, Paul came over to sit down with me and the girls to join the workshop. He said he did not do anything and therefore would not deserve to be punished like the others.

Group discussion 2

I asked them to share with the group or write on paper who or what they thought might be helpful in handling bullying due to body size. Klara, Lisa and Alice who seemed to be very close, agreed that talking to a friend would definitely help. Bianca, who seemed to get along less well with the three girls emphasized teachers or her big sister would help. When it was Paul's turn he shrugged and said that boys would not talk about their feelings. I asked if there would be anyone else besides peers that he could imagine being comfortable talking to. He went through the suggestions the girls had made. Teachers wouldn't be an option he said, as they would only punish the whole group if an incident was reported to them. All in all, Paul could not think of anyone or anything that might really help in such a situation.

Optional activities

The discussion rounds did not seem very appealing to Paul any longer.

Paul asked if he could opt out to play with the skate boards Patrick had provided. Now that the other boys were busy copying the school policy it was his chance to get his hands on them which according to him, he never had before. I asked him if he would quickly leave me a written comment on the questions "I feel good in my body when/because...". He agreed and without hesitation he wrote: "I feel good in my body... if I lost weight". Then he went off to play with the skate boards. The lesson was about to end so I attempted a quick wrap up and made sure that they had my contact details should they have any further questions.

Reflection

On the same day in the evening Bianca contacted me by phone. She asked when I was coming back and when we would have the next session. I was a bit irritated as I realized that I raised hopes in her. I told her that the workshops in this format were over and that it would take some time till the actual project *Club of Strong Friends* was running. I asked her if she had the possibility to talk to a liaison teacher. She affirmed which made me feel at least a little relieved.

Summary

I have now chronologically described the workshops based on my field notes from my intra-active participation. Below I will continue the thick description of this material by structuring it according to themes in order to perform a thematic interpretation.

Thematic interpretation

In the following section I will continue the thick description by organizing the material in themes. I have used these themes as way of clustering information from my field notes that I have interpreted as recurring and standing out across the workshops. I will indicate when I interpret themes as related to specific components of the workshop. Still, I know that all kinds of organizing is an imagination deriving from my own embodied and limited perceptions.

Bellies as point of attraction

In three workshops, situations occurred where bellies became the point of attraction. I will now discuss these scenes and how I see them as related in more detail.

In workshop I, I interpret this theme as not occurring in relation to a specific exercise. Rather it can be seen as an act of teasing or silencing a mate using his size as a catalyst. On several occasions I observed that two boys repeatedly tickled their larger friend on his belly. It happened several times throughout the workshop and it was exclusively the larger boy's belly that was targeted. Once I interpret it as their way to indicate their disagreement with the larger boy's ideas (see theme below). Another time the tickling occurred during the turmoil that arose while we discussed pictures (see below). In my field diary I described these events as "tickling-attacks" (FD [18-3-15]). The boy who was the target did seemingly not enjoy these attacks. He tried to defend himself by covering his belly with both arms, pushing his mates' hands away and demanding that they should stop (ibid).

In workshop II, the theme occurred in response to a discussion round where children talked about their experiences with bullying. A boy who identified himself as "overweight" stated that he had been experiencing ridiculing due to his weight. He squeezed his belly to indicate that *this* was the reason he has been teased.

The third episode took place in workshop III during the discussion round on body diversity. I interpret it as indirect response to the exercise. In my field diary I call this scene the "belly showing scene" (FD [23-3-15]). While the group discussed the possibility that "fat" could be used as a neutral value-free term, one slim tall girl disrupted the discussion by announcing that indeed *she* was fat and in need of losing weight. Many of her peers strongly disagreed,

reassuring her that she was alright and that she was not fat. Rather it would be them who needed to lose some extra pounds. The tall slim girl lifted her shirt to show her belly, squeezed it with both hands and said: "...but look!" One of her friends also lifted her shirt and said: "you are fine! Look! What should *I* say?!" It dawned on them that this was actually quite fun so three or four other slim children lifted their shirts in a joking mood to grab their bellies and show the group "how fat" they were. The only large girl in the group stayed silent throughout this scene. Neither did she engage in the mutual shirt-lifting nor did she appear to find it particularly funny. She interlocked her arms in front of her to cover her belly.

To summarize, bellies repeatedly became signifiers for larger bodies during workshops II and III. I interpret both situations as being indirectly evoked by an exercise. In workshop I, I reason that it was not related to specific exercises just yet related to the workshop in a wider sense as it can be evaluated as weight bullying.

I interpret this theme on the one hand, as being closely related to the theme "feeling uncomfortable". The larger boy in workshop II himself turned the attention to his belly when he explained that he experienced bullying due to his weight. The larger girl in workshop III on the other hand, seemed as if she hoped that covering her belly would keep the attention away from her. She looked displeased that others lifted their shirts to show off their bellies. Also, the tickling attacks made the larger boy in workshop I seemingly uncomfortable. In this case I see a connection to the theme "feeling uncomfortable" below.

On the other hand I see the scene in workshop III related to "the own body as laughing matter". While some of the slim children in workshop III seemed to enjoy the attention that they deliberately drew to their bodies, for the larger girl this attention and joking about supposedly "fat bellies" seems to me related to unpleasant feelings.

The own body as laughing matter

I interpret this theme as being particularly present in workshop III. In this workshop slim children frequently used their own bodies - which they openly declared as "fat" - as embodied signifiers for jokes and joking about body weight and size. I am now going to look at the "belly showing scene" where this theme was especially present.

The above described "belly showing" was performed by slim and weight norm-conforming children only. There were 4 or 5 children lifting their shirts cheerily comparing their belly fat. While some children did not participate in the shirt lifting, they seemed to enjoy what was going

on. However, there were also children who did not laugh and who remained silent throughout this scene. One larger girl in workshop III crossed her arms in front of her belly and approached the scene in a skeptical way.

I think that this performance is not entirely separable from the theme “expressing dissatisfaction” and “aiming to alter the own body” below. I can imagine that the slim children’s reaction could stem from body insecurity and dissatisfaction those who also conform to the norm may experience. However, I think that there is a difference to the discomfort larger children expressed and experienced when they talked about being teased due to their weight.

To conclude, the joking about non-normative bodies that was very present in all the other workshops was noticeably absent in workshop III. Rather the children, the majority of whom conformed to the weight norm, presented their own bodies as “too fat” and therefore offered it as target for fat jokes and jokes about large bodies. Thus I think that there is a connection to the theme “ridiculing other bodies”. This is because the children only pretended that their bodies were large and joked about fat bodies against this backdrop.

Laughing about others’ bodies

I focus on two different manifestations of “laughing about other peers or peoples’ bodies” which were present throughout the workshops. On the one hand, I interpret this theme as repeatedly occurring in reaction to the task of discussing pictures. On the other hand, being laughed at was often mentioned when participants described their experience with body shaming and weight bullying. I will now explain some concrete examples of these two different manifestations.

Laughing about pictures of large bodies

In workshop I and II the reactions to the pictures were very similar. In both cases, it was solely slim boys who broke into furious laughter about the pictures of people who did not conform to hegemonic weight norms.

In my field diary I describe the scene in workshop I as a “turmoil like” situation: The two boys who had been repeatedly tickling their friend started scanning through the pictures. One held up the photograph of Paris Hilton announcing: “I am going to make babies with her when I am grown up!” A picture of a large female weightlifter was next. The boy who saw it first jumped up and ran around jelling “what a fat cow, oh god she’s so fat!” He did not calm down till the

supervisor told him to be quiet and sit down again. The larger boy in the group however, did not engage in the furious laughter of his peers. He critically examined the pictures in silence while the other two were running around waving with pictures of large people, having a blast on their behalf.” (FD [18-3-15])

In workshop II, the pictures caused almost the same reactions as in workshop I. Those slim boys who had not already opted out of the exercises broke into furious laughter, throwing pictures and swear words around. Meanwhile the girls and the larger boy in this group scrutinized the pictures calmly, eager to discuss them with me.

In contrast, the pictures did not provoke laughter or turmoil in workshop III. Rather, the group examined the pictures critically, problematized weight and beauty standards and engaged in a discussion on normativities.

In my field diary I recall the conversation as follows: One boy concluded that the pictures of slender celebrities and models are problematic because they are photoshopped. Other children agreed and one girl said that the people depicted were not real or were depicted differently to how they looked in real life. Another girl reasoned that she could imagine why people would laugh about the appearance of others – for example about larger children. “They look different. Not so normal”, she said (FD [23-3-15]).

Experience of being laughed at and ridiculed

The experience of ridicule due to their body weight was reported by participants in workshop II and III.

In workshop II a large boy and a slim tall girl described their experience with body shaming. The boy explained that he had been frequently ridiculed in PE class for his size. The girl stated that children in school often made fun of her due to her skinny frame. “They would call me stick-figure and beanpole but I just can’t gain weight no matter how much I eat”, she explained (FD [19-3-15]).

In workshop IV, two larger girls discussed being laughed at and called names in school due to their weight. One of their female classmates jumped in reassuring them they were just fine the way they were and that those who called them names would be stupid idiots anyway (FD [26-3-15]).

