Chapter 9
Socialisation into organised sports

Based on:
Socialisation into organised sports

Introduction

Increasing sport participation is a policy goal in many countries, because sport is regarded an important vehicle for generating all kinds of social, psychological, health and academic effects (e.g., European Commission, 2011). In order to promote sport participation, it is necessary to get a deeper understanding of why children participate in sports (Devis-Devis, et al., 2013; Light, et al., 2013; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2012).

A consistent finding across studies investigating determinants of sport participation is that sport socialisation at an early age appears to be an important determinant for sport participation throughout the life course (e.g., Birchwood, et al., 2008; Kraaykamp, et al., 2013; Scheerder et al., 2006; Telama et al., 2005). This means that the socio-cultural and economic context of the family, or network of families, is often seen as a major socialising context with regard to sport participation and other leisure activities (Bourdieu, 1984; Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Duncan, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill, & Jones, 2004; Kraaykamp et al., 2013; Macdonald et al., 2004; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010; Wheeler, 2012). However, there are also studies focussing more on the complex interplay of different social contexts influencing sport participation, such as the family, school or peers (e.g., Devis-Devis et al., 2013; Wright, et al., 2003). The relative influence of these socialising contexts and other determinants of sport and physical activity participation appears to be related to social class differences (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Humbert et al., 2006; Stuij, 2013).

Policy-makers and scholars are especially interested in ways to increase the sport participation rates of children from families with a lower socio-economic status (SES), since they are in general less inclined to participate in sports (e.g., Bourdieu, 1978; Hartmann-Tews, 2006; Nielsen, et al., 2012; Scheerder, Vanreusel, Taks, & Renson, 2002; Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010). Many studies focussed on barriers for youngsters from lower SES families to participate in sport, such as financial means, safety and availability of sport facilities (e.g., Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012; Devis-Devis et al., 2013; Kraaykamp et al., 2013; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2012). These are all relevant aspects of sport socialisation. However, to get a deeper insight in sport socialisation of youngsters from lower SES families, it is crucial to understand why some children from lower SES families do participate in sports, notwithstanding these presumed barriers to participate. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the socialisation into organised sports of youngsters from lower SES families.
Theoretical background

Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1978, 1984), (sport) behaviour can be seen as a manifestation of the individual habitus. Habitus is a system of dispositions that (unconsciously) influences thoughts, values, behaviour and interpretations (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2006). The habitus is acquired through life-long internalisation of social conditions, constraints and opportunities of the environment people are exposed to, with a special emphasis on early childhood (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2006). The habitus that people acquire depends at least in part on the specific forms and amount of capital (cultural, economic, social and symbolic) people possess. For the acquisition of a sports habitus, it can be suggested that one needs a specific type of cultural capital, namely ‘sporting capital’ (Coalter, 2007a; Nielsen et al., 2012; Stuij, 2013; Wilson, 2002). The foundation of the sports habitus, and therefore long-term sport participation, is sporting capital which encompasses technical aspects (e.g., sport skills, knowledge about rules and tactics), but also socio-cultural aspects (e.g., a network of ‘sporty’ people, knowing the socio-cultural context of sporting clubs, etc.) (Green, et al., 2013; Jakobsson, et al., 2012; Light et al., 2013; Nielsen et al., 2012; Stuij, 2013).

