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How adolescents experience the rhythmic  
gymnastics community in the Oslo region:  
Identity and relative poverty

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## Abstract

This master's thesis aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of adolescents' experience in the rhythmic gymnastics community in the Oslo region, with a specific focus on their identities and to what extent, if any, they experience relative poverty. To date, research on the rhythmic gymnastics community, within a hermeneutical paradigm, appears to be minimal and this project hopes to contribute to filling this gap. The project is based on previous research from various fields and uses insights from theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens and also takes into account my own experience from within the community. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. The participants were all female adolescents, with varying levels of performance, time spent in the sport and most trained approximately 12 to 15 hours per week. Through the analysis and interpretation of the generated data I found that they all identified as a gymnast at some point in their career, and the sport seemed to be an important part of their lives. Relative poverty did not appear to be a direct issue, however, consumption, brand awareness and comparing items were seemingly a pronounced feature in the community.

*Keywords:* Rhythmic gymnastics, identity, relative poverty, adolescents, brand awareness, semi-structured interviews

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# 1. Background and conceptual context

This chapter provides the background to this project and conceptualises its context. Following this introduction, I will give a brief description of rhythmic gymnastics. The next segment will provide an overview over previous research and conceptualise the phenomena. Lastly, based on the above, I will present the research question that will be answered throughout this thesis.

## 1.1 Introduction

Zygmunt Bauman, a relatively modern scholar, discusses and describes how today's society is driven by consumption and the market (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 278-280). Norway is generally considered to be a classless society or at least is less affected by social class than other countries (Bahr Bugge, 2010, p. 129). The reason behind this is that individualisation has become a greater part of today's society. Norway has a social system that gives individuals choice despite for instance, social class, gender and geographic affiliation (Dahlgren & Ljungren, 2010, p. 15). As our society progresses sport has become an important aspect of our social lives. From a political point of view sport has major benefits for our society, such as, health and social inclusion (Meld.St.26 (2011-2012), p. 66). Politically, the government has an aim that everyone should be given the opportunity to do sport. Their target audience is especially children and adolescents (Meld.St.26 (2011-2012), p. 14). In line with the government, the Norwegian Confederation of Sport (NIF) has developed the well-known slogan "Sport for All", as a goal, which in theory means that everyone should be able to do any sport according to their ambitions and abilities. Moreover, sport is a huge part of adolescents' lives since more than 80 % of children and adolescents are at some point a member of a sports club. Therefore, sport is considered Norway's biggest youth organisation (Seippel et al, 2016, p 13).

However, NIF is under threat from several quarters when it comes to adolescents. For instance, the commercialisation of sport has pushed exercise into fitness centres and this trend has increased a lot among adolescents over the last decade (Seippel, et al, 2016, p.13). As a partial result of this, NIF ironically has a huge drop-out rate which, also threatens its overall image (Bakke et al, 2016, p. 194). Another interesting example is the increasing trend that sport is becoming more expensive and the result is that many

children and adolescents are excluded from sport (Oslo Economics, 2020). This increasing trend is also backed up by previous research, which has mainly focused on the economic sides of poverty in sport, sport managers' perspectives on poverty in sports, and how class structures or socioeconomic status affect activity levels in sports (Estabrooks et al, 2003; Harju, 2008; Seippel et al, 2011; Vandermeersch & Scheerder, 2017; Oslo Economics, 2020). Also, in the media during the last couple of years, expenses and social class connected to sports have become a popular topic, especially in sports that require a lot of equipment, for example alpine skiing (Brodahl & Myhre, 2019). These issues have been on my mind as they raise questions on how this might influence adolescents in sport.

In my experience as a gymnast, coach and judge in rhythmic gymnastics in Norway I have the impression that there has become an increasing amount of pressure to consume products within sports. This includes all items from sport equipment and other consumer items such as shoes, bags, clothes and technology products. Therefore, it would be interesting to research if my impression and other scholars' theories of modern society such as Bauman, is found in the rhythmic gymnastics community. I find it interesting to examine this because gymnastics in general is often considered a relatively cheap sport, especially seen in light of, for instance, alpine skiing (Oslo Economics, 2020, p. 27). Even if gymnastics is "cheap", it might not feel cheap for the adolescents involved. I believe that adolescents are especially interesting to study, because, sport is a vital part of adolescents' lives, whether it is in school, unorganised sports such as running in the forest, or in organised sport. Also, change is a huge part of being a teenager i.e. going through puberty and developing their identity through different aspects of their lives (Seippel, et al, 2016, p. 13-15). Moreover, adolescents live in contemporary society, and therefore, might experience consumption pressure, which could lead to the feeling of being partially excluded and create identity issues. To get a better understanding of these notions, I therefore, want to examine their experiences in the rhythmic gymnastics community (RGC) in the Oslo region.

## **1.2 A brief introduction to rhythmic gymnastics**

Rhythmic gymnastics (RG) is a judged sport that has its roots in the German and Swedish system, where the use of apparatus and developing rhythm through exercise

was a point of departure (Olympics, n.d., Rhythmic Gymnastics). It is a sport that has incorporated different elements from ballet, artistic gymnastics and has evolved with the years. The apparatus that is used is rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon, and accompanied by music. Today the sport consists of an individual and a group discipline. In the individual discipline, as the name implies, one gymnast competes. The group discipline consists of five gymnasts that compete together as a unit. Rhythmic gymnastics is recognised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Federation Internationale de Gymnastique (the international federation) and the Norwegian gymnastics federation. It was first included in the Olympic program in the summer games in 1984 in Los Angeles (Olympics, n.d., Rhythmic Gymnastics).

### **1.3 Conceptual context**

This subchapter is divided in two. The first part will give a brief overview of previous research, especially on relative poverty and how consumption can lead to different consequences. The next part will conceptualise theories and concepts connected to relative poverty, social exclusion, contemporary society, consumption, identities and social class.

#### **1.3.1 Previous research – what do we know?**

Most research done on poverty and sports is connected to the economic aspects, sport managers' perspectives on poverty and how class structures or socioeconomic status affect activity levels in sport (Estabrooks et al, 2003; Harju, 2008; Seippel et al, 2011; Vandermeersch & Scheerder, 2017; Oslo Economics, 2020). While relative poverty, as a concept in sports, has not been studied to any great extent on an international level, it has been given even less attention in Norway. However, there are some studies that have touched upon the phenomena and a few that have explicitly examined it, but not on a micro level in sports. Most of the research found on relative poverty is usually connected to the family's lack of income and therefore children and adolescents cannot participate in activities.

#### *Relative poverty in an international perspective*

In the UK a study was conducted with focus on how families play a crucial role in children's sports development and their success in their specific sport. Findings indicate



that families' biggest role in their children's success in sports is their financial and emotional support; the participants acknowledge some children have to choose which competitions they can participate in because of financial reasons or time constraints (Kay, 2000). Even though, this study does not explicitly elaborate on relative poverty and the implications around the phenomena, it does imply that children in sports are dependent on their families to fit into a certain box: in this case "elite athletes". This could imply that the gymnast's background is crucial to keep up with possible consumption pressure and not feeling the sense of relative poverty.

Two studies conducted in South Korea have researched relative poverty explicitly, although indirectly, within sports. The first study about relative poverty is connected to how people become sport fans (Rhee et al, 2017, p. 118) and the second study is how young Koreans feel relative poverty in connection to sport celebrity scandals (Chung et al, 2019, p. 1396). However, while both of the studies differ from each other, but they do have a significant and important similarity; that the feeling of relative poverty or relative deprivation is circumstantial and does exist (Rhee et al, 2017; Chung et al, 2019). This could mean that the research I am conducting might be contextual to the gymnast, club or the rhythmic gymnastics community.

#### *Relative poverty and sport in Norway*

The term relative poverty, at least within a sport context, has not been explored in Norway to a great degree. Bakke et al (2016) conducted research on low-income families and how that influenced their children's participation in after school activities, but also how the parents experience not being able to live up to the social standard in society. Although, a major part of the research is about parents in low-income families and their experience, it does point to the mechanisms that one also finds in relative poverty, such as the feeling of not being able to live up to the expectancy and pressures of people with whom one interacts and being socially excluded (Bakke et al, 2016, p 207-208).

#### *Adolescents, poverty, social exclusion and consumption*

Since I want to examine adolescents in the RGC it is imperative to obtain an understanding of previous research on adolescents and aspects that could enhance the feeling of relative poverty such as poverty, social exclusion and consumption.

Sletten (2004) conducted research on more than 5000 adolescents in Norway. From that sample, 37 percent had at least one experience where they could not participate in social activities because of their families' limited economic resources. Also, the results appear to confirm the assumption that families' income and adolescents' relationships are interrelated. For instance, the research also illustrates that adolescents from families with lower income have a greater probability to experience social isolation and being unpopular or bullied. Sletten does acknowledge that, in the sample, the majority of adolescents from families with lower income did not feel a sense of social isolation. However, most of the adolescents from families with lower income experienced unpopularity (Sletten, 2004, p. 64). Nonetheless, the findings do indicate that consumption habits of the adolescents that feel socially isolated, experiencing being unpopular or feeling friendless, are lower than the average of the sample (Sletten, 2004, p.65).

Sletten conducted another study on adolescents and socialising with peers. The major finding is that "poor" adolescents are less likely to socialise with peers than among the "non-poor". The research illuminates that even though Norway is a generous welfare society, adolescents can still experience the feeling of relative poverty. In the sense of feeling subjectively poor, the "poor" adolescents feel that they are less popular, are less active in social activities and they feel the lack of close friends (Sletten, 2010, p. 309-310).