To summarize, this theme showed up in two different manifestations. On the one hand laughing about large bodies occurred as a direct response to an exercise during the workshop. On the other hand, participants recalled the experiences from the past when they had been laughed at due to their weight. The slim boys in workshop I and II engaged in collective ridiculing of non-

normative bodies. Especially the picture of the female weight lifter provoked strong reactions. On the opposite end, the children in workshop III remained all in all much calmer and did not laugh that openly about the depicted bodies. In this setting however, self-critique and mocking their own perceived weight flaws was very dominant. Experiencing ridicule is flowing into the next theme that I am going to develop below.

Wish for mutual respect

The wish for mutual respect and the “rule” of not laughing about each other was presented as a mutual safe space rule across all workshops. In workshop II, a large girl emphasized the ground rule that no one should be exposed due to hir body size.

I interpret this theme as being related to the experience of body shaming in the past (see theme above) and as direct response to the exercise of establishing common safe space rules. I am now going to look into some examples in more detail.

In workshop II one larger girl very clearly expressed her wish for a “bullying and name calling free space” very clearly. On the safe space rules poster she wrote: “Don’t badmouth someone as fat or thin”; “No laughing about others”; and “Don’t exclude others” (MM II c).

In a creative writing exercise in the follow up workshop this girl wrote further: “Some [people] are very thin others are a little bit too heavy. We are all friends we just don’t know it yet.” (CW II 1).

In workshop I, the wish for mutual respect was brought forward by the larger boy. On the poster of safe space rules he wrote: “Get along well with each other”; “Respect each other even though you do not like each other” (MM I). Two of his mates however dismissed his idea by putting red dots all over his writing.

In general, the creation of ground rules seemed to be more important to some children. Across all workshops, it was noticeable that usually slim boys opted out of this exercise or seemed less interested in engaging.

Expressing (dis)comfort in relation to the own body weight

Feelings of comfort and discomfort with the own body weight were described during the workshops on several occasions. I am now going to interpret this theme as participants’ more or less directly articulated or written responses to different exercises.

Despite the absence of directly expressed bias against actual people of size, the children in workshop III and especially slim and weight norm conforming girls voiced their dissatisfaction with their own body weight. For example, one girl described her dissatisfaction with her weight and explained to me her efforts to first lose perceived extra pounds and then gain weight which eventually left her feeling confused. Another girl voiced her discomfort with her weight as she could not fit in her jeans anymore. She shared her planned resolution with the group which was to go on a diet. I see both statements indirectly related to an exercise. They occurred during the discussion round on weight diversity. I see them as related to the wish to alter their own body which the girls tried to achieve by dieting (FD [23-3-15]). In contrast, a slim boy in workshop III turned to me while some of his mates compared their belly fat in the “belly showing” scene. He said that he actually wished to not be as skinny as he was (FD [23-3-15]).

Throughout the workshops, children also described feelings of well-being and contentment with their body weight. For example, one boy in workshop III wrote as response to the creative writing task that he felt good in his body because he was very thin (CW III 1). In contrast, a larger boy’s answer in workshop IV was that he would feel good in his body if he lost weight (CW IV 3).

A girl in workshop IV wrote: “I feel good in my body when I get compliments” (CW IV 4).

In these examples the children linked a sense of wellbeing with being slim, conforming to the weight norm and getting positive comments on their appearance. On the contrary, evaluating oneself or being read by others as fat or too heavy can be interpreted as a feeling of discomfort. This self-evaluation and experience of being othered was on, various occasions, linked to the wish to change the body through losing weight or even more precisely losing weight through dieting. Although blatant ridiculing of large bodies did not happen in workshop III, many of the slim girls looked very critically at their own bodies and evaluated themselves rather than others as too fat and therefore in need to change.

Aim to change the climate

I interpret the efforts to change the climate of interactions as being closely related to the reported experience of weight bullying and teasing. Those children who reported experiences of teasing also welcomed the opportunity to establish common safe space rules. I interpret this theme as mainly related to the task of creating a safe space poster. I am now going to describe situations where this theme was present in more detail.

In workshop III the children did not create just one but three posters where they wrote down their ideas for a safer space. In workshop I and II some children expressed a very strong wish of having a more respectful class climate, where children would be treated equally regardless of their weight. A larger girl in workshop II wrote that “overweight” children should not be badmouthed as it was “not their fault that they were overweight”.

Some children however were more eager to negotiate a common safe space than others. Some children in workshop II did not want to engage in this kind of exercise at all. Also in workshop I, some children appeared less willing to engage in the exercise. The larger boy wrote that a safe space would mean that one should “not insult others” and “get along well with each other” (MM I). Those boys who size-wise conformed to the “norm” were pondering over the idea of having a TV set or a trampoline in this actual safe space (MM I).

I think that this opting out could be interpreted as not feeling particularly in need of changing the situation or the environment. It could however also be indicative of a feeling of despair and resignation of not believing that establishing such rules would change anything for the better.

The girls in workshop II appreciated the idea of creating their own safe space rules but did not want to contribute to a collective poster. Beside the “main” poster, they thus created their own colorful version which they were very excited to present and discuss. They were very frustrated that their class mates were not willing to listen to them and that some boys dismissed their suggestions as irrelevant.

Scrutinizing the safe space posters, it can be concluded that in many cases the participants focused on improving interrelations and interactions in order to render the space safer. I interpret this theme as closely related to the above described wish for mutual respect. The theme that follows describes a wish for change that I see as being turned inward and directed towards the own body.

Aiming to alter the own body weight

The wish to alter one’s own body was expressed throughout several workshops in relation to the dissatisfaction with their current body weight. I see this theme as more or less present in almost every workshop. On several occasions, both slim and larger children emphasized that they were unhappy with their current weight and therefore tried to alter and change their own bodies. I am now going to describe some of these examples.

Very frequently, slim girls shared their concrete intentions to change openly with the group. In most of the cases these changes were understood as weight loss. In those cases fellow

participants often offered reassuring words that their weight was just fine and by no means in need to be lowered. I will here describe one of these occasions where this theme occurred during a discussion round on weight diversity in workshop III. Here I asked the children what came to their mind when thinking about different body types and bodies of different sizes. One slim girl started to complain about her perceived too high body weight. Some of her female peers responded by declaring that she was be fine but they were be in need to go on a diet (FD [23-3-15]).

What I find noticeable is the clarity with which the girls in this workshop addressed the perceived issue and their resolution for it. To me it was astonishing how certain they seemed about the idea that the actual status quo (presumably being too fat) was undesirable; that they thus wanted to achieve weight loss and that the solution to this would be to go on a diet. For example the already mentioned comment of a participant in workshop III who wanted to lose weight through dieting because her jeans did not fit anymore (see theme above). All in all, this theme was very present in workshop III. In the discussion about idols and role models, a slim girl explained that she would prefer to be thinner. Her idol is the singer and actress Ariana Grande whom she admires for her slim physique. The girl stated that she wanted to look like her “[...] because she is slim and beautiful”. She grabbed her thighs, glanced around the group and continued “[...] and look, I am fat and ugly” (FD [23-3-15]).

In many cases the participants who called themselves fat and in need of losing weight were reassured by their schoolmates that s/he was slim and did not need to go on a diet.

In other cases, participants shared their ideas exclusively with me in written or verbal form.

For example one slim girl in workshop IV told me how she desperately had tried to gain weight in the past by eating more but did not succeed.

I also interpret the written comment of the larger boy in workshop IV as indicative for this theme. He wrote: “I would feel good if I lost weight” (CW IV 3). In his intention to change he was not very specific and compared to the slim girls’ comments, I see the feeling of discomfort and frustration as very dominant in his writing.

Neglecting weight stigma

This theme occurred in different forms throughout all workshops. However, in some cases children also acknowledged that weight discrimination in the form of bullying, name calling and ridicule was a problem and that it needed to be addressed. This wish was often brought

forward by those children who could recall negative experiences of weight bullying. Below I will describe examples in which this theme manifested.

In workshop I, I asked the participants about their experience with weight bullying and teasing due to their body weight. The large boy who had been tickled throughout the workshop was very quick to explain that weight bullying would not happen in this school (FD [18-3-15]).

In workshop II this theme came up during the creation of the safe space poster. It was discussed very ambivalently. While some girls strongly argued that teasing due to body weight was wrong, many of the slim boys emphasized that it was nothing more than a joke not to be taken seriously (FD [19-3-15]).

In workshop III many children acknowledged that making fun of someone who happened to be fat would be unjust. In contrast to workshop I and II, the pictures of large people did not provoke laughter and turmoil. Rather, some of the slim children called themselves fat and therefore ugly and in need of losing weight (FD [23-3-15]).

Finding support when dealing with body shaming

I interpret this theme as being directly related to an exercise. This is the discussion round where I asked the children to think and write about things and people that could be of help when dealing with body shaming experience. I am now going to scrutinize some of the answers in more detail.

In workshop III and IV, the girls who engaged with this exercise gave similar answers to this question. For them, a friend, a close family member or a companion animal like a cat, a dog or a horse would help when dealing with negative emotions due to a bullying experience (FD [23-3-15]).

The answers of boys who engaged in this exercise were notably different. In contrast, the above mentioned ways of getting support seemed to be not available or unimaginable for them. Many of them seemed rather skeptical that looking for support in such a situation would be a good idea at all (FD [23-3-15]).