Bourdieu (1984) indicated that most capital is acquired through heritance (intergenerational transmission), which largely depends on family upbringing (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2012). This is in line with the studies mentioned before, that indicate field of the family as a primary context for sport socialisation (e.g., Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010; Wheeler, 2012). However, a major critique to Bourdieu’s work is that he did not explain the acquisition of a habitus in detail at the micro level (Bernstein, 1990, pp. 161-162; Noble & Watkins, 2003). Bernstein (1990) argued that theories like Bourdieu’s “cannot generate the principles of description of the agencies” (p. 163), because Bourdieu’s main focus was on the social (power) relations between people and not so much on the description of individuals and their motives (Bernstein, 1990; Harker & May, 1993). Therefore, based on the work of Halliday (1969), Bernstein distinguished the instructional, regulative, imaginative and interpersonal contexts in which socialisation takes place (Bernstein, 1974, p. 198). In the regulative context social interaction and (moral) knowledge about relationships can be learned. In the instructional context, children learn the necessary (technical) skills. In the imaginative context is room for experimenting with what is learned. In the interpersonal context, children learn about values and emotions. Furthermore, Bernstein argued that the basic agencies of socialisation are the family, school and peers (Bernstein, 1974, p. 174). He indicated that within these contexts socialisation takes place by developing a cultural identity and
the response to that identity (Bernstein, 1974, p. 174). This extensive view on socialisation forced him to limit his discussion to the “linguistic performances within the family critical to the process of socialization” (Bernstein, 1974, p. 175). As sport can also be regarded a cultural behaviour that requires socialisation (Bourdieu, 1984; Tamboer, 1992), Bernstein’s theoretical framework can be useful for explaining the interaction between the macro and micro level in the formation of the (sports) habitus (Bernstein, 1990; Bourdieu, 1984; Harker & May, 1993; cf. Stuij, 2013). It can be suggested that the technical aspects of sporting capital can be acquired in the instructional contexts, whereas the socio-cultural aspects of sporting capital can be acquired in the regulative and interpersonal contexts. The theoretical framework of Bernstein is useful to understand sport socialisation.

Stuij (2013) investigated the formation process of the sport habitus of elementary school children based on the four contexts described by Bernstein (1974, 1990). Because of the vast differences in sport participation rates between children of lower and higher social classes, she analysed differences in the habitus formation between these groups. The findings of Stuij (2013) indicated that most children from both higher and lower SES families encounter an instructional context where the technical aspects of sporting capital (sport skills, rules and tactics) were learned, although children from higher SES families are typically more endowed with these technical aspects of sporting capital. Therefore, the possession of the technical or tactical capacities of a sport does not seem to be sufficient to explain differences in sport participation levels between high and low SES groups. However, according to Stuij (2013), within the regulative and interpersonal context, differences existed between children from higher and lower SES backgrounds. For children from higher SES families, these contexts were mainly provided by the family. Children in the lower SES group were more engaged in unorganised sports and were influenced by three regulative and interpersonal contexts: the (extended) family, the PE teacher and peers.

However, it is the question whether the findings of Stuij (2013) are related to the age of her participants. When children enter puberty or transfer from elementary to secondary education, the relative influence on sport participation between socialising agents tends to change (Allender, et al., 2006; Bourdieu, 1984; Devis-Devis et al., 2013; Haycock & Smith, 2011) from parents to the extended family, peers and new social networks (Allender et al., 2006; Haycock & Smith, 2011; Zeijl, Poel, Bois-Reymond, Ravesloot, & Meulman, 2000). Therefore, it can be questioned whether the socialising agents are similar or different for first year high school
students (12-13 yrs) compared to elementary school children (e.g., Stuij, 2013; Wheeler, 2012) or older adolescents (Devis-Devis et al., 2013; Humbert et al., 2006) that were investigated in previous studies. As sport participation of children from middle- to lower social classes is lower in general (e.g., Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010) and sport participation rates tend to drop during the transition from elementary school to high school (Tiessen-Raaphorst, et al., 2010), it is important to get more insight in the complex interplay of socialising agents of youngsters from lower SES families during early adolescence. In the present case study, we drew upon Bernstein’s (1974, 1990) conceptual framework and Stuij’s (2013) research in the analysis of the contexts in which socialisation takes place. Given this frame of reference, the present study focussed on the socialising contexts of the family, school and peers as regulative and interpersonal contexts for sport socialisation for first year high school students with a lower SES background.

**Methods**

**Participants**

Twenty-five first year students from a secondary school located in Emmen (The Netherlands) were interviewed for this study. Emmen is a middle sized city (around 57,000 inhabitants) in the east of the Netherlands, surrounded by rural communities. Statistics show that Emmen has a high percentage of school drop-outs, lower educated inhabitants and inhabitants that are unfit for work, compared to the Dutch average (Dijk, 2006). This results in a relatively low socio-economic position of the city. The school at which this study was conducted offers all levels of secondary education and is considered a modern, well performing school with around 2000 students.