Both studies conducted by Sletten (2004; 2010) indicate that consumption or the subjective feeling of not having enough resources can lead to social isolation, being unpopular, less active in social activities and lacking close friends. Also, the studies imply that consumption habits and feeling "poor" is a relative matter which can have negative consequences. It will, therefore, be interesting if these mechanisms can be found in the rhythmic gymnastics community.

### **1.3.2 Conceptualising the phenomena**

#### *Poverty and relative poverty*

Relative poverty differs from poverty and it is, therefore, important to have an understanding of what poverty involves before delving into the meaning of relative poverty. Poverty is a term that has many definitions both politically and theoretically:

for instance, the European Union has a different definition than Norway. The European Union defines poverty as a person that earns less than 60 % of the median income (Bakke et al, 2016, p. 194). As this research is going to be conducted in Norway, a definition that could cover Norwegian society would be ideal. However, while a formal Norwegian definition of poverty does not exist, some understanding of the concept will be necessary. According to the White Paper number six issued by the Norwegian parliament, poverty involves people that have unacceptable living standards because of lack of material and economic resources. The lack of resources is often connected to low income (St.meld nr 6 (2002-2003), p. 7). While one overall theoretical definition of poverty does not exist, the general idea is that poverty is described as multidimensional, a process and is characterized by a lack of income (Saunders, 2008, p. 75). According to the definition above, poverty in sport would involve families that do not have sufficient income to even participate in sport. Families with a lower income of 60% of the median, will probably prioritize basic needs such as food, water and a safe home, rather than leisure activities such as sport. In Norway, in 2020, 11 percent of children under 18 years of age lived in low-income families, which is a significant increase since 2013 when the percentage was 3,5 per cent (Statistisk sentralbyrå [SSB], 2020). Although, poverty (and its direct implication for participation in sport) is an important topic in itself, I want to explore the impact *relative* poverty has on the adolescents in the rhythmic gymnastics community. I believe the concept of relative poverty is a better point of departure.

Peter Townsend was one of the first scholars to theorize that poverty has a relative dimension. Townsend believed that poverty is when people in general do not have sufficient resources to obtain the standard of living or participate in activities that are normal or socially acceptable in society (Fløtten & Pedersen, 2008, p. 37-38). According to Townsend's definition of poverty, one can clearly understand that he believes that poverty is relative and has a social aspect. However, his main goal was to examine and find a method to reveal a scientific poverty index in The United Kingdom. Townsend's idea was to scientifically prove a certain point where the risk of poor standard of living conditions and social exclusion might occur in the low end of the income distribution. The point that he believed was scientifically proven, is highly disagreed upon by scholars, and in later years research has proven that poverty has a linear correlation between low and high income, rather than a specific point (Fløtten &

Pederesen, 2008, p. 37-38). Although, Townsend's discussion of the relative aspect of poverty is clearly important, his scientific index is, I believe, not suitable in this context, because I want to examine adolescents' experiences of relative poverty, which is subjective and not necessarily possible to scientifically prove with statistics.

Another definition is that *relative poverty* refers to which resources people have access to, when comparing it to others in the society one lives in (Edwards, 2008, p. 202). As one can assume from this definition, it differs from society to society, and in all probability from community to community. Furthermore, relative poverty is a subjective feeling that occurs when people feel unfairness when comparing themselves to others in their community. Therefore, even in relatively rich countries such as South Korea, research suggests that young people feel relative poverty (Chung et al, 2019, p. 1396). Although this study does not shed light on athletes' experience of relative poverty, it does make a significant point, that relative poverty is circumstantial and does exist. In a sports context, it is likely that athletes compare resources with other athletes within their sport or club. Furthermore, one can assume that if adolescent gymnasts' value and compare a certain type of sport equipment in one club in the Oslo region, another club might value and compare a completely different item. If this is the case, one can, therefore, argue that the comparison is relative to the club and arena, and we will possibly find different degrees of relative poverty. In some cases, I could possibly assume the gymnast does not experience relative poverty, because the gymnast belongs to a club that does not have the same pressure for items, or that the gymnast believes that he or she has the "right" items. Also, it is important to acknowledge that it is not only sporting equipment or sport-related consumer goods that adolescents compare, they will probably compare other goods as well, for instance, they might compare phones, outerwear, "normal" clothes and shoes. Which I find is equally interesting and important to examine.

From what previous research indicates and how our society has progressed, I believe that relative poverty can lead to different outcomes. In line with sports having become more expensive which can lead to social exclusion (Oslo Economics, 2020, p. 27), I believe that relative poverty could lead to social exclusion as well. Also, since, we live, according to Bauman in a *liquid society* which is heavily based on consumption, I believe that Bauman's explanation of society could influence the gymnasts feeling of

relative poverty. In addition, consumption has proven to have both negative and positive effects on adolescents (Sweeting et al, 2012), and can lead to the sense of relative poverty, social exclusion and influence their identities. In line with Bauman, I believe that the possible sense of relative poverty could influence adolescents' identities (Vogel & Oschmann, 2013; Aakvaag, 2008), especially, since the adolescent years are crucial for the development of identity (Seippel et al, 2016, p. 14). Another factor which could influence the sense of relative poverty and social exclusion is adolescents' background and social class.

#### *The concept of social exclusion in a sport context*

The term social exclusion can be understood differently by different schools of thought, which means there are several definitions. Scholars agree that social exclusion means lack of participation in social activity. From a sports perspective it would mean lack of participation in sports activity. However, some scholars believe that the term is more fluid and it is more a matter of degree on a spectrum than the dichotomy of either social exclusion or social inclusion (Spaaij et al, 2014). As a matter of fact, social exclusion is somewhat fragmented into different components that together form the whole. Spaaiji et al (2014, p.24) shed light on five components of social exclusion; economic, political, social, cultural and moral. Although, there are five dimensions it is the economic, social, cultural and moral dimensions that would be of relevance for this research, the political dimension is not as relevant because it is on the macro level.

The economic dimension can be understood in several ways, however, I choose to approach it through two concepts which, 1) involves income, production and access to goods and services which some people are excluded from and others are not (Spaaij et al, 2014, p. 25) and 2) *consumption* which involves the individual's capacity to purchase goods and services (Burchardt et al, 2002, p. 31). These concepts of the economic dimension are directly transferable to sports and ongoing expenses that lie within the sporting field with equipment, sports clothes and other fees. I understand the social dimension as a combination of ideas of several scholars i.e., as social interaction with peers, family and the community in general (Spaaij et al, 2014, p. 25). I believe this is transferable to sports because it indicates that sporting peers, their family and the community around the sports clubs are interrelated. In these circumstances and in this context, an individual's social interaction with peers, family and community influences

their ideas, consumption wishes, identity, values, norms and culture. The cultural aspect of social exclusion goes beyond the social interaction; Madanipour provides insights into how culture is the core of social inclusion where a culture shares symbols, meanings, language, religion and nationality. Furthermore, Madanipour highlights the importance of how culture forms individual and group identities through consumption and these formations differ from social groups, where often minorities are left behind (Madanipour, 1998, p. 189). Therefore, the cultural aspect of social exclusion is transferable to the gymnastics community, which could be viewed as a social group in itself, but is more likely, in my view, to consist of individual social groups i.e. the individual sports clubs. This would mean that the individual sports clubs form their culture and identity through, for instance, symbols, meanings and consumption. If one does not fit into the culture of a particular club, which, as stated, can vary from club to club, then this could lead to social exclusion. The moral dimension involves prejudging notions, stigmatisation and people that are perceived as different or unlike the norm (Spaaij et al, 2014, p. 25). It is the latter that is interesting in this case, because how a person is perceived, could be a result of social class, identity, as well as the pressures of buying equipment or other devices in a sports context. Social exclusion in sport, is in fact more complex and has several dimensions that can influence adolescents.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the difference between *self-exclusion* and *enforced* exclusion. Often in research and popular culture, one automatically examines the enforced exclusion when a person is excluded because of either cultural, moral, economic, political or social reasons. However, some choose to self-exclude from for instance sport or other social arenas for various reasons, such as, interest or lack thereof, sickness or possibly a latent reason of feeling social pressure. Self-exclusion in itself should not necessarily have negative consequences. However, researchers believe that it can be problematic in social situations and can cause a reduced well-being (Spaaij et al, 2014, p.17). Most researchers agree that a person is not either in or out of social settings. She or he is rather socially included and excluded in matter of degree and within different aspects. I believe it is a vital point in social exclusion and sport, that the feeling of being excluded, does not mean being forced to eliminate oneself from sport. The feeling of not fitting in or the emotions connected to feeling excluded, could be a result of the society with live in.

### *Contemporary society, consumption and the gymnastics community*

Zygmunt Bauman argues that contemporary society is fluid and liquid, also known as *liquid modernity*. To follow Bauman's train of thought, he believes that contemporary society is unable to hold its shape and uses the term liquid as a metaphor to emphasize the fact that all parts of society are fluid (Vogel & Oschmann, 2013, p. 64). In light of contemporary society being liquid and fluid, Bauman believes it also involves that our society has transitioned from production to consumption, which narrates individuals' identities. Furthermore, Bauman argues that members of society are deeply dependent on goods and services on the market to solve every issue a member acknowledges. This is because the fluid contemporary society is changing rapidly, new products and services overshadow old ones, and, therefore, this increases the urge to consume the newest products and services on the market (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 281-183). In Norway an increasing growth of affluence has proven that consumption has become a more central part in our lives (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 290) and therefore, I would argue that Norway has, at least, some hints of the Bauman's fluid society.