All in all, the male participants in this workshop rather listed whom they would *not* talk to. One boy stated he would feel good when he arrived at home and could go to his room (CW III 2).

To conclude, while for the girls a friend or a relative came to mind, these options seemed not available for the boys. For many boys feelings and negative experience are issues that they rather handle on their own, sometimes even in solitude rather than looking for support.

Negotiating labels

Throughout the workshops, participants utilized the term “fat” in different ways to convey several different things. On the one hand, this theme can be interpreted as being related to an exercise. This is that I challenged the children to think about the meaning of the term in the discussion round on body diversity. Besides that, it was repeatedly brought up by the children themselves throughout the workshops in a different sense that I originally had intended. I am now going to describe these different situations.

On the one hand many of the slim boys in workshop I used the word fat to describe the larger bodies on pictures which they obviously perceived as laughable (FD [18-3-15]). Instead of discussing the pictures, the boys solely labelled the people on the pictures as either “a nigger, [...] a fat nigger, [...] a skinny bitch, a porn star and “so gay” (ibid.). With the exception of the male boxer, they were very uninterested in the depicted people.

The slim boys in workshop II used almost identically the same terms to label the people on the pictures. They inter alia dropped phrases like “[...] hot bitch, [...] what a fag! That’s so gay! [...] Fat pig [...]”. Also these boys did not want to discuss the pictures any further. I asked them if they had ever considered that this might sound hurtful to other people. “But that’s not to be taken serious, it’s just joking”, one boy replied (FD [19-3-15]).

In contrast, one larger girl in this workshop openly voiced her discontent about labelling others as fat. She pled for the ground rule that no one should be called fat, thin or ugly (see theme above) (FD [26-3-15]).

In workshop III the participants approached the issue of language very differently. When one boy described “Sumos” as fat it provoked whispering and giggling. Also the teacher seemed hesitant if she should intervene. I asked if they could imagine that the word fat could be used as non-judgmental characteristic just as thin, blond or tall. One boy reasoned that the real problem would be the teasing of fat people not the word as such (FD [23-3-15]).

Another manifestation of this theme was very present in workshop III. Some of the slim children talked themselves into being fat, overweight or large despite being read by others as slim (FD [23-3-15]). I see this specific manifestation of the theme as closely related to the above described wish to alter the own body.

To summarize, throughout the workshops fat was described as being a marked position. Although on some occasions there seemed to be agreement that discrimination due to body size

was wrong, discussions and conversations conveyed slenderness as the unmarked, desired and also the normalized and normal state of being.

Analyzing the material with theoretical thinking technologies

I will now analyze the material with the theoretical thinking technologies presented above. After the thematic interpretation that mainly focused on collective scenes and intra-actions within the group, my research interest for the next analytical step now lies on the subject level. Thus I will lay out the stories of four children whose corporeal and discursive practices and ambivalences challenged me the most. Their stories are particularly vivid in my mind even years after holding the workshops.

I will start the analysis with the story of Andreas whom I met in workshop I. After that I will lay out the story of Attila and Hari who also participated in workshop I. They stuck that close together the entire workshop so that their story can only be told collectively as I can only imagine them in a pack. After that I am going to look at the story of Elli who took part in workshop III followed by the story of Celine who also participated in this session.

The analysis below is inspired by Rosholt's' idea of troubling storylines, which means "to ask critical questions" and find additional ways of looking at taken for granted issues (ibid.: 95).

I am going to look at the processes, practices and strategies the children used to navigate their intersectional subjectivity through normative discourses of intersectional body weight. Of particular interest therefore will be how troubled subject positions came to be and how children use their bodies to navigate in- and out of different positionings. By trying to step back and reading scenes from a different angle I hope to present a broader picture about the complexity of children's discursive negotiations of body weight.

Signifying the proper pupil

"Andreas"

Andreas is a white boy of Austrian origin. In terms of body weight he was larger than all the other boys in the group. When I first met him he was sitting over his homework while most of the other children were playing games. Especially two boys Attila and Hari were running around, laughing and giggling.

To better understand Andreas' participation and engagement in the workshop I would like to look at his corporeality and practices by bring in a line of thought brought forward by Staunaes. She writes that in settings like schools, discursively constructed normativities influence what is deemed appropriate and in doing so constitute subjectivities and subject positions (Staunaes 2008: 106). In the case of this workshop, I would interpret voluntarily engaging with school related tasks, being attentive and showing commitment to the teachers as to be the ideal image of a "proper pupil", as Staunaes calls it.

In Staunaes' terms, Andreas' quiet engagement with his homework could therefore be understood as "in line" with the discursive agreed behavioral code of school (ibid.: 106). These codes open up a variety of possibilities for positioning oneself, respectively, for being positioned. Being "in line" with the agreed norms makes it possible to stay untroubled while individuals who don't adhere to it become potentially troubled or "marked" (ibid. 106).

As a native Austrian, Andreas is skilled in speaking, reading and processing tasks that are given in German. His mother tongue and language proficiency allowed him to grasp tasks quickly which makes engaging in the workshop activities generally easy for him. In this case, Andreas signified the norm.

Staunaes writes that depending on the context and actors involved, it might be relatively easy for some children to maintain or access an unmarked or untroubled position (ibid. 106).

In a context that is dominated by Austrians and saturated with Austrianness as the norm, the position of a "proper pupil" is rather easily accessible for Andreas. His corporeality and actions signify this norm. For Attila and Hari, this unmarked position is however not available.

Staunaes writes that it takes a lot of effort for some children to stay untroubled, in many cases, it is even impossible for certain intersectional subjectivities to pass as unmarked at all (ibid. 106).

I see this very much reflected in the relations between the boys and the teacher. Attila and Hari for example, got told off very often. Andreas' behaviour on the other hand was never rebuked by the teacher during the workshop. His practices and corporeality seemed to be in sync with the teacher's requirements and the requirements of this particular learning space.

For Andreas, the position as "proper pupil" had been on offer. Watching him interacting with the teacher and his peers, I would interpret that he had been taken up this "offered position" of a good student.

He composed himself in a way that signified confidence in his intellectual abilities. For example Andreas frequently engaged in conversations with me or the teacher.

To Davies and Harré (2007), a subject position holds both, “a conceptual repertoire” on the one hand and a location within the structure of rights for those who utilize this repertoire (ibid.: 46). I see this idea very much reflected in Andreas’ corporeal practices. I think one could say that Andreas understood the signifying practices of being a good student (completing his homework and workshop tasks) as his “conceptual repertoire” that granted him the right to participate in the workshop and to be corporeally engaged in this curricular space. For example, he voiced his discontent about the interruptions and “non-compliant” fooling around of his peers.

I would interpret that, in line with the idea of Davies et al., Andreas’ constructed himself in this situation as rightful and his embodiment as being “right and just” in this space.

Yet, according to Staunaes, it is not entirely up to the individual to state one’s righteousness and enjoy a state of untroubledness. “The rest of the class and the teachers have to confirm that you are doing it right” (Staunaes 2003: 106). Following this line of thought, Andreas’ peers and the teacher would also need to agree with his construction of untroubledness and accept his positioning within the group.

In relation to the teacher and me, as workshop leader, I would say that Andreas was and felt accepted in this untroubled subject position. He proactively approached me and asked questions about the workshop content which to me are signifying practices to show interest. He also frequently tried to engage the teacher in conversations about curriculum related issues. His body weight did not seem to be an issue that would interfere with his untroubledness in regards to the teacher. Their conversations seemed relaxed and respectful. I thus interpret that for Andreas’ conforming to a certain body weight norm was not part of his understanding of being a proper pupil.

According to Staunaes, the “doing of proper pupilness” can however cause troubles for other ways of being a pupil (ibid.). Claiming the position as the good pupil is thus not without consequences for the relationship between Andreas and his peers. The story lines Andreas produced were dominated by speech and intellect. His corporeal manner was rather tentative and calm. Hari and Attila, in comparison, therefore stood out as loud and physical which was in the context of an intra-curricular event evaluated (by the teacher and Andreas) as inappropriate.

Using Staunaes’ idea to take a closer look at Andreas’ interaction with Hari and Attila reveals the challenges he faced to maintain an untroubled subject position within the group of boys. Staunaes writes that the power balance between actors moves and shifts in relation to ongoing negotiations of un/troubledness and intersectional subject positions (ibid. 2003: 105).

In the following I am going to take a closer look at mainly two aspects of the boys' interactions where I think this shifting is particularly obvious. This is first, the picture discussion and second, the tickling attacks against Andreas' belly.

When invited to discuss pictures together, Andreas decided to look at the pictures on his own and not together with Attila and Hari. Consequently, the discussions of pictures looked very different. While Andreas sat calmly "thinking through" what he saw, Hari and Attila were running and jumping around, bumping into furniture or into each other.

Throughout the workshop Andreas generally tried to avoid close corporeal proximity to Attila and Hari. In this scene, he also distanced himself discursively from the two. Andreas openly declared his frustration about Attila and Hari's interruptive behaviour and told me that he did not like it when others fooled around.

I would interpret that the loud and physical "doing of pupilness" irritated Andreas. Their actions were not in line with his idea of a proper student. One way to maintain a sense of balance therefore would be to distance him from the other boys and their perceived inappropriate behaviour.