The participants were selected for the interviews by their PE teacher, who received selection criteria based on the sport participation level and socio-economic status of the students. The selection criterion for sport participation level was based on the Dutch research guidelines for the definition of sport participation (participate in sport at least 40 weeks per year) (Tiessen-Raaphorst et al., 2010). Parental occupation and education were used to classify the SES of the students, based on the Dutch occupation standards (CBS, 2010) and the UK National Statistics socioeconomic classification system (ONS, 2010). As the present study was performed to get insight in the sport socialisation of students from lower SES families, only students with a middle to low SES score (4 to 8) were included.
Table 9.1: Participant characteristics: participant number, sex, age, current education level, current sport participation, age at the moment of first introduction to organised sports, current or past sport participation of parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nr</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Edu. level*</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Age sport</th>
<th>Sport parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Swimming, Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Horse riding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Squash, Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Diving, Dancing, Boxing, Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Horse riding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mountain biking, Horse riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Field hockey</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Speed skating, Football</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Horse riding</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Football, volleyball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>havo</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Handball, Volleyball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>havo</td>
<td>Horse riding</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Running, Swimming, Horse riding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>vmbo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>vwo</td>
<td>Boy scouts</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Handball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>havo</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fitness, Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>havo</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Handball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>havo</td>
<td>None**</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Educational level: VMBO = pre vocational education, HAVO = pre professional education, VWO = pre university education

** recently quit his football participation
After rechecking the inclusion criteria after the interviews, it was found that two participants stopped participating in organised sport three years ago. These participants were excluded from the analysis. One participant recently stopped, but did meet the criterion for sport participation six months prior to the interview. Therefore, this participant was included. In addition, two participants were excluded because their socioeconomic status was too high (SES score 2 and 3). This resulted in 21 included participants (9 girls and 12 boys; $M_{\text{age}} = 13.3$ years; SD $\approx 0.9$) (see Table 9.1). Three participants had a foreign ethnic background, although two of them were born in the Netherlands. The participant who was not born in the Netherlands was adopted by Dutch parents.

**Procedure**

First, the study was approved by the ethics committee of the VU University Amsterdam. Before recruiting the participants, the school management was informed about the objective and nature of the study. Subsequently, the PE teacher informed the potential participants about the study. After their agreement to participate but before the interviews took place, an informed consent was obtained from the parents and participants assuring anonymity. The actual data collection by interviewing the participants was conducted in March and April 2013. The interviews were semi-structured, which enabled subsequent and specific questioning. The interviews were carried out by two researchers (second and third author) during the PE class of the participants, in a private room next to the gymnasium. Each semi-structured interview lasted between approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The time for the interviews was limited by the class schedule of the participants and earlier experiences with the attention span of participants from this age group. The interview guide was based on the three possible regulative and interpersonal contexts for sport socialisation (school, peers and family), as Bernstein (1974, p. 174) indicated this to be the main agencies for socialisation. By conducting a pilot interview with a 12-year-old boy, the interview guide was further improved. Examples of questions from the interview guide are shown in Table 9.2. The interviewers introduced themselves before each interview and explained the purpose of the research, in order to accommodate the participants.