Before discussing how Bauman's analysis of contemporary society is transferable to the RGC in Oslo, a definition of consumption and consumerism is imperative. Bauman distinguishes between *consumption* and *consumerism*. *Consumption* is something people do all the time. Consumption, according to Bauman, is not limited to human beings, he believes every living organism has to consume to survive. This means, that consumption is more or less everything we do in our life, ranging from buying, producing, distribution, disposal of products, eating, drinking and other activities (Bauman, 2007, p. 25-26). However, Bauman argues and suggest a so-called "consumerist revolution" has occurred. The "consumerist revolution" is understood as the transition from where society was based on consumption, to a society based on consumerism. The transition happened when consumption became more important and central for most human beings. Bauman explains the transition as when humans feel the emotions; *to long for, to want and to desire*, continually and over time (Bauman, 2007, p. 26). *Consumerism* according to Bauman, on the other hand, is a social aspect of life and in a way a diagnosis of today's society. It is a notion that explains human wants, longings and desires, which in effect is a force that results in systematic reproduction, social integration, social stratification and the creation of individual identity (Bauman, 2007, p.28).

To follow Bauman's train of thought of consumption and consumerism, he argues that we live in a "society of consumers". The "society of consumers" encourages a consumeristic lifestyle and dislikes alternative cultures. In a "society of consumers" one is supposed to live under strict rules and the choice of living in such a society is the only acceptable option (Bauman, 2007, p.53). Also, an important aspect is the fact that participants in a "society of consumers" should make the "right" consumer decisions so as not to be excluded or be seen as a ridiculous. Bauman considers consumption is an investment in the individual. Through consumption one invests in the social membership in the society by gaining and increasing your value through consumer goods. When increasing your value in society it results, according to Bauman, to improved social value and self-esteem (Bauman, 2007, p. 54-56). A further notion Bauman discusses in his theory on the "society of consumers" is that the members' ultimate goal is to become a sellable commodity, and this is not necessarily a conscious decision. However, becoming a sellable commodity is an important part of being evaluated as a person in the society. From the fear of being evaluated, a member of the "consumer society" will be striving for perfection through consuming, which in effect will be a never-ending process. Since, the consumer society is based on consumption, the market, therefore, provides the tools for the members to become a sellable commodity and achieve perfection (Bauman, 2007, 57-61).

*How consumption, consumerism, "society of consumers" and previous research can be applicable to the gymnastics community in Oslo*

Consumption, consumerism and the theory of the "society of consumers" is transferable to the rhythmic gymnastics community. Firstly, when gymnasts sign-up for a rhythmic gymnastics class, buy gymnastics equipment such as a leotard or tools, buy food to consume before, in and after training, and everything else a gymnast consumes in the rhythmic gymnastics arena, these are all forms of rhythmic gymnastics consumption. Secondly, gymnasts consume in other aspects of life, such as in school, at home, at a friend's house etc. Consumption will always be there for the gymnasts because it includes everything from consuming essential products to survive, and other items that one consumes in other aspects of life. Consumerism, I believe is applicable to the rhythmic gymnastics community because sports is a social arena and they have their own social codes. Since, consumerism is a social aspect, I can assume that it is influenced by the people and the society one socializes in. Therefore, what gymnasts



want, desire, and long for could be influenced by other gymnasts in their club, school, the market or other aspects of life. For example, if a gymnast is longing for a new leotard or the newest pair of popular sneakers, it might be because other gymnasts have bought the items or is a consequence of living in a society of consumers. Consumerism in the rhythmic gymnastics community can be strongly connected to the social exclusion dimensions, especially the economic, social and cultural aspects (Spaaiji et al, 2014, p.24).

Furthermore, the longing for a new consumer product could be connected to another part of Bauman's theory of "society of consumers", where the participants in society strive for perfection and making the 'right' decisions through consumption. Also, the striving for perfection, I argue, is not only connected to consumption of material items such as clothes and shoes. I believe the endeavor for perfection can be linked to other aspects of life that society has determined. This is in line with Bauman's thoughts about how it is the individual's failure when they do not become successful, because this is what society has defined (Bauman, 2007, p. 58-59), which I believe could be connected to the striving to achieve faultless gymnastics performances. Rhythmic gymnastics is a judged sport, which means that several judges contribute to evaluate the performance of a gymnast. Therefore, the training for a gymnast consists of executing exercises as perfectly as possible. If one does not execute perfectly, one could assume that it might be because one does not practice enough or does not listen to the coach – individual failure. This I believe is directly transferable to Bauman's theory that our society strives for perfection through consumption. So, an interesting question would be; does the fact that the nature of rhythmic gymnastics (striving for perfection) contributes (as well as to our society) even more to the desire to purchase popular consumer products, and also influence the gymnast's identity?

From previous research I can assume that consumption can lead to, for example, the feeling of social isolation, a decrease of well-being, anxiety and lower self-esteem. However, research does indicate that not all consumption can lead to negative consequences, which is an important notion to illustrate (Sweeting et al, 2012; Sletten, 2004), because I might find that adolescents do not feel pressure to consume sport related items or other consumer products. That would mean that if adolescents have negative feelings such as low self-esteem it could be a result of something else. Thus,

one can assume that adolescents in the rhythmic gymnastics community can have varied experience of consumption. Some gymnasts might have negative experiences because they, for instance, cannot keep up with the material consumption pressure in their club or other aspects of their life. This could be connected to how some gymnasts might have limited access to resources to match other gymnasts' material consumption (Sletten, 2010, p. 294). Popular culture and research indicate that the city of Oslo is divided into "Oslo west" and "Oslo east", where people who live in on the west side usually have a higher income than those who live on the east side (Andersen, 2018, p. 129). Therefore, I could assume, on one hand, that gymnasts belonging to the west side have less consumerism pressure because adolescents might have more available resources, and therefore they can buy more consumer products than on the east side. Consequently, the gymnast can possibly afford more consumer items and possible not feel the consumption pressure. On the other hand, I can imagine that if you gather people with more or less the same resources, similar wealth and job status (Mayeda, 2013, p. 80-83), they can construct a pressure for more exclusive and ever more expensive (designer) consumer items. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore to what extent consumption pressure exists in the rhythmic gymnastics community and the possible effects consumption has on gymnasts in the Oslo-region. Moreover, consumption or consumerism could have an influence on adolescents' identity and how they identify themselves.

### *Identities*

From previous research and theories one can assume that consumption could lead to some negative aspects for an individual (Sletten, 2004; Sletten, 2010; Sweeting et al, 2012), which I believe can be transferable to the rhythmic gymnastics community. Also, since we live in a society, that according to Bauman, is fluid and based on consumption which is an important mechanism for identity development (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 279), one can, therefore, argue that since gymnasts are part of contemporary society this must be applicable to the gymnastics adolescents. Before delving into how the identity of the adolescents could be influenced by society, consumption and the rhythmic gymnastics community, I will first define what identity is.

Most people have an idea of what identity is, however, it is complex and compound. A traditional definition of identity is "*the relatively stable and enduring sense that*

*individuals have of themselves*” (West-Newman & Sullivan, 2013, p. 112). Most scholars, however, believe that individual identity is based on our social life and in many circumstances is historically and culturally depended. For instance, the concept of what is feminine and masculine changes through history and is different from culture to culture. For example, in the 1950s women in the US were expected to stay at home and do domestic work, and one can argue that the expectancy from society generated an identity for women at the time. However, society has changed and at the same time so has identity according to Bauman and Giddens (Aakvaag, 2008).

### *Contemporary society and “the reflexive self”*

In line with Bauman thoughts of the fluid society, Giddens describes how our society has gone from being an industrial society to a modern society, as has the way we view identity. Giddens argues that identity is no longer a result of tradition, inherence of social class or social expectations, but of reflexive choices and decisions, which is the core of his theory; the reflexive self. Our identity develops through a narrative, which updates with new experiences, information and occasions. He argues that our narrative (with experiences, information and occasions), create who we are as a person (Aakvaag, 2008, p.277-278). For instance, a person’s first day at primary school, sickness, work experience, marriage, an important sporting event, etc. will shape the identity of a person and their narrative. Since, sport is a major part of adolescent’s lives in some form or other I can (Seippel et al, 2016, p 14), therefore, assume that sport is an imperative part of creating their narrative. Moreover, Giddens argues that the body is an important notion in shaping the reflexive self, especially in the modern society in which we live today. This, I believe, is applicable to the sports community and adolescents, since research suggests that adolescents have gradually become more fixated on body image and appearance (Seippel et al, 2016, p 14). Giddens believes diets, training, hairstyles, clothing styles etc. are notions and expression of reflexive choices and decisions (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277), which I believe is a central part of living in a consumer society. Also, Giddens argues that our choices construct a lifestyle based on consumer culture and our individual choices (An Interview with Anthony Giddens, 2003, p. 396). For instance, (a stereotypical) lifestyle of a lawyer is influenced by the fact that a person chooses to study law, become a lawyer, live in a “good” neighbourhood, consumes a nice suit and works innumerable hours. To further this

example, the lifestyle of this fictional lawyer is based not just on choice, consumerism and the narrative of his or her life, but also the expression of the body through for example the consumption of the suit.