While his performances were verbally focused, the jokers' actions were very physical. With their tickling attacks the two made Andreas' largeness relevant and constructed his difference as laughable.

Against this backdrop one could say that according to them their idea of being a proper boy and pupil involved a certain set of behaviour. To be respected in their group, one had to engage in wild physical play. Andreas did not do that. Also, his non-normative body was something that made him stand out as the other among them. By making his non-conformity obvious through the tickling attacks, they established in-and out-group positions whereas Andreas' was positioned in the latter.

I would say that their performance not only troubled Andreas' subject position, but also the untroubled way he saw himself. It might be safe to say that, on this level of corporeal discourse, Andreas was inferior. Therefore I would evaluate Attila and Hari's physical play and especially their tickling attacks as challenges to Andreas' unmarked position. Andreas' doing of proper pupilness had been getting disrupted by Hari and Attila's frequent tickling attacks.

When Attila and Hari made his size relevant, Andreas was located by their actions. Their jokes about large bellies and size were supported by dominant discourses about body norms which I think made their story lines very powerful. Henceforth, I would say that through their joking they could shift the power balance to their favour.

According to Staunaes (2003) the categories one inhabits influence the possible position a person can take up (106). Against this backdrop, I would interpret the category of “good pupilness” as limiting the possible positions Andreas could take up in interactions with Hari and Attila.

I thus interpret his corporeal and verbal distancing as a way to stay out of potentially troubling situations and as an attempt to maintain his untroubled position. I would therefore evaluate that Andreas’ way of coping with this challenge was to distance himself physically and verbally from Hari and Attila but also from all kind of weight discrimination related issues by using practices that were in line with his position as a good student. For example he negated weight bullying in this school presenting reasons and examples to underline his arguments.

In his storylines, Andreas did not doubt his righteousness. His discursive constructions depicted Hari and Attila as the problem, those who were not behaving right.

To further make sense of the contradiction of being simultaneously teased and neglecting bullying due to body weight, I would like to refer to a postulate from Davis et al.

Alternative reading: Negating weight bullying

Davies et al. write that once an individual has taken up a position of his own, s/he looks at the world from the perspective this position allows. It is therefore inevitable, according to Davies et al. that a person who inhabits a certain subject position will evaluate and “make relevant specific images, metaphors, storylines and concepts” in a range of particular discursive practices that are deemed as in line with the requirements for this position (Davies and Harre 2007: 46).

One particular practice I would therefore point out is to distance him from the category of largeness. I see this particularly reflected in Andreas’ negating of weight bullying in his school. In accordance to Staunaes (2003) this can be interpreted as an attempt to overshadow his troubled corporeality through talking himself into an untroubled position (106). In other words, Andreas tried to discursively undo the damage the weight teasing of his peers had on his subject position.

When asked about weight discrimination, Andreas denied that weight bullying or size discrimination would be an issue at all at this school. He discursively positioned large children as the others, a group to which he does not belong by saying that there were many larger children in his PE class but no one would make fun of them due to their size.

While the tickling attacks undoubtedly targeted Andreas' larger belly he did not refer to himself as large. He also did not see himself as victim of weight bullying and refused to take up this position.

To further make sense of the contradiction of being simultaneously teased and negating bullying due to body weight, I would like to refer to a line of thought from Staunaes. In her paper she describes how children discursively try to position themselves as untroubled (ibid.: 106). I see these efforts very much reflected in Andreas' story lines.

In an Austrian dominant school context, Andreas is in the lead. As an Austrian, he belongs to the majority, the ordinary, and the normal students. Andreas therefore talks himself into existence as member of the normal sized children, "the ordinary pupils". He does not question his legitimacy in this group and not only negates that the teasing he experienced was related to his size but dismisses the idea of weight discrimination in his school at all.

To summarize, I would say that the actions of Hari and Attila lead to Andreas' subject position becoming troubled. In a corporeal discourse that focused on body size, Andreas' body was positioned by his peers as non-normative. Andreas' doing of proper pupilness therefore got disrupted by Hari and Attila's attempts to fix their own troubled positionings.

According to my analysis, I would say that Andreas used two strategies in particular in order to navigate his intersectional subjectivity and corporeality through these potentially troubling discourses. This is on the one hand putting emphasis on signifying practices of being a proper pupil. One key practice I would emphasize is the asking of critical questions and engaging the teacher and me in discussions that should underline his intellectual abilities.

On the other hand, I would evaluate the negation of weight bullying as a further strategy of Andreas. Here, Andreas tried to overshadow his troubled corporeality through talking himself into an untroubled position. Two key practices should therefore be mentioned. First, the discursively positioning of larger children as the others and second, the avoidance of close physical proximity to those whose discourse positioned them as the large one, the other, the inferior.

The play of masculinities

“Attila and Hari”

Attila and Hari are both slim, white boys who have a migrant background. In my memory, they stuck together the entire workshop. They were laughing and giggling a lot about jokes and story lines they created among themselves.

It turned out that both had troubles with fluency in reading and sometimes struggled grasping the tasks I allocated during the workshop. In one scenario, they understood one of the activities very differently than Andreas did. Their reaction was to put red sticker dots all over Andreas' written comments.

To understand the complexity of this scene more clearly, I would like to read it with the understanding presented in Staunaes. She writes that school contexts hold specific sets of agreed codes which result in certain subject positions becoming “inappropriate, destabilized, and difficult”. In such situations subjectivities are challenged and in need of repair (Staunaes: 104). I think that holds true for Attila and Hari in this situation for various reasons. In the Austrian dominated, German speaking context their academic standing read otherness. Andreas' performance of “proper pupilness” made their inability to conform to the standards of an Austrian speaking school context stand out even more. Their subjectivity thus could be evaluated in line with Staunaes as being troublesome and asking to be fixed.

Their reaction to trouble Andreas' as a response may therefore be seen as their strategy to make their troubledness stand out less.

In a similar vein as putting red dots over Andrea's writing, I would evaluate their tickling attacks against his belly as a further attempt in their available and accessible repertoire of strategies to balance out troubled aspects of their intersectional subjectivity.

I interpret their performance inspired by Staunaes as a wish to renegotiate their troubled border position and “make themselves legitimate” by creating their own story lines and narratives that positioned Andrea's as the outsider and themselves as the superior (108).

Building on dominant discourse

In her paper Staunaes describes how children build on dominant discourse and normativities to fix and repair broken subjectivities (ibid. 106). In the case of the workshop series this would be the building on the normalized discourse of the slender ideal.

I think that Attila and Hari's reaction to the photographs showed very clearly that they perceived slenderness not only as an ideal but also as the norm.

It became obvious in numerous situations throughout the workshops that all the boys shared this idealisation of slenderness. Andreas for example, emphasized that the actress on the pictures was too large for TV and in need to work on her body weight.

This observation would be in line with literature from van Amsterdam et al. (2012) who also noticed that while norms are always up for negotiation among children, prevalent normativities from dominant societal discourses have strong influence over how body weight is debated among young people (ibid.).

Signifying the norm

Hari and Attila's bodies are read as slender. In a discourse that focuses on body size, they thus have the opportunity to position themselves as the normal, the unmarked and ordinary. By putting emphasis on Andreas' non-normativity, the larger boy's corporeality became marked in and by the jokers' discourse as different and non-conforming.

However, as already discussed above, I would again refer to Staunaes' idea of how the power balance shifts and moves depending on the discourses that are made relevant (ibid. 2003: 103). Andreas for example presented himself at the beginning of the workshop as untroubled by producing story lines that emphasized his norm-conforming student body. The signifying practices that are needed to make oneself legitimate in this unmarked position had been easily available to him. As long as any non-normative aspects of his intersectional being were "silent" he could maintain this powerful position that vice versa positioned Attila and Hari as the others, the troubled.

To shift the discourse to mend their "difficult" subjectivity seems therefore like a very logical attempt undertaking for Attila and Hari.

To interpret the signifying practices Hari and Attila therefore used, I would again like to refer to Staunaes (2003). In her paper she explores hyper masculine behavior of under grade boys in a school context (ibid.: 108). According to Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002, paraphrased in Staunaes 2003) hyper-masculine behaviour in male students can be understood as practices of "internal comparison" between boys and other boys. Thereby stereotypical elements traditionally linked to masculinity like physical strength, aggressiveness and toughness are emphasized and acted out (Staunaes 108).

I see such behavior very much reflected in the story lines and practices of Hari and Attila. Thus I find the concept of hyper-masculinity very valuable for my analysis. I inter alia remember the “picture discussion” with Hari and Attila particularly poignantly as saturated with hyper masculine rethorics and heteronormative ideas.

They for example pointed at pictures of skinny males, calling them fags and negated the idea that someone like that would be a desirable role model for them. On the other hand, both of them expressed admiration for a male boxer who was depicted shirtless and in a fighting pose.

They talked themselves into being like this boxer one day, flexing their arm muscles and pointing out the prominent “six pack” of the boxer which they found impressive.

Looking closer at the intersection of gender and ethnicity may according to Staunaes reveal further aspects of troubled subject positions. Staunaes explains hyper masculine practices of migrant boys as an attempt to make up for a feeling of “weak ethnicity” by “establishing a component in their subjectivity that can *repair* a troubled subject position” (108).