All the interviews were audio-recorded and during the interviews notes were taken by the interviewers about issues which needed to be considered during the coding.
Table 9.2: Examples of questions guiding the interviews (translated from Dutch).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the reasons for you to participate in sport?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did these reasons change over the years you have been participating in [sport]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would be a reason for you to quit participating in [sport]?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what way did you learn about the social manners that are present within your sport club?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In which ways do your parents support your sports participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what way does playing [sport] during PE influence your actual [sport] participation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever considered asking your PE teacher for advice regarding the choice for a new sport?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you already know friends who were actively involved in [sport]?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis
All the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. During the process of data analysis, two researchers read the transcripts independently to identify the three primary themes (school, family and peers). Subsequently, subcategories within these themes were formed based on relevant literature, the interview data and discussions between the researchers. The actual coding involved the following 3 steps. First, data were categorised according to the primary themes. Logically, this will filter out any irrelevant or repeating data. Second, within these themes data were coded according to the subcategories. Third, subcategories within the themes that coded for similar information were connected with each other (Denscombe, 2010). This process provided a categorical structure of the data and became the basis of the findings presented in the following section. Consultation between the researchers and re-checking of the transcribed interviews during the analysis were used to improve the reliability of the data analysis.

Findings
The data are categorised along the three primary themes (school, family and peers), in order to get insight in the regulative and interpersonal contexts for sport socialisation. Quotes were translated from Dutch by the authors (I=Interviewer, P=Participant).
Chapter 9

Family

The introduction into sports is very important for sport socialisation, as it provides children the opportunity to get acquainted with the social context of the sporting club (Macphail, et al., 2003). Especially when children joined their parents from a young age to the parents’ sporting clubs, this introduction can have a strong impact on the acquisition of the social aspects of sporting capital. At a young age, it is to be expected that the family is the most obvious way to get introduced to sports, which has been shown in previous research indicating the family as a major socialising force for sport participation (e.g., Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008; Kraaykamp et al., 2013; Light et al., 2013; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010, 2012; Wheeler, 2012). Regardless of their age at the moment of introduction, most participants in the present study indicated that their parents were primarily responsible for the introduction to sports, as the following example illustrates:

I: Do you remember why you started to play football?
P 17: I guess that was my father. He played football himself.

The strong influence of parents is somewhat surprising, as it is often suggested that children from lower SES families are in general less stimulated by their families to participate in organised sports (e.g., Bourdieu, 1978; Bourdieu, 1984; Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Nielsen et al., 2012; Scheerder et al., 2002). It appears that the parents of ‘sporty’ students with a lower SES have a similar role in the introduction to sports as the parents of students with a higher SES (Stuij, 2013; Wheeler, 2012).

The participants experienced the decisions to start participating in a sport as a free choice without explicit influence of their parents. However, it can be argued that these decisions were influenced by the habitus of the children. Habitus constrains the possibilities and allows a predetermined pattern of behaviours, it is the “unchosen principle of all choices” (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2006, p. 7).

The participants mentioned some parental practices that stimulated their ongoing participation in sports, after the initial introduction. These parental practices can be categorised as the parental practices that Wheeler (2012) distinguished for children from higher SES families: support, encouragement and coaching.

The way in which the parents of the participants in the present study supported and encouraged their children was comparable to younger children (Wheeler, 2012) and adolescents (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007) from families with a higher SES. Parents supported their children with transportation to practices and matches, attendance at matches and financial support, as is illustrated by the
following excerpt from an interview:

I: Are your parents actively involved in your volleyball participation?
P 20: They are always present during my matches and they drive me to most of the away-games. But especially my mother comes to see me a lot.

This kind of support is very important for continued engagement in sports, as an absence of this kind of instrumental support might be a barrier to stay engaged in sports (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Humbert et al., 2006; Macdonald et al., 2004).

In addition, the parents encouraged their children by cheering for them at matches and giving advice about technical and tactical situations. In most cases, the encouragement was experienced as positive and stimulating, as the following quote illustrates:

I: Does your father give any advices about your sport [football]?
P 1: Yes, when I was a goalkeeper...he always helped me by standing next to the goal and he always said: “look over there, stay focused, etc.”
I: Do you appreciate the help he gives you?
P 1: Yes, very much because he knows a lot about football so it really helps me.

Some of the parents acted as coaches of their children's team. Other parents talked with the participants about their sports, sharing knowledge and values about the sport. In most cases, this was knowledge about tactical and technical skills, but sometimes also about other aspects of sport participation, such as the potential health benefits and the possibilities for social interaction. This teaching and coaching function (Wheeler, 2012) was strongest when the parents (used to) play the same sport as the participants:

I: In what way do your parents support you in your sport participation? Do they attend any of your matches?
P 19: Well, for instance, my father is our head coach. So he is always present during our matches. He used to play football so he has a lot of sport specific knowledge.