### *“The reflexive self” and rhythmic gymnastics*

I believe that Giddens’ theory is transferable from the “normal” world to the rhythmic gymnastics community in the Oslo-region. Through Giddens’ theory I can possibly give an understanding of how gymnasts identify themselves and examine if consumption pressure in the rhythmic gymnastics community can influence them. For instance, a gymnast’s identity and lifestyle, according to Giddens, will develop through the experiences, information, occasions, an expression of the body, individuals’ choices and consumption (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277-278). Even though all of these dimensions might not be a major part of a gymnast’s identity or lifestyle, it could have a role in how the identity is constructed. So, through experiences, information and occasions in the rhythmic gymnastics community, gymnasts will develop an identity, and through the expression of the body and choices I can assume they will have a “gymnast lifestyle”. The question would therefore be; what notions and characteristics are central for gymnasts in the Oslo-region to have a “gymnast lifestyle”? It would be interesting, with Giddens in mind, to explore the expression of the body to understand what creates the reflexive self of gymnastics adolescents. For example, a gymnast’s expression of the body, through the choice of picking rhythmic gymnastics as a sport, gymnastics training and consumption of sports equipment and other consumer products, will narrate the adolescent’s identity. Although, most gymnasts will most likely have different arenas that are important such as school or other social activities, which could also be imperative experiences and occasions for the gymnast identity, that do not directly have anything to do with sports. However, I believe that the “gymnast lifestyle” most likely will follow the gymnast in every situation in their life. For instance, the first day of secondary school one presents one’s name and one’s after-school activity, and when an adolescent presents her or himself as a gymnast, it is a way of identifying oneself. I can, therefore, assume that how one presents oneself in other social situations than the rhythmic gymnastics community, is also an important part of constructing the reflexive self and the “lifestyle of a gymnast”.

It is essential to recognise that throughout the teenage years the identity development is critical. Adolescents change mentally and physically, and their choices are probably more sporadic. These concerns might in some cases cause difficulties with understanding who they are and creating a reflexive self. As our society is embossed by individualism and fluidity, it also results in many more options and alternatives that adolescents can choose from with regard to activities (Seippel, 2016, p. 109).

Individuality does force adolescents' physical activity to be a personal choice. However, choice is hard when there are many and if one is influenced by one's peers. The feeling of being pulled from one alternative to another, could lead to stress. Moreover, the highest scores for motives for physical activity is connected to physical and mental excess, self-confidence, health, fun and appearance (Seippel, 2016, p. 109). I can, therefore, argue that sport (both in commercial gyms and sports clubs), is a way of developing their narrative and identity. This could explain how self-training and fitness centres have become more important for adolescents than sports clubs. Even though the sample of this study consists of gymnasts between the ages of 13 to 19, I believe that their identity is also influenced by individuality, choices and influence which might help contribute to the development of their identity and narrative.

Identity development and creating a reflexive self through consumerism in the gymnastics community, can cause the feeling of social exclusion. In this instance, the social, the moral and cultural dimensions of social exclusion are relevant, especially the latter. The cultural dimension enforces that group identities are formed through consumerism and consumption, and more people feel anxiety and uncertainty towards this. The extent of social exclusion varies from individuals, groups and society, and if one feels socially excluded it is often experienced partially because of the lack of language skills, race, religion, but also for instance, lifestyle (Madanipour, 1998, p 189-190). This could mean that if a gymnast feels partially socially excluded from the club, it may be because he or she does not have the 'right' gymnast lifestyle, as Giddens discussed. In addition, the cultural aspect of social exclusion is also backed up by an autoethnographic study of a retired elite Australian swimmer. The swimmer had negative experiences when she wanted to swim "for fun". The swimming community gave her negative labels, she was subjected to stereotyping, loss of status and discrimination when she did not meet the cultural standards in the club (McHahon et al, 2019, p. 295). Although, this is not directly transferable to the possible consumption

pressure within adolescent gymnastics, I do believe the mechanism might be the same. I consider that if a gymnast does not follow the cultural standards in the clubs, which in light of Madanipour (1998, p. 189), is through consumption, it might result in the feeling of social exclusion. If there is consumerism pressure in the rhythmic gymnastics community, it is a relative matter, because it probably trickles down to how adolescents perceive the experience. Although the sense of feeling excluded and consumption pressure might influence the adolescents' identity, it could also be a result of where they come from and their family's social class.

#### *Social class and stratification in Norwegian society*

It is generally thought that Norway has become a classless society (Bahr Bugge, 2010, p. 129). Social class is understood differently by different scholars world-wide, however I find it fitting to understand social class from a Norwegian point of view because my research is conducted in Norway. Dahlgren and Ljunggren have studied social class in Norway and define social class as a group of positions in a structure in society, where people are characterised after material and cultural criteria, and this gives people certain privileges' or disadvantages in the "fight" for attractive goods (Dahlgren & Ljunggren, 2010, p. 13). Therefore, one can argue that social class is based on education, highbrow or lowbrow tastes, income and other material goods. Furthermore, some scholars believe that social inequality is a result of the individuals' choices, because in Norwegian society we have every opportunity to succeed, and if one fails to succeed it could be seen as a "personal fiasco" (Dahlgren & Ljunggren, 2010, p. 15-17). However, individuals are social beings, and we will most likely never be liberated from other people. We can, therefore, assume and imagine that we are dependent upon each other and find social relationships as an important part of life. We are affected by our peers and find that our choices are appraised by what is experienced as available and wanted in our community (Dahlgren & Ljunggren, 2010, p. 17). However, through social theorists and previous research we do find that some of the mechanisms do still exist and might be a significant factor in whether adolescents feel a sense of relative poverty in the gymnastics community or to some degree or not. To understand some of the mechanisms in contemporary society and social class, we should not overlook the influential social stratification theorist, Karl Marx.

Marx believed that the pronounced social class differences were the sole reason for social stratification. Social stratification can be defined as a way groups of people are systematically organised unequally (Mayeda, 2013, p. 80-83). Marx, believed that stratification in society was based on the ownership and the controlling of material goods and production, and those who did not own nor control material goods and production. Marx distinguished between *the bourgeoisie* (capitalists, the ownership of production and purchase labour) and *the proletariat* (labour as currency). In Marx's view, the bourgeoisie were the upper class and the "rich", and the proletariat were the lower class and the "poor" (Dalhgren & Lungren, 2010, p 18). Even though contemporary society, especially in Norway, does not seem to have such clear distinctions between classes as Marx claimed, one can still argue that the type of work and wealth has some of the same effect. For instance, there are certain jobs that have a higher status than others and in a lot of instances the income reflects that high status job. This notion could imply that gymnasts that have parents with high status job, also have a considerably higher income, than gymnasts with parents with lower status jobs. In popular culture a high-status job could be a Doctor of Medicine, a lawyer or a chief executive officer (CEO) of a big company and a typical low status work could be for example a cleaner or a store employee. This, in effect could imply a social class distinction because gymnasts that come from families with high status jobs who would probably have more access to resources than gymnasts that come from families with lower status jobs. This could also be transferable to whether gymnasts feel consumption pressure or not, and this could vary not just due to economic resources but also social resources such as taste and wishes. For example, if a gymnast feels a sense of consumption pressure it be could because of lack of resources or it could be because they do not understand the "tastes" of peers and do not consume the same items and, therefore, feel excluded. Or if a gymnast does not feel any sense of consumption pressure it might not be a result of more economic resources, it could be because of different wishes and desires when it comes to consumer items, which is in line with contemporary society's individuality. Moreover, Marx also argues that the bourgeoisie's wealth rests solely on the production of the labour of the proletariat and both social classes were interdependent upon each other. He believed that the power struggle and the means of the work that the proletariat were made to do, resulted in alienation (Dalhgren & Lungren, 2010, p 18).

Marx's notion of power struggle could be transferable to possible consumption pressure in the gymnastics community. Assuming that consumption pressures stem from unbalanced power between gymnasts and the possible desire to consume items to fit into the gymnastics community, consumption pressure could lead to becoming what Marx believed the proletariat were: alienated. For instance, let us say some gymnasts are more what you could call "leaders" (people who have the right clothes and are popular) and they lead the way in the club as to what is popular to purchase and to use. Those who are not a "leader" per se, could feel pressure to purchase the "cool" items to fit in. If one does not have the resources to fit in, one might feel excluded (or alienated – to use Marx's terminology).

These expectations of social stratification and class can be connected to the four dimensions for social exclusion: economic, social, cultural and moral. For instance, the economic dimension is directly transferable to social class, wealth, and consumption. These aspects of the economic dimension could lead to social exclusion in the rhythmic gymnastic community. The social dimension of social exclusion can be related to how gymnasts can be influenced by their peers and if they are influenced in a way that is negative, for example consumption pressure, might make them feel excluded. Also, consumption of popular items could be a way to share "symbols", such as clothes and shoes, and a lifestyle of a gymnast (Madanipour, 1998, p. 189), which is discussed in the cultural dimension. One can assume that if a gymnast or their family does not have the means to enter into the cultural dimension, he or she might feel excluded from the group. The moral dimension can be connected to belonging to the lower classes, as Marx maintained. Whereas, if a gymnast is perceived as different it could be because they do not have the same consumer products as the other gymnasts in the club, and this could be because they do not have the resources or 'taste' to consume the same products.

#### **1.4 Research question**

Based on previous research, theories, concepts and my experience in the RGC, I believe there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled.

Bauman elaborates on the idea that the market and consumption are the core of developing our identity (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 278-280). Also, sport has become an



important arena for our society as a whole because of the essential advantages for our society such as its potential for social inclusion and health benefits (Seippel et al, 2011). However, research and media note that sport in general has become more expensive and the result is that many children and adolescents are being excluded (Oslo Economics, 2020; Brodahl & Myhre, 2019). While this is generally true, we know that clubs and authorities do implement strategies to reduce costs, such as having sales of used equipment and other necessities for sports and the authorities giving aid to low-income households. However, are these strategies enough to overcome the norms, culture and consumptions pressures that is ongoing in sports and society as a whole? Through my experience as a rhythmic gymnastics coach, I believe that consumption pressure is a phenomenon in the world of gymnastics. Therefore, I wish to examine if my impression is correct. The aim of my research is to obtain an in-depth understanding of adolescent gymnasts' experience in the rhythmic gymnastics community (RGC). More specifically, I want to examine whether experiences in the rhythmic gymnastics community can be connected to identity and relative poverty.