To interpret the picture discussion scene with the ideas brought forward in Staunaes I would evaluate Hari and Attila’s notions as longing for a strong masculine figure that could possibly help to make up for their experienced troubledness as migrant boys in this Austrian school.

Pretending to be like the boxer and talking themselves into being like him in the future can be thus seen as an empowering image and vision that could help them escape from the current troubledness.

In other words, their performance could be understood as one of the limited coping strategies on offer for boys with a migrant background to balance out a troubled subject position.

In a way they act in a similar vein to Andreas by overshadowing the intersection that is experienced as troublesome. Being read as “the victim” seemed for all the three boys a very undesirable position.

In that sense Hari and Attila’s negotiation of body norms would be in accordance with Sorensen (2008). who observed that young heterosexual males tried to underline their masculinity by acting loud and aggressively in order not to be read as homosexual or feminine and therefore weak (ibid.: 150-151).

I would argue that their strong investment in the idealisation of stereotypical masculinity put Andreas in a troublesome position as being a good pupil is not in sync with being loud, aggressive and rebellious. Thus Andreas could not be part of their in-group should he have wanted to guard his position as a proper pupil. I would reason that he consequently opted out of most of the activities that involved collaboration with Attila and Hari.

The act of positioning 1

Davies et al. (2007) write that through the idealisation and normalisation of dominant stereotypes actors are able to position others. According to the authors, this act of positioning is a process that works in both verbal and non-verbal ways (ibid.: 48).

I see this positioning of others as very present in Hari and Attila's conversations because they confirm the rightness of the boxer's body and verbally ridicule non-normative figures like larger actresses or the female weight lifter. The discourses they built their comments and jokes on is one that privileges heterosexual masculinity and renders females and slim males as deviant. Also, they constructed certain ways of "doing masculinity" as undesirable and inappropriate for example posing in underwear in a rather passive position as a man. While slenderness became part of masculinity and thereby got naturalized and normalized in their story lines, there seemed to be a "right" and a "wrong" amount of slenderness for males.

Further, their performance of heteronormativity positioned females in a way that fit a dichotomous hegemonic gender order. I see this positioning reflected in their turmoil like reactions to the depictions of large women and the sexualized comments on the pictures of slim females.

To summarize, I think that Hari and Attila's subject positions *inter alia* came to be through the fact that they were located in a context where German language proficiency was the norm. They were troubled by their schoolmate whose performance signified the ideal pupil, while they lagged behind in reading, writing and grasping tasks.

Yet, Hari and Attila's bodies were slender which gave them the opportunity to shift the power balance by making the non-normative size of their schoolmate relevant. It might be safe to say that their corporeal performance had been part of their way of negotiating the hierarchy within the group. I would see the following practices as their strategy to navigate through the normative discourses they were faced with.

First, they relied on over exaggerated ideas of heteronormativity and masculinities. One key practice thereby was to verbally sexualize female bodies and construct and normalize *patriarchal femininity*¹¹. Further, I see the loud ridiculing of bodies that were outside western heteronormative body norms as a key practice. Another practice I found to be related was talking themselves into being part of this norm by discursively underlining their own masculinity and displaying a disobedient mentality, fearlessness, and rowdiness.

The second key practice that could be observed was the creation of their own in-group that was clustered around values Andreas´ did not conform to. One could therefore conclude that in order to overshadow or escape the troubles they experienced within this Austrian dominated context, they assigned slenderness as their in-group requirement in order to exclude Andreas from their group.

Pleasure and pain

“Elli”

Elli is a tall white girl with long blond hair. She spoke German fluently without any accent although she was from Russia and German was not her mother tongue. In the group of boys and girls she appeared to be very popular. Many of the other girls looked up to her and openly admired her looks. From the very beginning of the workshop she appeared very willing and eager to engage in the discussion rounds. With her cheeky comments, she earned laughter from her peers and rebukes from the teacher.

Positions on offer

Elli´s body size conformed to a weight and body norm that in Western cultures is deemed as normal. Even more so, she embodied traits that were desirable and ideal in dominant teen pop culture. Yet, throughout the workshop Elli talked herself into existence as flawed in terms of her body weight.

¹¹ The term *patriarchal femininity* is borrowed from Joan Rivière´s essay *Womanliness as Masquerade* (1929). In this piece Rivière describes femininity and masculinity as “masquerades in which both sexes adopt a role which covers over the ambivalence and anxiety of subjectivity and sexual identity.” (Rivière 1986/1929: 35)

At first glance Elli's performance seemed estranging. Why would someone who is clearly in a respected and powerful position deliberately belittle themselves? Especially interesting was that Elli's performance seemed the complete opposite to the boy's (Attila, Hari and Andreas) attempts of navigating themselves out of situations that were belittling.

To make sense of Elli's rhetoric I interpret her corporeal performance with the knowledge brought forward in Haug (1987 referenced in Rossholt 2008). The author describes the phenomenon that individuals subordinate themselves to societal stereotypes that work through the body. Against this backdrop she claims that societal standards do not allow females to be satisfied with their appearance (Rossholt 2008: 98).

I believe that it is very common and socially accepted in western society that females openly worry about their figure. "Fat talk", as the social anthropologist Mimi Nichter calls it, seems to be a way to connect with each other (Nichter 2000). In Elli's situation, using a self-critical rhetoric and constructing her body as flawed might thus be seen as a practice for raising empathy from her peers and reassuring her superior position that is in line with socially accepted behavior as female. I would reckon that bragging about her figure and thereby drawing attention on her ideal body weight would have been against the code of a "proper girl" which is in a school context understood as being polite, reticent and humble.

Elli who was clearly very slender enjoyed acting out and putting emphasis on her corporeality. In this case, one could say that she acted in line with Rossholt's idea that "playing out" stereotypical femininity is rather easy for the pretty and slender but most likely doesn't work well for those females who are larger and muscular (Rossholt 2008: 98).

Given the reaction of Elli's peers, I would say that her claims of being "too fat" and in need of losing weight very much underlined her untroubledness.

Thus, rhetorically constructing herself as fat and flawed could therefore be interpreted as a strategy to negotiate slenderness as desirable. Furthermore, it reinforces her position of superiority by using the codes that are easily accessible for slim girls.

The belly showing scene

Elli had been one of the initiators of the story line that I like to refer to as "the belly-showing scene". To underline her claim that she would be fat and in need of losing weight she lifted her shirt to expose her naked belly.

To understand the complexity of this scene more clearly, I am going to first look at it with Staunaes' majority inclusive approach and add Crenshaw's ideas on the potentially harmful power of jokes further below.

Analyzing this scene I find it particularly important to pay attention to the fact that weight related teasing had been shunned as inappropriate in the children's dominant rhetoric. At the very beginning the children in the workshop told me that they would consider it rude to call someone fat and they voiced their agreement that others should not be made fun of for being larger.

In line with Staunaes' I see this particular discourse at the same time limiting while offering possible ways for positioning (ibid.: 108).

While it was, for example, made impossible by the modalities of the dominant discourse to directly joke about large children's bodies, Elli's acting out still constructed larger corporealities as less desirable. I would interpret the shirt lifting and squeezing of her slim belly as practices she incorporated to position herself in a superior safe place. By showing her slim belly and claiming that she was fat Elli could surpass the constraints of the limiting discourse. In this particular scene many of the slim children started mimicking Elli. Especially other slim girls spoke up that they would be fatter than Elli and needed to lose weight too. I see this as an attempt to negotiate their position and claim "in group membership" by copying Elli's signifying practices.

Alternative reading: Bliss and frustration

As an alternative reading I would also interpret Elli's seemingly blissful expression of her corporeality as also saturated with feelings of frustration and as experiences of troubledness that manifested in her embodied performance.

Rossholt writes that children's story lines are not only conversed out but acted out and lived out (2008: 99). Against this backdrop, I would therefore evaluate the story line Elli and her peers created in the "belly showing scene", as acting out of body norm negotiations on the one hand and a trying to make sense of experiences of troubledness on the other.

To support this claim I refer to Haug (1999) who describes the ambivalent feeling of joy and pain in regards to body norms. The author writes that while on the one hand meeting a certain

norm might increase one's confidence, it is on the other more or less impossible to match up to the societal ideals in reality (Haug 1999: 84).

While Elli and her slim peers might be able to pass as normal-weighted and being unmarked in and through everyday discourses, they still might experience body insecurities that are fueled by unattainable body ideals in the media. Against the backdrop of a slender, light skinned western pop culture icon, children and especially pubescent youths might experience their own intersectional corporeality as deeply troubled.

A quote from Haug underlines this idea very poignantly. She writes: "In Western cultures females' bodies are vehicles for socialization. As women we 'know' how we are supposed to look; we know what remains within the bounds of acceptability and what goes too far. It is knowledge of the proper 'standards'. As females, we have an ambivalent way of looking at our bodies. Enjoyment and control are thereby closely linked together." (ibid 84-85).

I see this ambivalence very much reflected in the slim girl's story line of being in need to lose weight.

Yet I think it is important to emphasize that also children who are socialized as males expressed ambiguity towards their corporeality in the workshops. For example the slim boy who had been participating in Elli's story by also lifting his shirt turned to me while the scene was still on going to tell me he would prefer to be less skinny. Furthermore, the larger boy in workshop II should not be forgotten. While he also obviously enjoyed moving his body he though expressed his frustration at how others made him feel about it and stated that he would feel good about himself if he lost weight.