I: What is the influence of your parents on your football participation?
P 14: My father is also a trainer of my brothers team. And my mother visits every match
I: Did you learn any football specific skills from your father?
P 14: Yeah, really just how to play football and that kind of things.
The involvement of parents increased the significance of sport participation in the lives of the participants. Moreover, some participants experienced sport participation as an activity of the whole family. This means that the participants in the present study experienced a stronger influence of what the family considered important values and behaviours, compared to older adolescents with a lower SES, most of whom experienced no whole family approach to physical activity (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). Habitus formation is often a process of inheritance, which is illustrated by the fact that the parents of all participants (used to) play sports. In fact, 13 of the 21 participants played the same sports as their parents (used to) do (see Table 9.1). These shared activities might be crucial for the formation and reinforcement of the sports habitus (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Macdonald et al., 2004).

In a previous study, it has been found that for younger children of a lower SES background, the extended family, such as uncles and cousins, provided a regulative context (Stuij, 2013). In a similar fashion, younger children with a higher SES experienced an influence of networks of families (Wheeler, 2012). This means that not only the nuclear family had an influence on sport socialisation, but also the families of friends or their parent’s friends. However, in the present study only four children referred to the extended family as a source of sport socialisation. A girl explained:

I: Would you have decided to participate in horse riding even if your friend would have chosen another sport?
P 2: Yes, I would have....because my cousin was already involved in horse riding. That is also how I convinced my parents that I wanted to participate in horse riding.
[...]
I: Are there any more family members involved in horse riding?
P 2: Yes there are. My other cousin, my uncle and aunt are also involved. Moreover my grandparents participated in horse riding

In conclusion, for most participants parents formed a regulative context, because they introduced their children to sport and the social context of the sporting club. In addition, some parents formed an interpersonal context, as they explicitly shared values, opinions and knowledge about sport participation with their children. The parental practices and interactions experienced in these contexts are crucial for the significance of sports in the lives of the participants. They exerted a strong influence on the acquisition of the social aspects of sporting capital: knowledge
about sport, values of the sport, familiarity with a sporting club and the support to stay engaged. Therefore, it can be concluded that the parents of the participants in the present study are important for the formation of the sports habitus. This influence is comparable to the influence of the nuclear family of younger children with a higher SES (Stuij, 2013; Wheeler, 2012) and older adolescents regardless of their SES (Humbert et al., 2006).

However, the absence of a clear influence of the extended family or networks of families is in contrast to the influence on younger children with a lower (Stuij, 2013) or higher SES (Wheeler, 2012).

**School**

Often, the school is regarded as a context that might contribute to sport participation (Bailey, 2006; Green, et al., 2005; Trudeau & Shephard, 2008). The expectation is that PE and school sport have an influence on sport participation during the life course. The participants in the present study regarded their PE lessons and extra-curricular school sport as enjoyable activities, in which new sports can be introduced:

I: What kind of sports do you play during PE?
P 5: Most of the time we play team sports, but sometimes more track and field kinds of activities.
I: Are there any sports which you have kind of ‘discovered’ during your PE lessons?
P 5: Hmmm….maybe for instance volleyball…
I: How come?
P 5: I never enjoyed watching it….however by just doing it with your classmates helped to really see it more as a fun sport in which you can win in the end. And I really like winning so…

This is in line with the findings of Stuij (2013) who regarded the school as an important instructive context in which the technical and tactical aspects of sports can be learned. However, the participants in the present study did not regard PE or school sports as a regulative context, as none of the participants referred to knowledge about the social aspects of sport participation when discussing the school context. In addition, the participants indicated that they did not try sports outside of the school context that were introduced during PE. Therefore, the activities offered during PE and extra-curricular school sports were not regarded as relevant to their ‘out of school’ club sport participation. A boy explained this as follows:
I: Did you participate in any of the school sports?
P 15: Yes I have. I joined the school football team last year. However, it did not went very well, but I liked it though.
I: So would you consider participating in football more?
P 15: No not really. I just enjoy it doing during lunch-breaks here at school. But I would never consider actually joining a football club