This will involve trying to understand adolescent gymnasts' *lived experience* of what rhythmic gymnastics is to them, how important it is to be a gymnast, possible consumption pressure, which items are important, how this might affect the adolescents' identity positively and/or negatively, by answering the following research questions:

*How do adolescents experience the rhythmic gymnastics community (RGC) in the Oslo region?*

To help answering the overarching question and to focus on identities and relative poverty, I have created two supplementary research questions:

- 1) *In what ways are experiences from the RGC meaningful for the adolescent identities?*
- 2) *Is relative poverty experienced in the RGC and if so, in what ways?*

## 2. Methodology

In this chapter I will present the methodology of my thesis. A method is a strategy or recipe to solve a problem and one method should not be considered better than another, and it should help the researcher on his or her way to solving a problem (Everett & Furuseth, 2012, p. 128). Therefore, it is imperative that the method should coincide with the paradigm and the research question. While the research question has been in constant evolution throughout the process (Thagaard, 2018, p.47), I believe it has strengthened the paradigm and research design. Here is a reminder of the overarching research question I am going to answer through this thesis, with the aid of this chapter:

*How do adolescents experience the rhythmic gymnastics community (RGC) in the Oslo region?*

To supplement the above, I created two additional questions.

- 1) *In what ways are experiences from the RGC meaningful for the adolescent identities?*
- 2) *Is relative poverty experienced in the RGC and if so, in what ways?*

In this chapter I will first elaborate on which paradigm my research belongs to. Next, I will briefly explain what research design I will use to answer the research question and why I find qualitative interviews more suitable for this research than, for instance, participant observation. Thirdly, I will present the sample criteria. Then, I will explain how I recruited participants, conducted the interviews and transcribed the interviews. This will be followed by a detailed description of the analysis and a discussion of the quality of the methodology with help from the concepts; reliability, validity, generalisation and reflexivity. Lastly, I will also discuss some important ethical considerations.

### 2.1 Paradigm

Sport has become increasingly more important and essential in today's society, and research of sport has gradually become an academic field referred to as "sport science"

(Loland & McNamee, 2017, p. 63). Like in all research fields there are different paradigms. A paradigm is a set of theoretical assumptions, laws and techniques which members of a scientific community apply to their research (Chalmers, 1999, p. 108). In sport science there are three main paradigms': *the mechanistic, the hermeneutic and the critical paradigm*. My research is heavily placed into the hermeneutic paradigm because I want to understand and interpret meaning of the phenomena (Loland & McNamee, 2017, p 65). It is the study of understanding and how one goes about obtaining an understanding (Føllesdal & Walleø, 2000, p. 89). Moreover, it illuminates the experience of the individual to understand the meaning, also known as the interpretation of the *lived experience* (Loland & McNamee, 2017, p.65). The hermeneutic paradigm is in line with what I want to examine in my research; that is, adolescents' experience in the RGC. The "lived experience" is the participants experience of a certain situation, which within the hermeneutic approach is fundamental. (Loland & McNamee, 2017, p. 65). An important notion within this paradigm is that while there is no objective truth or reality, the truth can be interpreted on different levels which means the understanding of the truth is contextual. Although, the interpretation of the truth is contextual it cannot be completely understood without the understanding of the whole situation (Thagaard, 2018, p.37). This is closely linked to the *ontological* and *epistemological* position I have as a researcher. Which ontological position I have, is dependent on what I believe to be the *nature, character and essence* of the social world (Masion, 2018, p. 4-7). I would say that my ontological position would be that social world consists of experiences, understanding and knowledge and this is related to my epistemological position, which forces me to critically ask questions about how the data is generated and how knowledge is perceived (Masion, 2018, p. 4-7). In my research this would mean that the understanding of possible consumption pressure, relative poverty and identities is contextual because it is adolescent gymnasts' thoughts, ideas, experiences and perspective of the phenomena. It also implies that I should critically ask myself how I generated this data and to retain an awareness of my position as a coach and judge in the RGC. Another important notion within hermeneutics is the term "horizon of understanding" which means what the researcher believes is important subject to our perceptions and attitudes (Føllesdal & Walleø, 2000, p 94-95). Therefore, through my years as a coach and gymnast at a relatively high level, I have gained an understanding of the rhythmic gymnastics community which has, in all probability, influenced what I found interesting, important and valuable from the gathered data. Also, my education,

background and my general interests have also influenced how I interpret meaning in the research.

## **2.2 Design**

To examine adolescents' experiences, perspectives and thoughts I have used a method design that will be in line with the hermeneutic paradigm (Loland & McNamee, 2017, p. 65) and, therefore, the study will also have a qualitative approach, which concentrates on the "qualities" of the phenomena (Mason, 2018, p ix). More specifically a design with the hermeneutic paradigm examines the essence and in-depth part of a social phenomenon (Thaagard, 2018, p. 37). There are several different research designs that could be fitting in this study such as interviews, observation and text analysis to name a few. To answer the research question, I believe the best method was to conduct individual qualitative interviews with gymnasts to understand their view of being a gymnast, consumption in their community, the possible feelings of relative poverty, their sense of being excluded or included and to what extent RG is important to them. In a broad sense, qualitative interviews offer a unique and in-depth insight into other people's experiences, situations, perspectives and beliefs (Thagaard, 2018, p. 89). To be more precise I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants, because this structure enhances the opportunity to understand topics and themes from the participants own perspectives. A semi-structured interview is closely linked to an everyday conversation; however, it has the characteristics of a structured interview with techniques and a specific approach (Kvale, 2007, p 10-11). In line with the semi-structured interview, I have created an interview guide based on the research question, paradigm, theory, previous research and design (Appendix A). The interview guide has a range of questions that I thought would cover the research question and the themes I wanted to talk about, but I also had room for impromptu questions. This strategy was to create a situation that was based on what the gymnasts said but had guidelines to help get back to what I wanted to talk about with them. Also, when I was creating the interview guide, I thought a lot about what type of questions I was going to ask, and whether there were any leading questions, or if the questions led to yes or no answers. To see what kind of data the questions generated, I conducted several practice interviews to see what sort of answers they generated. As I came to realise during the practice interviews, the questions that asked the participants to explain or describe

something, were the most effective, in fact, “good” questions (Dalen, 2013, p. 27). So, I heavily based my questions on this practice.

In the beginning of the process of recruiting gymnasts for interviews I was determined to conduct the interviews face-to-face because I believed it would be better for both parties. However, due to the restrictions resulting from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, recruiting and meeting up with the participants, in person, became increasingly difficult. As a result, I decided that I needed to conduct the interviews online. While online interviews do not differ too much from face-to-face interviews in structure, they can be synchronised or a-synchronised; the former involves a direct video chat, for example, whereas the latter can be answered at different times through, for example, email (Thagaard, 2018, p. 110). I wanted the online interviews to be as close as possible to face-to-face interviews, therefore, I chose to have a synchronised interview via the platform Zoom, with which NIH has an agreement.

It is also important to acknowledge that there are always some strengths and weaknesses to every research design, also with qualitative interviews. As a researcher one has to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the design up against what you want to examine and be aware of them. In qualitative interviews one strength is that the researcher obtains in-depth knowledge through understanding the participants views, experiences and perspectives (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 90). Another important strength is that by conducting interviews, the researcher will efficiently generate a lot of data (Tjora, 2017, p. 118), which is an imperative aspect of research. However, this could turn out to be a weakness, because conducting interviews requires transcribing, which is time consuming. Moreover, as a result of that the process of interviewing and time consuming transcribing, one will naturally not have as many participants as in a quantitative survey (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 90). That will, therefore, mean that one will not be able to generalise to the same extent as in quantitative methods. Another central weakness is the asymmetrical balance between the interviewer and the interviewee, but this will be discussed in the subchapter 2.7. Online interviews also have their strengths and weaknesses, in addition to the ones mentioned above. There are several strengths, such as, that the participants can be in their own home which could make them more comfortable and possibly engender an even greater sense of privacy. Also, online interviews are more adaptable and flexible, because it is easier to pick a

time that suits both parties (Thagaard, 2018, p. 110). In addition, it does not require any travel to a meeting place, which also is time and cost reducing. However, a possible weakness is that the internet connection might not be the best at both ends and this could lead to either some missing elements of a conversation or the feeling that the conversation is staccato and therefore the flow of the interview might be harmed. During some of the interviews, we had some problems with the internet during the interview and that was a bit frustrating. However, I did not find this to be a big problem as I asked questions such as; *did you hear me? Is everything ok? Could you please repeat that, the internet on my end failed a bit?*

One could argue that a different design such as participant observations could have been used effectively to answer the research. Participant observation involves that the researcher observes and participates in a social situation to understand and elaborate on what people are saying and what they are doing in their own environment. In this design the researcher does not control nor influence the environment in any way, just participates and observes (Fangen, 2010, p. 12). However, I do not believe this method would be optimal for the aim of my research, since I want a comprehensive understanding of adolescents' experiences and feelings of the RGC. Also, due to the Covid-19 situation it this might not have been plausible in any case.