Overshadowed discourses

Through the lens of Staunaes' concept on how intersectionality is done, a further differentiated reading of Elli's positioning through the scene is possible which is presented below.

Staunaes writes that certain discourse have the ability to cover or overshadow others. Against this backdrop I would interpret the story line that was created through the belly showing scene as attempt to cover troubled aspects of subjectivity by bringing to the forth one's untroubledness in terms of body weight. I would for example interpret Elli's story line of self-claimed inadequacy as rooted in the troubling experience of being Russian in an Austrian-dominated school.

As already stressed above, Staunaes writes about migrant boys who develop hyper masculine trades to repair a troubled subjectivity and compensate for a feeling of weak ethnicity (ibid.: 108).

Based on this, I would evaluate several of Elli's practices as such attempts to repair the troubled ethnicized aspect of her subjectivity. I would for example evaluate the playing out of fragile femininity, her investment in beauty discourses and the self-critical rhetoric she displayed towards her body weight as such "compensatory practices". Elli visibly embodied the ideal in terms of body weight that gave her access to a respected, powerful position among her peers. Her corporeality, skin color and language proficiency allowed her to pass as a "normal" pupil, even as a "neat girl" and "proper female student". Yet, the pure fact that she was born in Russia made her susceptible to bullying which she explained in one of the discussion rounds.

In order to understand this "double edged" position more clearly I would like to refer to the Foucauldian notion of *subjectification*. Foucault proposes a two-sided view of the human actor. This means that a subject may act upon "contextual conditions" but at the same time is "subject to" and determined by these conditions (Foucault 1979, 1988 referenced in Staunaes 2003). I think this idea is very valid to better understand how certain intersections are experienced as more troublesome than others in this particular school context. While Elli's intersectional self set her apart as the Russian other in this school, her corporeality embodied the ideal in terms of looks and body weight. The story lines she produced therefore emphasized looks and slenderness which underlined her untroubledness and allowed her to pass as normal. Yet I think that through her performance she also processed her ambivalent feelings toward her subjectivity that she partially experiences as difficult and troubled. In other words one could say that Elli uses her slimness to repair her troubled intersectional position in an Austrian dominated context. Several times she directs the conversation towards her desired weight loss. This move seems very reasonable as talking about her body weight came very easy to her. It led to connection with, and empathy and reassurance from, her peers. Yet almost no room was given for making sense of her experience of being bullied due to her Russian nationality.

Henceforth, Elli built on a very common normalized rhetoric among females of all ages in the West, which is talking about dieting and personal weight flaws. Incorporating these signifying practices allowed Elli to connect and bond with her peers and underline her untroubled position in this group.

Her corporeal practices highly influenced how body weight was discussed among the group. For example many other slim children took part in the belly showing scene and some slim girls took up the offer to complain about their own body weight, reassuring each other that they were

just fine. These practices were however not as easily accessible for all children. For example, the joke would not have worked if an actual larger child would have wanted to join the scene.

I would interpret this in line with Staunaes', who writes that certain doings/constructions of "normal" may trouble others as it renders their subjectivity as inadequate (ibid.: 106).

Against this backdrop, I think that the construction of fatness as undesirable lead to the troubling of children who did not conform to the slender-norm. Although not directly targeted as the official target of the belly showing scene's jokes large children still got positioned as troublesome through the performance of the slim children.

To summarize, I would evaluate Elli's troubledness as having similar roots as in Attila's and Hari's case, namely the Austro-centric school context. Despite holding a well respected position within this particular group, her foreignness lead to troubling experiences that she hardly got the support to make sense of.

Yet, Elli's corporeality signified the ideal body weight. One of her strategies to navigate her subject position through normative discourse thus was to produce story lines that signified modest femininity and emphasized looks and slenderness.

One key practice Elli therefore used was to rhetorically construct herself as fat and flawed which propelled other children to reassure her that she was fine.

The second key practice that I would like to stress, was the lifting of her shirt that exposed her slim belly while she claimed to be in need of losing weight. Through this she demonstrated that she signified the norm in terms of body weight while still staying in line with the requirements of being a neat and modest girl.

Silent resistance

"Celine"

Celine is a white girl of Austrian origin. Within the group she is the largest. Although Celine had been very quiet throughout the workshop – the memory of her had still been very vivid long after my visit. To interpret Celine's participation I would like to bring in a quote from Elisabeth Grosz who writes that "bodies speak without necessary talking" because in discourse, they become coded "with and as signs" (Grosz in Rossholt 2008: 96).

I find this quote very valid to approach and understand Celine's positioning within the group.

She was not particularly large, all the other children in the group however were much slimmer. Thus this circumstance led to the fact that Celine stood out as the largest child. Her body became coded as different. Throughout the entire workshop, Celine hardly spoke up in discussions. Yet I think that in regards to weight negotiations Celine's silent body played a very important role. Thus I see Grosz' idea as an important reminder to look for practices other than merely spoken discourse.

The act of positioning 2

Rossholt writes that storylines that are acted out have a powerful ability to simultaneously shape and negotiate material bodies. In these processes some stories are brought to the front, dominating the scene while others become less important. "These acting out in play and movement can therefore position children in the most literal sense" (Rossholt 2008: 99).

When Elli and some of the slim children lifted their shirts, Celine attentively but silently watched what was going on, crossing her arms and hands in front of her belly.

While many of the slim children took up Elli's offer to expose their bellies and claim that they were too fat, Celine did not participate in the scene. She remained silent. The story line that the slim children made up was to expose a slim belly claiming that it was fat. They thereby constructed largeness as undesirable and a larger belly as something in need of change. Thus, the option to participate in the scene in an equal manner as her slim peers was hardly on offer for her. Consequently, Celine's body became coded as the undesirable, the marked and difficult.

Davies et al. describe the dynamics of positioning as a "discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines." Against this backdrop, they speak of "interactive positioning" on the one hand and "reflexive positioning" on the other. Interactive positioning means that one person can position another through the story lines s/he creates. By reflexive positioning Davies et al. understand the act of positioning oneself (ibid. 2007: 48).

As Elli was among those who opened the story line on the belly showing scene, I would read her action as interactively positioning her peers. By joining Elli and also lifting their shirts, I would say that those other slim children reflexively positioned themselves as untroubled, claiming an in-group position. The children discursively construct their slenderness as the norm by jokingly claiming to be "too fat" and in need of losing weight. Celine, whose corporeality on the other hand embodied largeness thereby got positioned on the outside. I interpret the

crossing of her arms and remaining silent in spoken discussion rounds as taking up and accepting this position on the side. In other words, her introversion could thus be seen as not only being positioned but also as an act of reflexively positioning herself.

The power dynamics of “just joking”

In the following I am going to look at the belly showing scene’s using Crenshaw’s ideas of the subjectifying power of “joking” as a basis. Through this I think it is possible to understand the normative force that propels the positioning that had been taking place in and through this scene more clearly.

In her piece *Mapping the Margins*, Crenshaw writes that the claim a representation would be meant “simply as a joke” might at first glance be true. Yet she highlights that, as with any discourse, also humour and jokes also function in a specific social context (Crenshaw 1991: 1293).

In the case of slim children joking about body weight in a context where slim is considered as the norm, the jokers can speak from a position that is untroubled and powerful.

Crenshaw emphasizes that humorous story lines presented as mere pranks or “just a joke” have the ability to reinforces patterns of social power if delivered by those who hold a (more) powerful position than those who the jokes are ultimately about (ibid).

While the group collectively agreed that teasing of children due to their largeness would be wrong, Elli and her peers found a possibility to work around that. While their corporeality read slenderness, they indicated in a supposedly funny manner that being large was an undesirable state of being using their slim figures as vehicles to deliver this joke.

I would say that in this particular scene, it had been up to the slim children to determine what was funny, desirable, inappropriate or laughable. By their participation, they could actively claim in-group membership. As members of the untroubled norm their bodies became unmarked in the process. Thus, they could choose to participate or not without risking their untroubled subject position.

Rossholt when referring to Grosz writes that bodies are a negotiation with images, other bodies, space and visibility (2008: 96). While slim bodies and bellies visibly dominated the scene, large bodies, despite being target of the joke, were absent and silenced. The scene positioned them as the others, the troubled, the ones who embodied the undesirable – the larger belly.

Alternative reading: Negotiating body norms

Ronholt, who offers insights on how norms are negotiated among pupils, writes that children co-create memories and joint lived experiences through their participation in their learning community” (Ronholt 2008: 259).

While many of the slim children copied Elli’s action and thus credited her action as meaningful and fun, Celine only watched them silently.

She neither cheered with those who found the scene funny nor argued with them. Celine did not join those girls who reassured Elli that she did not need to lose weight. More so, she did not show her support for any of the storylines that positioned larger bodies as inferior left alone describe her own body as flawed. I would therefore say that in her passiveness, Celine is a very active co-creator as the storyline’s meaning and the ritual itself changed through her silent, indifferent presence. Celine did not only refuse to engage in any body-centered ritual of her peers, she also declined my invitation to share her experience in any written or spoken form.