Interestingly, the participants indicated that they did not like playing their ‘own’ sport during PE, because either the level was too low or classmates did not put enough effort in trying. Furthermore, sometimes the participants felt they were forced to participate in dull or boring sports, as the following excerpts exemplify:

I: Do you play a lot of football during the PE lessons?
P 9: No not really unfortunately…
I: So what do you think about the other sports you play during the PE lessons?
P 9: I don’t really enjoy them as much as I would enjoy playing football, but…yeah….you just have to participate.

I: What do you think about the PE lessons? Did you develop another view on the sports you played during those lessons?
P 17: Not quite, because in PE you play those sports for a prolonged period of time. This makes it very dull in the end.

In these instances, the interpersonal context within the school did not stimulate the formation of a sports habitus. Moreover, experiencing some sports as dull may even stimulate negative feelings towards a sport.

Although the participants regarded the relationship with their PE teacher as pleasant, they did not talk about sport participation with their teacher. For example, some participants indicated that their teacher had no idea about what type of sport they performed outside of school. In addition, they would not turn to their PE teacher if they had questions about sport participation or when they would be searching for a new sport:

I: Does your PE teacher know you participate in horse riding?
P 6: Well….I guess he knows…
I: So do you talk about horse riding with him?
P 6: No never actually. But I don’t really care
[...]
Socialisation into organised sports

I: If you were looking for a new sport, would you turn to him for any advice?

P 6: No, not at all.

From these findings, it can be concluded that for these participants PE and school sports provided no regulative context in which the social aspects of sporting capital can be learned. This is in line with the conclusions of previous studies, stating that in the school context “nobody received information about environmental, cultural or psychosocial issues linked to physical activity and sport participation” (Devís-Devis et al., 2013, p. 12), that children do not learn about the social connotations of being a member of a sports club (Stuij, 2013) and that the PE teacher did not provide encouragement for participating in physical activities or school sport (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). Therefore, the school context did not influence the formation or reinforcement of a sports habitus for these participants.

Peers

Most interviewees indicated that peers or friends played a role in their sport socialisation, which is in line with other studies indicating that peers were important for the motivation to play sports for youngsters from lower SES families (Allender et al., 2006; Dagkas & Stathi, 2007). For most of the participants in the present study, peers lowered the threshold for sport participation. Although friends were not considered overly important for the idea that sport should be a part of their life (sports habitus), some interviewees indicated that the actual step to sport participation was influenced by friends. A girl explained how her friend introduced her to field hockey:

I: In what way did you come in contact with field hockey?

P 8: It was just after my injury....which made me quit gymnastics. I wanted to stay actively involved in sports and was looking for an alternative. This friend of mine played field hockey and told me a lot of things. So she kind of introduced me to field hockey

The persuasion of friends to actually start participating in sport was also related to the choice for a particular type of sport. For instance, for some participants friends were considered an important information source when they could not decide which sport to choose. Most often, they joined friends to a practice to try a new sport, as is illustrated by this quote:
Chapter 9

I: Can you describe the first moments in which you came in contact with football?

P 21: Yes it was because of my friends that I first heard about football. They were already actively involved and because I did not participate in any sports at that time….They told me football was a very cool sport. Therefore I decided to visit a training and from there on I wanted to play football.

For these participants, peers were important for club sport participation, which is comparable to the role peers have for younger children of higher SES families (Stuij, 2013). However, younger children of lower SES families considered their peers to be mainly important for participation in unorganised sports, such as playing outdoors (Stuij, 2013).

The influence of friends on the type of sport was further emphasised by answers to the question what the participant would do if his/her friends would join another sport. Some of them indicated that they would follow their friends to another sport:

I: You already told us your friends were of great influence on your participation in football. But let’s say if your friends had been involved in for instance volleyball. Would you have considered this as a possible sport?