## **2.3 Sample**

Here I will present the sample criteria. They are based on my research question, knowledge from the community, previous research, theories and concepts acquired in the beginning phases of this project (Mason, 2018, p. 61-62; Thagaard, 2018, p. 54). They can be placed under the following headings: *adolescents, gymnasts, gender, training hours, level of performance and social class.*

### **2.3.1 Adolescents**

I have used The Norwegian Confederation of Sports (NIF) definition of adolescents as a point of departure; adolescents are sport participants being 13-19 years of age (Norges Idrettsforbund og olympiske og paralympiske komite, n.d., Ungdomsidretten). This means that the sample is relatively young, but studying, most Norwegian rhythmic gymnasts, although not all, fall into this category. As a coach and judge I have gained the impression that there is an increasing trend to consume new products both sports

related and non-sport related. I, therefore, wanted to examine if this observation had any truth from an adolescent’s perspective through qualitative interviews. Another increasing trend is the huge dropout rate from sport among adolescents often, at least partly, because of pressure to train more (Seippel et al, 2016, p 13). Although I am not directly interested in the adolescents that drop out, I believe that consumption pressure might be a contributing factor. Previous research also indicates that consumption pressure, among adolescents can lead to social isolation, anxiety, lower self-esteem and reduced happiness (Sweeting et al, 2012, p.803). It will, therefore, be interesting to examine if this holds true in the rhythmic gymnastics community, and whether this is considered a “problem” from the perspective of the gymnasts. Additionally, it is, of course relevant that during the teenage years identity development is critical due to the mental and physical changes that take place (MacPherson et al, 2015, p. 73). I am, therefore, curious to discover whether adolescents in the gymnastics community identify themselves as gymnasts, and the importance of that identification, and does consumption play a partial role to this.

To protect the adolescent’s anonymity even further, because the rhythmic gymnastics community is quite small. I have categorised the ages into two groups: “13-15” and “16-19”. I have chosen these groups because this is the distinction between “Junior-gymnasts” and “Senior-gymnasts” internationally and in Norway within rhythmic gymnastics.

**Table 1:** Age groups

Age group	Consists of ages
<b>A “13-15”</b>	13 years of age  14 years of age  15 years of age
<b>B “16-19”</b>	16 years of age

	17 years of age
	18 years of age
	19 years of age

### 2.3.2 Gymnasts

There has been very little research on the rhythmic gymnastics community in Norway. Therefore, a gap needs to be filled. Also, an interesting aspect of studying relative poverty, consumption and identity with gymnasts is that traditionally gymnastics has been looked upon as a relatively cheap sport (Oslo Economics, 2020, p. 27). However, it will be interesting to examine if the adolescents feel that rhythmic gymnastics is a cheap arena when it comes to consumption of both sports related and non-sport related consumer items. This will, therefore, have to be examined closer.

### 2.3.3 Gender

The gymnastics community, in general, has a greater proportion of female participants than males in the Oslo region (Eikeland, 2017, Statistikk), but rhythmic gymnastics is dominated by females. While there are an increasing number of male rhythmic gymnasts internationally. I am not aware of any in Norway. Therefore, clearly, this study consists only of females.

### 2.3.4 Training hours

Another aspect of the sample that I believe is imperative to manage to answer the research question more in depth is the gymnasts *training hours*. I want a sample that trains around 12 hours a week or more, because from my experience this is when gymnasts get to a certain level and spend a lot of time and energy in the gym. When they use this much time training, the adolescents will aim to travel to more competitions, have a competition leotard of some sort (either bought or rented), training clothes, the necessarily equipment (such as toe shoes, apparatus), the training fee is probably higher, and it is likely that they will have more social contact with other gymnasts.



### 2.3.5 Levels of performance

In the sample I wanted to interview gymnasts at different performance levels. It would be very interesting to see if there is a difference in the gymnast identity and the feeling of relative poverty between recreational gymnastics and elite level gymnastics. The Norwegian gymnastics federation has, both within rhythmic gymnastics and artistic gymnastic, two sets of competition formats at the junior and senior level:

“*international*” and “*national*”. The “*international level*” is generally a higher level of gymnastics because it follows international regulations and code of points. The “*national level*” enforces national rules, regulations and is a simpler format of the international code of points (Norges Gymnastikk og Turnforbund [NTGF], n.d. Rytmask Gymnatikk; NGTF, n.d., Turn Kvinner.; NGTF, n.d. Turn Menn.).

### 2.3.6 Social class

During the interviews I will ask questions that can indicate affiliation to a social class. Social class might have a connection to whether gymnastics adolescents might feel a sense of relative poverty, consumption pressure, social exclusion or different identities. For instance, one can assume that if an adolescent recognises oneself from a higher social class, he or she might not feel consumption pressure nor relative poverty. I, therefore, asked questions about their parents’ work. I have categorised and analysed types of work based on “Categories of occupation” developed by Statistics Norway. This table categorises occupation by the criteria; 1) skill level and 2) skill specialisation. Skill level does not necessarily require formal education, but in many instances the occupation requires university or college level education. Skill specialisation covers different aspects such as “field of knowledge” and “the kinds of goods and services produced” and can also include a degree of independence and manual labour (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2011). The categories of work are; 1) *Legislators, senior officials and managers*, 2) *Professionals*, 3) *Technicians and associate professionals*, 4) *Clerical support workers*, 5) *Service and sale workers*, 6) *Skilled agricultural and fishery workers*, 7) *Craft and related trades workers*, 8) *Plant and machine operators and assemblers*, and 9) *Elementary occupations*. Examples of occupation and jobs within each category of work is inspired from Statistics Norway and can be found in appendices (see Appendix B) (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2011). This categorisation is very broad and will not give a complete and exact measure of social class because occupation and work are only aspect of it.

I have broken these occupations down into three major categories of social class based on level of education. High social class consist of occupations that require education after high school, middle social class consists of a mixed category of some education after high school and low social class includes categories of work that do not require any further education than lower or secondary education. This is to create a model and an indication of social class based on the assumption that higher education and higher classification of occupation can indicate higher income (see Appendix C). For example, if both parents fall under the category “Professionals”, I will interpret that as the family belonging to a “high social class”. There are of course major limitations by using such a simplistic model but as mentioned, it should give some indication.

To sum up, the sample consists of adolescents who are all females participating in rhythmic gymnastics as an after-school activity. The gymnasts will ideally have a varying number of training hours and have different levels of performance. Also, the sample is categorised into “high”, “middle” and “low” social class.

## ***2.4 Conducting and transcribing the interviews***

### **2.4.1 Recruiting**

In light of my research question, design and sample criteria, I wanted to recruit gymnasts with different criteria (e.g. sample criteria). Since, I am a coach, judge and a previous gymnast I have quite a few connections in the rhythmic gymnastics community, which I used to my advantage. I contacted several clubs through either the coaches or board members and gave them a detailed description of my project and asked if they could give this to any gymnasts, who might be interested in being interviewed. My contact in the clubs is also known as a “gatekeeper”. The “gatekeeper” had the possibility to deny or give me access to their club (Thagaard, 2018, p.65), but they all were eager to help.

I was hesitant, because of my role in the community, to actually go to the different clubs in person to “sell” my project, because I did not want the gymnasts to feel pressured to participate. Also, as mentioned above, the ongoing pandemic curtailed in-person visits. These concerns did, to a certain degree, slow down the recruitment process, however, my frequent contact with several of the “gatekeepers” eventually resulted in contact with my aimed for number of gymnasts and parents. I had wanted a strategically picked

sample, but the above issues, especially Covid-19 restrictions and ad-hoc lockdowns, made it almost impossible to implement. To sample strategically means giving a relevant range of context or phenomena to make contextual comparisons (Mason, 2018, p. 58). Therefore, it is more a *convenience sample* because it is strategic in the sense that it does consist of the characteristics required, but I had to recruit the gymnasts who wanted to participate and were available to me (Thagaard, 2018, p. 56). I would, also, argue that, as one should in qualitative research, that one should celebrate the similarities and differences in the sample, because in some ways it is natural to get this in a sample.

#### **2.4.2 Conducting the interviews**

The collection of data was through qualitative interviews, in Norwegian. My goal was, initially, to have all of the interviews face-to-face, because research literature suggests this format gives the interviewer more insight in interpreting what the interviewees are saying because of facial expressions, enunciation and general body language (Thagaard, 2018, p. 111). However, only two of the interviews were done face-to-face, before Covid-19 restrictions came into effect, and the remaining eight were conducted over the platform Zoom, using their videoconferencing service, which has several features including online meetings (Archibald et al, 2019, p. 2). The interviews lasted approximately an hour, however the shortest one lasted about 40 minutes and the longest was roughly 90 minutes.

All of the interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide and I used an approved dictaphone to record, even during the Zoom interviews. A study has shown that Zoom is an adequate, suitable and user-friendly platform in collecting qualitative data (Archibald et al, 2019, p.7). Before my first Zoom interview I was a bit nervous that I would not be able to interpret the interviewees' expressions and body language but, I did not, in fact, find the difference between interviewing face-to-face and on Zoom, too different. The only, and possibly significant difference was the occasional internet connection interruption. However, this was infrequent and quickly resolved. This is a documented problem in using Zoom as a platform for qualitative studies (Archibald, et al, 2019, p. 4-5). However, overall I found Zoom may have worked out better for me and the participants because it was easier to plan back-to-back interviews, while saving a lot of travel and cost as well (Archibald, et al, 2019, p. 4). Also, most of

the interviewees were used to Zoom through school and training, so they were familiar with the concept of online meetings and communication. Some of the interviewees seemed to even enjoy the conversation over Zoom because they could stay at home. Mary even said *“I think it works really well. I am sitting quite comfortably in the sofa”*. I actually agree with Mary, the comfortable home environment, in some ways, made it easier to create an informal, relaxed conversation, rather than a scary interview situation.

### **2.4.3 Transcribing interviews: From oral communication to text**

*“To transcribe means to transform, to change from one form to another.”* (Kvale, 2007, p. 93). An interview is a social interaction and to transcribe in this situation means to transform from an oral language to a written language. An interview is a social and oral format, and by transcribing to a written form it is natural to lose a sense of the social situation in the written form such as bodily expressions, tone of voice, intonations and breathing (Kvale, 2007, p. 93). However, if I found that some bodily expression or breathing might be of some significance during the interview, I would write it down and include it in the transcriptions, so this was not a significant problem. However, transcribing is time consuming, and it is hard to transcribe from one form to another form due to different rules of talking and academic writing (Kvale, 2007, p 94-97).