I interpret the way Celine participated in the workshop thus as a strategy for staying untroubled by refusing to enter discourses that would emphasize parts of her intersectional corporality as marked.

Davies et al write that an individual has the ability to position others by “adopting a storyline that incorporates a particular interpretation of cultural stereotypes to which the others are required to conform, if they are to contribute to the storyline that person has opened up” (Davies 2000: 93 in Rossholt 2008: 99).

Yet, I think that the act of refusing to contribute is at least as powerful. The story line that Elli opened up to emphasize her untroubled position is less effective without Celine’s contribution. Staunaes writes that in order for a self-claimed position to be effective it needs the endorsement of peers and the teacher (ibid.: 108). Celine however refused to be a constituent part of this positioning act, in that she not only counteracted the reinforcement of the slender norm. She also did not show support for the superior positioning Elli constructed for herself. Through her resistance the group was thus challenged to negotiate collective values, rules and norms differently had they wished to establish collectively accepted positions. In that Celine’s role can be evaluated as very powerful.

Alternative reading: Silent resistance

In the last section of this analysis I would like to present an additional reading of Celine's participation and reconceptualize her silent body as an embodied sign of resistance against dominant weight norms.

Despite being potentially subjectified by the dominant rhetoric of the slim children's storyline Celine was not necessarily powerless. I would even say that as a white able bodied Austrian girl, Celine passed as untroubled on different occasions in this school context. To present her silence in a different light, one could therefore reason that Celine did not feel the need to speak up in order to defend her subject position. Her Austrianness granted her the right to be embodied in this context which gave her the option to choose how far to disengage or to participate in the workshop. In contrast to Elli, Celine's performance was, for example, not negatively commented on by the teacher or her peers. Although she chose to pass when it came to answer questions or share her thoughts in discussion rounds, her silence did not seem to be a problem for neither her peers or the teacher.

Vinthege and Johansson (2013) write that resistance, like all acts, is situated and needs to be put in context of time, space and actors involved. Therefore, "oppositional acts" may look very different depending on the situation and relations of actors at stake.

What "counts" as resistance of an individual is therefore not always as easy to recognize as collective acts of demonstration, vandalism or rebellion.

Against this backdrop, Elli's as well as Attila's and Hari's cheeky comments and jokes about body fat spring to mind as example for noisy and interruptive acts of rebellion. As a consequence of their actions, all of the three were scolded by their teachers who threatened to exclude them from the workshop.

Vinthege et al. refer to Scott (1985, 1989, 1990) who describes everyday resistance as "quiet, dispersed, disguised or otherwise seemingly invisible behavior" which is commonly used by "exploited people". Against this backdrop, I thus would describe Celine's positioning as both troubled and empowered at the same time. She remained more or less quiet throughout the entire time. Throughout the workshop, she only talked to the teacher and a girl who I interpret to be a very close friend. She did choose to pass when it came to answering questions or share thoughts in discussion rounds. In addition, she opted out of the crafting and writing activities. Yet Celine did not opt out of the workshop completely. She stayed engaged but silent.

In the turmoil of lifted shirts and pinched bellies, Celine's corporeal performance, which was to cover her belly with her hands, was comparably subtle.

According to Scott, silence may thus be a strategy to "both survive and undermine repressive domination; especially in contexts when rebellion is too risky (ref)".

The workshop had been situated in a space that favoured slenderness, where largeness frequently got called out as marked and non-normative. Despite all efforts to establish common ground rules, I realized from the very beginning that neither the teacher nor me were able to prevent the subtle joking about largeness. I therefore could not avoid the potential exploitation of large children.

I would say that Celine's silence could therefore be seen as both an act of resistance and resilience in order to stay engaged, balanced and coherent with all her intersectional aspects in an environment that is favoured the slender ideal.

To summarize, Celine's corporeality that signified largeness became troubled by the jokes of her slim peers. She stayed engaged but silent throughout the entire workshop and did not participate in the collective story lines her peers enacted.

I would evaluate this silence and indifference as a strategy to navigate through the challenging discourses that were made relevant in the workshop.

While on the one hand, one could read her corporeal performance as being positioned, it could also be understood as reflexively position herself.

Celine's passing in discussion rounds while staying engaged in the workshop could therefore be seen as one of her key practices that demonstrated her non-support for anybody centred discourse that would depict her intersectional corporality as troubled.

Another key practice was her non-participation in the collective rituals that were acted out by the slim children. This is to say that Celine's corporeality signified resistance against the reinforcement of slenderness as the unchallenged norm, which not only changed the storyline's meaning but also the way normativities were negotiated among the group.

Conclusion

I will now sum up the findings of this study, put them into perspective with its limitations and provide suggestions for change interventions and future research.

Summary

With this thesis, I aimed to fill the knowledge gap on how children navigate their intersectional subjectivity through normative discourses on body weight.

In order to approach this issue, I suggested an analysis of school children's intra-actions in a workshop series on body image and health.

My study was carried out within the methodological framework of intersectional feminist post-constructionism whereby the intra-active workshops served as a method.

I utilized Staunaes' idea of "doing intersectionality" and the Foucauldian concepts of subjectivity, subjectification and troubled subject positionings in order to think through layered power differentials and enable the analytical engagement with individuals' experience and the processes that render certain subject positions (in)appropriate.

Answering of research questions

In the beginning, I posed the questions of how troubled subject positions come to be and how children use their intersectional corporeality to navigate in and out of different positionings.

To answer these questions, I intra-actively analyzed children's participation in the workshop-series.

My interpretation of data allowed me to identify several different key practices of subject positioning that were on offer for children depending on their intersectional subject position within their school environment.

The data suggest that their normative or non-normative corporeality influences the positions on offer. Body weight thereby plays a significant role. For example, normative body weight on the one hand, made ingroup positions more easily accessible and thus was often emphasized to overshadow otherwise troubled positionings. In particular, the difficult experience of having a migrant background in a dominant Austrian school has been covered up by putting emphasis on exaggerated hegemonic gender roles and body weight ideals.

It thereby seems difficult for both, girls and boys to navigate a racialized subjectivity through the Austrian-dominant school context. Normative body weight thus seems to be a tool to renegotiate their positioning within the limitations of their gendered subjectivity.

Non-normative body weight on the other hand often hindered the connection with others and the participation in in-group activities so that larger children often took a sort of border position in group inter-actions. A common strategy to compensate the troubling experiences of exclusion

and teasing was to signify proper pupil behavior by underlining trades of rationality, attentiveness and calmness which ensured the support of the teacher and helped to safely navigate through a school context that valued these trades. This strategy has been incorporated by larger girls and larger boys alike.

I would conclude that troubled subject positions came to be by silencing the issue of diversity and the inability of the curricular system (including me as the workshop leader) to sufficiently address and value differences.

To overlook troubled intersections in children is therefore a big barrier for building a safe learning community as the experience of being troubled affects how children interact with each other.

Limitations

Due to the limited scope of this study, my analysis mainly looked at the intersections of body weight, gender and ethnicity within a curricular setting and did not go into detail regarding e.g. dis/ability, skin color or class. The findings presented above therefore need to be understood as a mere fraction of a very complex issue. Thus a challenge for future research would be to broaden the perspective and to obtain a more inclusive approach from the very beginning.

It also needs to be acknowledged, that the time I spent with the children was limited and my intra-active participation only made a very limited perspective possible. The different aspects of my embodiment in this particular place and time have specific implications in terms of power differentials and relations that certainly influenced the outcome.

Throughout the research process, I embodied various different roles which were at times more at times less conflicting and compromising each other. The way I positioned myself and the way I have been positioned by the context school enabled certain interactions with the children and made others impossible. Furthermore, I conducted research in a set up environment where the student-body of the boys and girls who took part in my research was very present. The interactions that occurred and that I was able to observe therefore need to be perceived as a product of this set up. The decision to meet my research participants in this particular setting limits my analysis and leads it in a specific direction. Thus, the insights I could gain need to be understood as highly influenced by the research environment.

Further, this project took place in a specifically selected setting in Austria which certainly had an impact on the transferability and the generalizability of the findings. Also, I conducted this research project using a majority inclusive approach while being part of the majority.

Although I claim to follow a non-essentialist, post-constructionist approach, the cuts between two genders turned out to be very rigid. This fact certainly influences the findings and limits the informative value of the data gathered.

Outlook and further research

With my research, I aimed to contribute to the field of sport science and public health by providing post-constructionist feminist insights on body normativities in children's intersectional experience.

The purpose of this thesis was to inform good practice in juvenile health education on the one hand and to contribute with intersectional feminist insights to the interdisciplinary dialogue on body weight and health on the other.

To further help fostering inclusive health promotion, I suggest that emphasis needs to be placed on increasing the diversity in researcher and project teams to conceptualize programs that are informed by a variety of intersectional life situations.

Against this backdrop the effects of health programs could be evaluated with Staunaes' concept of a majority inclusive approach.

In my view, the challenge in future health program planning will be to extend the intersectional focus beyond body weight and gender in order to ensure fully embodied safe participation of children in collective learning experiences. Therefore, it would be important to support teachers of size and educators from the LGBTQ+ community and allow for more diversity in role models who can be allies, mentors and guides for LGBTQ+ youth, migrant children and children of size.