P 5: Hmmm….I don’t know really…I would have to think about it a lot and it could well be that I would have participated in volleyball if it was the case

The social interaction with friends is considered an important motivation to play sport, which is in line with previous studies (Humbert et al., 2006). The interviewees thought it was important to have fun with teammates and that an absence of that fun-factor might be a reason to quit:

I: What could be a possible reasons for you to quit sports?

P 4: Probably a team which is not that fun anymore. If you can’t give 100% for each other I would lose the fun […..] I have experienced this once and it made me really doubt if I should continue sports

In summary, peers were experienced by the participants to be mainly important for the introduction to a particular sport. In that sense, peers formed a regulative context. Moreover, peers formed an interpersonal context because the social contact and interpersonal relations between the participants and their friends were considered an important motivation and an important part of their sport experience. Although peers were not regarded as important for the initial habit of
playing sport, they can be considered an important context for the acquisition of sporting capital.

Furthermore, the participants indicated that sport participation acted as a way to relate to peers. From notes taken during the interviews, it can be concluded that participants were very happy and proud to talk about their sport experiences. In that sense, being sporty served as (symbolic) capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which might be converted into other forms of (economic, cultural and social) capital (Driscoll & Wood, 1999; Stempel, 2006).

Discussion and Conclusion

Many studies investigating social class differences in sport participation focussed on reasons why people with a lower SES background are less inclined to participate in sports (e.g., Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012; Devis-Devis et al., 2013). However, in order to get a complete grasp on the sport socialisation of youngsters with a lower SES background, it is also important to understand how (some) persons with a lower SES nevertheless develop a sports habitus. Therefore, the present study focussed on the influence of family, school and peers on the formation of the sports habitus of young adolescents with a lower SES background.

The data showed that the parents are extremely important for the predisposition to play sports and for transferring the socio-cultural aspects of sporting capital. Parents introduced children to the social context of the sporting club, but also guided the formation of sports related values and behaviour. Therefore, the parents formed a regulative and interpersonal context (Bernstein, 1974). This finding seems to be in line with the theoretical framework of Bourdieu (1984), in which socialisation in the early years is considered very important. For participants in the present study, the extended family played a marginal role in sport socialisation. It might be that for these participants the extended family is not proximate enough during the early adolescent years in order to have an influence on the sport socialisation of the present sample.

The school context of the participants did not seem able to form a regulative or interpersonal context in which they learned about the social aspects relevant to organised sport participation or the values and feelings belonging to sport. Furthermore, PE-teachers were not considered significant agents for sport socialisation. The absence of an influence of the school context on the formation of sporting capital is in line with Bourdieu (1984), who indicated that the apparent acquisition of capital within the educational system is often a conversion of
inherited capital (p.73). Moreover, if anything, PE lessons sometimes had a negative influence on the image of some sport, as they were regarded as boring by some.

The results of this study show that peers (friends) play an important role in the choice for certain sports or the introduction to new sports. Through peers, some participants got acquainted with new social contexts which might reshape their (sports) habitus (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 2006). Although the predisposition to play sports might be transmitted primarily by the parents, peers have an influence on the interpretation that these young adolescents give to their sports habitus.

In summary, it can be concluded that the sports habitus of the young adolescents with a lower SES background in the present study is mainly formed by the parents, who provide a regulative and interpersonal context in which the social aspects of sporting capital can be transmitted. The peers formed a regulative and interpersonal context that restructured and often reinforced the sports habitus. It should be noted that the results found in the present study may be explained by the specific social and demographic context of the participants studied.

**Similarities between youngsters with a higher and lower SES background**

Interestingly, the socialisation into sports of these young adolescents with a lower SES background shows strong similarities with the sport socialisation of youngsters with a higher SES background (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Stuij, 2013; Wheeler, 2012). For instance, in line with previous studies indicating the importance of parents in sport socialisation (e.g., Birchwood et al., 2008; Bourdieu, 1984; Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010; Wheeler, 2012), the participants in the present sample considered the role of their parents in a similar way as younger children with a higher SES (Stuij, 2013; Wheeler, 2012).