To illuminate the difficulties when transcribing from an oral language to a written language, one can look at the reliability and validity of transcriptions. To control the reliability of the transcription it is, for instance, possible to have another person transcribing the interviews to see if one has the same word count and has picked up the same words and phrases (Kvale, 2007, p. 97-98). I did not have the means nor time to implement this strategy. Since transcriptions are decontextualised forms and are used to analyse the phenomena, a completely objective transcription was probably not possible. My process of transcribing was to write down exactly what the participants and I said in the recorded interview, to be sure that I had enough ground to analyse, but also obtain a form of reliability. This was imperative to answer the research question (Kvale, 2007, p.97-98) and to the project in general. It should also be noted that my interviews were conducted in Norwegian and were transcribed in this language. However, I have translated into English any excerpts included in this thesis.

## **2.5 Analysis**

After conducting and transcribing the interviews, it was time to make sense of the data. The method of analysis was decided before conducting the interviews so they would be easier to analyse afterwards (Kvale, 2007, p. 102). The hermeneutic paradigm had an imperative role in the analysis, because of the importance of the *lived* experience and the *horizon of understanding*. Analysing the generated data was divided into two parts; *organising the data* and *interpreting the data*.

### **2.5.1 Organising the data**

The first and most imperative part of organising the data was to recognise what the data was and to get an understanding of what I wanted to obtain through the data (Mason, 2018, p. 187). One way of organising the data is the way you read your data which is connected to the goal of the research. I believe that *interpretive readings* and *reflexive readings* are imperative to obtain a better understanding of the adolescents in the rhythmic gymnastics community.

*Interpretive reading* meant that while I was reading through the data, I was mostly interested in the interviewee's interpretations, understanding and how they make sense of their experiences in the RGC (Mason, 2018, p. 191). However, I did not want my involvement in the rhythmic gymnastics community to lead to taking their codes and norms for granted so I believe it was crucial to also conduct a *reflexive reading* of the data. *Reflexive reading* involved that I looked for the interaction between me and the interviewee, and how my role might impact on the generation of data (Mason, 2018, p.191). Although, reflexive reading is not the main focus of this study, I believe it to be an important factor from an ethical point of view and to show the importance of the *horizon of understanding* through *interpretive reading* and *reflexive reading*.

### **2.5.2 Interpreting data**

Interpreting and analysing data gives meaning to the transcribed and generated data. However, analysing and interpreting does not start after the interviews are conducted, it starts in the starting phases of research with the choice of topic, paradigm, method, working research questions, previous research and theory (Thagaard, 2018, p. 151). The first part of analysing the generated data was to apply an analysing technique. I used *cross-sectional coding* which meant constructing themes and codes that can be applied

in all of the interviews (*Table 2*). The codes are ranged by different characteristics such as thematic, descriptive, conceptual, interpretive and analytical. I used these codes to find common ground between the interviews and as a basis for my interpretation (Mason, 2018, p. 194). The codes were created in light of theory, previous research, experience, and the goal of this research and were used as points of departure to interpret the data. However, even though I used these themes and codes to get a better understanding and interpret the findings, I did also keep an open mind in case something else could be relevant or even just interesting in the generated data.

**Table 2:** *Themes and codes*

Themes	Codes
<b>Identities</b>	Identifies as a gymnast
	Gymnastic lifestyle
	Training environment
	Performance
	Narrative: experience, information and occasions
	Talks about RG
	Body and hair image
<b>Consumption</b>	Consumption of gymnastics items
	Consumption of other items
	Aware of popular items in the club

	Not aware of popular items in the club
	Consumes and not consumes popular gymnastics items
	Consumes and not consumes popular other items
	Needs certain items to fit in to the club
	Typical gymnastics items
	Does not need certain items to fit in the club
	Need certain items to fit in, in other situations
	Parents pay for consumer gymnastics items
	Gymnasts pay for consumer gymnastics items
<b>Inclusion/Exclusion</b>	Sense of feeling included in the club
	Sense of feeling excluded in the club
	Friends are essential in the club

	The club is a good place to socialise
	The club is not a good place to socialise
<b>Comparing consumer items</b>	Has compared products with others
	Has not compared products with others

## 2.6 Quality of the methodology

The main idea to this methodology chapter is to give the reader an insight into which decisions and choices I have made throughout this project, which should allow people not involved in the milieu to understand and assess the quality of this research (Thagaard, 2018, p. 14). However, to obtain an even greater understanding of the quality of the methodology, I can present some measures to enhance this notion. The measures are *reliability*, *validity*, *generalisation* and *reflexivity*.

*Reliability* is often a term used within quantitative research and refers to whether other researchers obtain the same results using the same method. However, this is not realistic in qualitative research. Within qualitative studies reliability involves the assessment of whether the research is credible and trustworthy (Thagaard, 2018, p. 187). To obtain reliability in this research I have tried to be transparent in the methodology. This chapter has, therefore, a detailed explanation of research design, sample, the interview process, transcribing the interviews and the process in the analysis. To enhance the transparent aspect of the methodology there will be a copy of the interview guide (see appendix A) (Thagaard, 2018, p. 188).

Another aspect that can measure the quality of the methodology of this research is *validity*. *Validity* is whether the research actually examines what I claim to examine (Mason, 2018, p. 236). As qualitative social research does not operate with numbers per se, validity must be measured in a different way. It refers to whether I, as a researcher, checks, questions and theoretically interprets the findings, throughout the whole researching process (Kvale, 2007, p. 123). To validate the research I have, for instance,



throughout the research process cross-referenced my findings with previous research which has been presented in section 1.3. If I find that the findings coincide with previous research this will strengthen the validity of the research. Operationalisation of terms and concepts are also important measures to ascertain the validity of a project. Therefore, in the theory section (1.3) I have included several terms and concepts such as relative poverty, consumption, identities, social inclusion and exclusion to identify what I am actually examining (Mason, 2018, p.35).

*Generalisation* in research involves whether it is possible to transfer the results from an interview to other interviewees and situations, however this is only possible if one can obtain reliability and validity in the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 287). Traditionally generalisation is often connected to statistical research where huge samples are used. Therefore, an on-going debate is how to generalise a sample from qualitative research. Rather than generalising from one sample to a bigger sample, qualitative methods obtain in-depths knowledge of a phenomena and therefore can look for some of the same connections and patterns in other relatable situations (Thagaard, 2018, p. 194). For instance, from my research it could be possible to transfer some of the findings to another sport or other social situations with adolescents, because the findings could be connected to previous research, theory and most importantly adolescents' experiences and thoughts. Therefore, I will combine two forms of generalisation; *naturalised and analytical generalisation*. *Naturalised generalisation* has a point of departure in the personal experience and tacit knowledge, and throughout the interviews I got a glimpse of their personal experience of relative poverty in the rhythmic gymnastics community and turned it into explicit knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 188-189). *Analytical generalisation*, on the other hand, raises the question whether the results from one study can be a guide to what will be found in another study. It is, therefore, important to acknowledge the similarities and differences from previous research and this research to recognise the analytical generalisation (Kvale, 2007, p. 127).

*Reflexivity* is an important notion within research and an imperative aspect for this project. It is about the ability to see how my role can influence the research. This was applied throughout the whole process of this master's thesis, from my connection to the interviewees, to the empirical data, to the theory, to the analysis and the

interpretation of data (Den nasjonale forskningsetiske komite for medisin og helsefag [NEM], 2019, Forskerrollen). I have, therefore, reflected over my role as a previous gymnast, and my involvement in the community today through coaching and judging, and how this could influence the research and in what way. As my connection to the RGC is quite profound, I had to embody and be aware of my position especially in the analysis, to be aware of how this could influence the interpretation. A tool to reflect upon reflexivity in this research would be to use Bourdieu's reflexive device, *crossing fields* (Townsend & Cushion, 2020, p.2-3). *Crossing fields* builds on Bourdieu's concept of field, which is a space of social networks and positions (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 169). So, from my researcher's perspective I am connected to the researching field (with ethics, methods, theory, previous research), and also the sports field by examining the sub-field "rhythmic gymnastics". By distinguishing the fields, it was easier to divide what set of knowledge and thoughts belong where. However, the two fields will overlap, because my knowledge of the gymnastics community is interconnected to the interpretation and understanding from a researcher point of view. This means the fields are overlapping throughout this project. Another tool to help me as a researcher to obtain reflexivity is to keep a research journal during the process of the recruitment, while generating data and during the analysis. The research journal has been a very helpful tool, not only to reflect on my reflexivity in the research, but to also give myself feedback in especially the interview situations. This I found even more important, because my main goal throughout this project and from an ethical perspective was to give the participants a comfortable and pleasant experience in participating in this research. Here is an excerpt from my journal:

I thought the interview today went really well. The participant seemed to think it was quite fun to be interviewed and both of us laughed a bit throughout. I felt that the interview become more like a conversation. The participant seemed quite eager to answer questions and had lots of examples to bring to the table.

I thought before the interview [today] that I wanted to be neutral, but I felt that became quite unnatural and wrong. I also thought it was imperative to try to create a conversation, rather than an interview with a "scary" researcher. After the interview I realised that I forgot to ask a couple of questions, because of a

digression and stress. I hope that the stress will disappear after a few more interviews.

The participant that I am going to meet now, I do know her a bit. I have been to a few competitions where she has been present. I have been back and forward, with how I should act, but I have concluded that I will act like I always do, except that I will ask her questions. I want a nice conversation, with the interview guide as a point of departure.