How teachers experience weight stigma, bias and discrimination due to their intersectional subjectivity and how far curricular that follow a non-oppressive, inclusive approach to health are able to render learning environments more safe for children and teachers alike needs thereby be subject of future research.

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Appendix 1

Information letter for School principals, teachers and supervisors (German)

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Das Projekt „*Club der ganz schön starken Freunde*“ der SPORTUNION Burgenland startet in die Pilotphase und bittet die (name of the school) um Unterstützung bei der Durchführung einer Pilotworkshop-Reihe zum Thema Selbstwert, Körpergewicht und Gesundheit.

Mein Name ist Claudia Koller. Ich bin als Projektkoordinatorin bei der SPORTUNION Burgenland für das Projekt *Club der ganz schön starken Freunde* verantwortlich.

Allgemeine Informationen zu den Pilotworkshops

Für März 2015 ist eine Pilotworkshop-Reihe geplant. Ziel ist es die Zielgruppe Kinder (Alter 11-14) besser kennen zu lernen, um das Projekt *Club der ganz schön starken Freunde* den Bedürfnissen der Kinder entsprechend anpassen zu können. Außerdem ist Partizipation ein Grundprinzip im Projekt. Daher wird darauf Wert gelegt, dass die Kinder als „JugendexpertInnen“ mitreden und mitgestalten.

Ziel/Zweck der Workshops

Die Kinder setzen sich kritisch mit der Frage auseinander „Wie stellen wir uns sicheren, mobbingfreien Unterricht vor?“

- Die Kinder lernen, wie sie als „JugendgesundheitsexpertInnen“ auf ihre Bedürfnisse hören und diese auch kommunizieren können
- Im Workshop sollen Rollenbilder aus den Medien besprochen werden
- Die Kinder haben die Möglichkeit über Erfahrungen mit Gewichtsdiskriminierung und Mobbing zu sprechen
- Wir erfahren was Gewichtsvielfalt bedeutet

In diesem Workshop diskutieren wir, wie ein achtsames Miteinander im Sport aussehen soll, damit sich jede/r wohl und sicher fühlt.

Mögliche Inhalte: Wir erforschen was es bedeutet selbstbewusst eigene Entscheidungen über unsere Gesundheit zu treffen.

Wir sprechen über die Angst Fehler zu machen, nicht gut genug zu sein und ausgelacht oder gemobbt zu werden. Wir lernen, dass wir mit dieser Angst nicht alleine sind und dass jeder Körper ok ist, so wie er ist – egal ob dick oder dünn, groß oder klein, breit oder schmal oder irgendwo dazwischen.

Information letter for School principals, teachers and supervisors (English translation)

Dear Sir/Madam,

The project “*Club der ganz schön starken Freunde*” [*The Club of strong Friends*] starts the pilot phase and is asking the (name of the school) for support for the realization of the pilot workshop series about Selbstwert, Körpergewicht und Gesundheit [self-worth, body weight and health]. My name is Claudia Koller. I am the project coordinator at the SPORTUNION Burgenland and responsible for the project *Club der ganz schön starken Freunde*.

General information regarding the pilot workshops

The pilot workshop series is planned for March 2015. The goal is to get to know the target group better (children between 11-14 years) in order to adapt the project *Club der ganz schön starken Freunde* according to the children’s needs. Moreover, participation is an ultimate principle for the project. For this reason, it is crucial that the children cooperate and help creating it as “youth experts”.

Workshop goals

- The children are being critical about the question “How do we imagine a safe and bullying free class?”
- The children learn how they – as “youth experts” – can realize their needs and also to communicate them
- During the workshops role models taken from the media are being discussed
- The children have the opportunity to talk about their experience with weight discrimination and bullying
- We will experience the meaning of weight diversity

In this workshop we are discussing how respectful cooperation should look like, so everybody feels good and safe.

Possible topics: We will investigate what it means to self-consciously make decisions about our health.

We will talk about the fear of failure, of not being good enough and of being laughed at or of getting bullied. We will learn, that we are not alone with this fear and that all bodies are okay the way they are – no matter how fat, thin, tall or small, big or slim, or somewhere in the middle.

The children await many exciting activities in the course of the workshop:

role plays, creating a collage, creative writing, creating video messages, conduct interviews with friends and families etc., etc. Furthermore, we will take enough time to discuss topics such as health, self-conscious, puberty and weight.

Appendix 2

Parental declaration of consent (German)

Liebe Eltern, liebe Erziehungsberechtigte

Ich lade Ihr Kind zur Workshop-Reihe „Selbstwert, Körpergewicht und Gesundheit“ ein. Die „ExpertInnenmeinung“ Ihres Kindes soll helfen, das Projekt „Club der ganz schön starken Freunde“ zu verbessern und ist Teil meiner Diplomarbeit. Die Teilnahme am Workshop erfolgt im Rahmen des Turnunterrichts oder der Nachmittagsbetreuung, ist aber selbstverständlich freiwillig. Ihr Kind kann zu jedem Zeitpunkt entscheiden, ob es mitmachen möchte, oder lieber am regulären Unterricht teilnimmt.

Ich bitte um Erlaubnis, das schriftliche Material aus den Workshops und etwaige Online-Konversationen verwenden zu dürfen. Die Identität der Kinder bleibt zu jeder Zeit gewahrt. Alle persönlichen Angaben werden anonymisiert. Die Informationen werden nicht an Dritte weiter gegeben und sie können jederzeit Einsicht in meinen Arbeitsprozess nehmen. Sie und Ihr Kind haben zu jeder Zeit das Recht und die Möglichkeit Ihr Einverständnis zu widerrufen.

Bei Fragen zu ethischen Richtlinien der Datenverarbeitung steht Ihnen meine Diplomarbeitbetreuerin Prof. Nina Lykke von der Universität Linköping zur Verfügung.
--

Kontakt: Nina Lykke

Kontakt: Claudia Koller

Linköping University, SE-581-83 LINKÖPING

Sollten Sie überdies Fragen zum Projekt „Club der ganz schön starken Freunde“ haben, sende ich Ihnen gerne Informationen per E-mail bzw. gebe telefonisch oder persönlich Auskunft. Nähere Informationen zum Projekt finden Sie auch auf der Homepage der SPORTUNION Burgenland unter www.XXXXX

Ja, ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die Materialien aus den Workshops und etwaigen Online-Diskussionen in der beschriebenen wissenschaftlichen Arbeit Verwendung finden.

Name des Kindes

Datum, Unterschrift des/der Erziehungsberechtigten:

Parental declaration of consent (English translation)

Dear Parents, dear Guardians

I would like to invite your child to the workshop series *Self-worth, Body Weight and Health*.

The insights of the children should help to improve the project *Club of Strong Friends* and will be part of my master thesis. The workshops will take place during the gym class or the afternoon supervision. The participation is voluntary. It is up to your child to decide if he/she wants to participate or attend the regular class instead.

I kindly request your permission to use the materials (posters, written comments, discussions, paintings etc.) that are created during the workshops.

The identity of your child will be guarded. All personal data are going to be anonymized. I will not hand over any information or data to third parties and you can request insight into my working process at any time.

You and your child are entitled to revoke your consent at any time.

Please contact me or my supervisor Prof. Nina Lykke, should you have any questions in regards to the data processing procedure.

Kontakt: Nina Lykke

Kontakt: Claudia Koller

For more information on the Project *Club of Strong Friends*, please contact me by phone or email or visit the project's web page at: [www. XXXX](http://www.XXXX)

Yes, I agree that materials created during the workshops are going to be used for the thesis outlined above.

Name of the child

Date, signature of parent or Guardian

Appendix 3

Workshop schedule

The structure presented below is based on the structure provided on the webpage of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and shows the general layout of the workshop schedule (NCVO 2017)¹².

Who	What	How	Material	Aim/Goal	Time
Claudia	Welcome/Intro	Frontal	Flip chart	Information	3´
Claudia	Agenda	Frontal	Flip chart	Getting familiar with the schedule	2´
Group	Ice breaker game	Round	2 Balls (red, blue)	Learning names, warming up	5´
Group	Safe space poster creation & discussion	Round	Blank Flip chart, cards, pens	Establishing and discussing ground rules	15´
Group	Role models & idols	Round	Chairs in a circle	Discussion, sharing experiences	15´
Group	Optional tasks (writing, drawing etc.)		Pens, paper	Alternative ways to share experiences	10´
Group	Discussion & Feedback	Round	Chairs	Sharing new realizations and summing up	10´

¹² Webpage of the NCVO accessed at: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-design-a-training-workshop/> on 10.10.2018

Appendix 4

Workshop documentation

Following the suggestions for interview documentation in Gläser and Laudel (2009: 119) the below presented table illustrates the date and duration of the workshops, the occasions and location they were held and if a supervisor was present during the workshop.

School	Date, Time	Location	Children	Teachers present
I	18-03-2015 13:30-14:30	Afternoon supervision, recreation room	5 boys (Age: 11)	3 female supervisors
II	19-03-2015 10:15-12:00 Follow up: 26-03-2015 10:20-12:05	PE class, Gym	12 boys 9 girls (Age: 11)	No teachers present
III	23-03-2015 14:20-15:10	Afternoon supervision, class room	4 boys 8 girls (Age 11)	1 female teacher