For the participants in the present study, the regulative and interpersonal context within the school was absent. This finding is consistent with earlier studies indicating an absence of an influence of PE or school sports on sport participation, regardless of SES (Dagkas & Stathi, 2007; Devis-Devis et al., 2013; Evans & Davies, 2010; Green, 2012).

Peers played an important role in restructuring the sports habitus for the young adolescents in the present sample by influencing the type of sports which they participated in. This is similar to the role of peers of children from higher SES, who were involved in joining a sports club (Stuij, 2013).

Although sporting club membership is more common in higher SES groups (e.g., Bourdieu, 1978; Kraaykamp et al., 2013; Tuyckom & Scheerder, 2010), the present study indicates that if youngsters with a lower SES participate in organised sports,
the socialisation process is similar to that of youngsters with a higher SES. This would support the claim that socialisations into sports is relatively independent of SES (cf. Birchwood et al., 2008, p. 291). The present study indicates that parents are the key to sport participation: If they are able to provide a context in which sporting capital can be transmitted, chances are higher that children will (continue to) participate in sports, irrelevant of the SES of the parents. Nevertheless, socio-economic context differences are very relevant when studying differences in participation rates between youngsters from lower and higher SES families.

**Differences between younger and older children with a lower SES**

Another aim of this study was to give some insight in possible differences between the interplay of socialising agents for young adolescents compared to younger children. A difference between the younger children in the study of Stuij (2013) and the adolescents in the present study was the role of the extended family or network of families which played an important role in the formation of the sports habitus for the younger children (Stuij, 2013).

The school context played a similar role for younger children (Stuij, 2013) and young adolescents from lower SES families by providing an instructional context for some young adolescents but not a regulative or interpersonal context.

The role of peers is different compared to younger children with a lower SES background, because at a younger age peers were mainly involved in unorganised sports and play outside. Peers did not play a major role in organised sport participation for children with a lower SES (Stuij, 2013).

It may be that in the earlier years the parents are very dominant in socialisation (Bourdieu, 1984), which leaves no room for other socialising agents to restructure the habitus. Based on a comparison between the study of Stuij (Stuij, 2013) and the present findings, it may be suggested that when children enter adolescence, other agents gain influence on the sports habitus. Although this influence might be beneficial, it may also be that influences other than the parents’ can lead to drop-out from sports (e.g., Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008). It has to be noted though that in the study of Stuij (2013) the younger children with a lower SES were primarily involved in unorganised sport and physical activities, whereas in the present study sport club members were included. The hypothesis that the interplay between socialising agents changes when children enter adolescence should be investigated in a longitudinal study in which the interplay between socialising agents is followed from an early age into adulthood in different SES contexts.
Both Bourdieu (1984) and Bernstein (1974, 1990) indicated that interpretation and meaning is context dependent. This means that the findings of the present study must be understood in the light of the structure of the interviews and the socio-economic context of the participants. For instance, it may be that the sport clubs in which these participants were involved can be considered lower class sport clubs, as most participants were involved in football (Bourdieu, 1984). This would be an indication that social class does play a role in the way sport socialisation works.

Although Bernstein (1974), Bourdieu (1984) and Stuij (2013) indicated the family, school and peers to be primary socialising contexts (fields), it may be that other fields, such as religion, (social) media, elite athletes and government campaigns, influence the sport socialisation of young adolescents as well. Therefore, the focus of the interviews on the family, school and peers may have influenced the findings. It may be that youngsters from lower SES families differ in the influence of those other socialising factors from youngsters from higher SES families. Nevertheless, based on the findings of this study it can be hypothesised that the way in which sport socialisation works is relatively independent of SES and that the interplay between fields and socialising agents is different for young adolescents compared to younger children. Although these hypotheses have to be investigated in future studies, this study contributes to the understanding of how social class and sport socialisation processes may be related.
Socialisation into organised sports