These excerpts, I believe, illustrate how important it was to me both on a personal level, but also from an ethical point of view, that the participants in the project were my first priority. Also, I think this demonstrates that I am aware that I might know some of the gymnasts that I interviewed, and that I have thought through how I should act.

## **2.7 Ethics**

All research is obliged to follow ethical principles within the respectable research field (Thagaard, 2018, p. 20). According to The National Committee for Research Ethics in Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH), research ethics includes a wide range of values, norms and institutional arrangement that help regulate and guide research activities (NESH, 2019, Introduction). In line with NESHs regulations about personal information, I applied to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), because my research collects personal data that could be linked to adolescents, such as age, gender, residence, social class and a code linked to their names (NESH, 2019, Other institutions and authorities; NSD, n.d. Notification Form for personal data.). After a couple of minor corrections from NSD, such as my not ticking off the box about health information and that I did not include the email address to the *data protection officer* at the Norwegian School of Sport Science in the informed consent form, I was granted approval to start my research. Later on, I also applied to NSD to interview online, which was also accepted (see Appendix D). Also, since, my project might consist of people from vulnerable groups, which means people that cannot consent by themselves (Norwegian School of Sport Science, 2020, NIHs etiske komite), I had to apply to the NIHs ethics committee as well. I received approval from the NIHs ethics committee, as long as NSD also gave their consent (see Appendix E).

There are always ethical issues concerning research projects in all fields of science. However, since the design of this project is interviews, there is a range of ethical issues that could occur, mainly because through interviews the researcher examines “*..private lives and placing accounts in the public arena.*” (Kvale, 2007, p.23). Therefore, it is imperative to have the interviewees’ best interests as a main priority and to ensure that the participants are protected, researchers must follow the universal ethical guidelines for social science; *informed consent, confidentiality, and consequences of participation and the role of the researcher* (Kvale, 2007, p 26).

*Informed consent* involves information about a research project to participants that are considering participating (Kvale, 2007, p. 27). The principle for informed consent is the respect of individuals and their right to choose how information about them is used and that they are free to consent with any pressure (Thagaard, 2018, p.23). It is required that the information includes the goal of the research, methodology, research funding, possible risks and benefits of participating (Fossheim, 2015, Samtykke). It is important that in the informed consent there is sufficient information, so the possible participants have enough information to consider whether to consent to participation or not. I wrote two information documents, one for participants over 16 years of age and one for the parents who have children under the age of 16 years of age. The participants in this research were presented with a document of information and a consent form according to NESH and NSDs guidelines (see Appendix F for information document for adolescents and Appendix G for document for parents). The consents were either in written format or electronic.

*Confidentiality* includes that personal information obtained in this research will not be recognised nor identifiable (Kvale, 2007, p.27). This means managing of personal information and publishing the generated data has to be anonymous (Thagaard, 2018, p. 24). I used a range of strategies to protect the personal lives of the adolescents and their anonymity. Firstly, I saved personal information such as names separate from the generated data and my computer, with a code that only I can identify. It was, also imperative that personal information was locked safely away, so nobody but myself could access the information (Thagaard, 2018, p. 24). Also, when this project is handed in, all of the personal information will be deleted.

*Consequences* is connected to the benefits and the disadvantages of participating in this project. As a researcher one has the obligation to ensure that the participant will experience no harm of a physical or psychological nature nor other unnecessary strain by participating in this research (Thagaard, 2018, p. 26). Therefore, I have considered several benefits and disadvantages of participating in this project. The advantages of participating could be that the adolescents can share their insight and perspectives of possible consumption pressure in gymnastics and, therefore, their voices will be heard. I believe it is important to examine adolescents' perspectives, thoughts and experiences to better understand their world. A disadvantage of participating in this research could be the gymnast might gain a clearer idea or feeling of their situation in the rhythmic gymnastics community, which could include psychological, socially and economic factors. This could lead to negative thoughts and feelings about participating in this project. Therefore, it was imperative to ensure their anonymity throughout the whole process and to mention during the interview that they can pull out of the research at any time without giving a reason and stressing that there will be no consequences if they do so. Also, I had to consider the data generated during the interview from an ethical point of view. For instance, I only considered the data generated during the interview on record and not the information given before or after the interview nor if they said explicitly "I do not want this documented" (Mason, 2018, p. 94).

Moreover, it is vital that I considered the ethical implications around confidentiality and anonymity. Since the ethical guidelines impose legal claims to oblige the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants it is obvious this has to be implemented in all stages of the research. However, since the nature of interviews involves a majority of the data generated being based on personal experiences, feelings and perspectives, the interviewees might recognise themselves in results (Mason, 2018, p. 93). Even though, personal information such as age, name and resident will be anonymous, their feelings, experiences and perspectives will not be. I, therefore, had to reflect over how I presented the results to protect the adolescents' integrity. There were for example a few excerpts that I could have included in the results/interpretations, but since the RGC in the Oslo region is quite small, and some of the stories or experiences could have been identifiable to the gymnast, I choose to exclude it from the project.

Another aspect of ethical issues I have had to consider in the interview process is the asymmetrical relationship. The nature of interview is often one-sided, since there is a researcher that is asking the questions and an interviewee that is answering the questions. From this perspective there will be an asymmetrical balance in power (Thagaard, 2018, p. 91). My role as a judge, coach and student from a university could also enhance the asymmetrical power balance. However, to obtain the best possible data from the interview the asymmetrical imbalance is not desirable. I, therefore, had to reflect over what strategies I had to apply to minimise this unequal balance. For instance, a strategy was to give positive appraisal of what the interviewees are saying and doing to create a positive and safe environment. I believe this led to a more equal balance of power. Another possible strategy is to also offer a little bit of myself, without being too leading with regard to generating valid data. For instance, to some of the interviewees I told them one experience I had, or I would say “ah, that happened to me too”, or I could say “Oh, I had one of them as well”. I did apply these notions in most of the interviews. But a strategy I felt was the most efficient was to make the interview more like a conversation between friends, with laughter and being interested in what they were saying. This of course did not completely wipe the imbalance, but it did, to some degree make the asymmetrical balance more equal.

### **3. Results: Presentation of the findings and analysis**

In this chapter I will firstly introduce the participants whom I have interviewed during this project. Secondly, I will give a brief overview of the similarities and differences between the participants in the sample. Then I will present the findings and analysis of the data generated.

#### **3.1 Presentation of the sample**

To obtain in-depth knowledge of the area I wanted to research, I reached out to several gymnastics clubs and conducted ten qualitative interviews with adolescent gymnasts. Here I will present the sample, but to protect the interviewees' anonymity I have given the gymnasts pseudonyms for their name, residence and divided the adolescents into two age groups: the first is group A which consists of girls aged 13 to 15 and group B aged 16 to 19. Also, to further protect the interviewees' anonymity I have categorised their parents' work based on a table from Statistics Norway (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2011). I have also chosen not to create a pseudonym for their club nor to present how many clubs were present in the study, as there are only a few clubs in the Oslo region.

##### **3.1.1 Group A (13- 15 years old)**

###### *Alice*

Alice lives in the Beech area and has been doing RG for about 4 years. She is a national gymnast who enjoys the pleasures of participating in both the individual and group competitions. Alice estimates that she trains rhythmic gymnastics between 10 and 15 hours a week. Her participation in rhythmic gymnastics is a very important part of her life, as well as her family and friends. Her parents' work is placed under the categories "Professionals" and "Technicians and associate professionals".

###### *Anne*

Anne started with rhythmic gymnastics about three to four years ago. For Anne, friends and family are fundamental in her life. Also, she loves RG and trains more than 15 hours per week. Anne is a national gymnast and competes in both the individual and group divisions. She also has a part-time job, which she finds both challenging and fun.

Her parent's jobs fall under the category "Professionals" and "Technicians and associate professionals". She lives in the Beech area as well.

#### *Charlotte*

Charlotte resides in the Beech area and she has been doing RG for about five years. She trains approximately 15 hours per week and is currently an individual national gymnast. For Charlotte, family and friends are most important, but she also finds it imperative to focus on RG if she wants to become a good gymnast. She also admits that schoolwork is important. Her parents work is categorised under "Technicians and associate professionals" and "Sales and service work".

#### *Diana*

Diana has been doing rhythmic gymnastics for about six years and resides in Spruce town. She trains approximately about 20 hours a week and is an international individual gymnast. The most important things in Diana's life are her family, health, rhythmic gymnastics and education. She loves RG and it is very important for her to be a gymnast. In her family there is one parent who works, and the type of job is placed under the category "Plant and machine operators and assemblers".

#### *Elizabeth*

Elizabeth is a young international gymnast who lives in Fir town. She has practiced rhythmic gymnastics for more than 7 years, and trains more or less 20 hours a week. Elizabeth loves gymnastics and has previously trained both in a group and as an individual. However, she has decided that she liked the individual aspects best and, therefore, only competes in the individual exercises. Elizabeth's parents' jobs are both categorised in the "Professionals" category.

#### *Margaret*

Margaret lives in Oak Town. She is relatively new to the sport but has completely fallen in love with rhythmic gymnastics. Margaret is a national gymnast and trains around 13 hours a week. She only participates in the individual discipline of rhythmic gymnastics (RG). The most important aspects of her life are her friends at school and RG. Her parents' jobs can be placed under the category "Technicians and associate professionals" or "Clerical support workers" and "Sales and service work".



### *Mary*

Mary has been doing rhythmic gymnastics for almost 5 years and loves the sport. She trains 13 to 14 hours a week depending on how much her club manages to get access to the gym. Mary is a very eager gymnast, and while she is currently a national gymnast, she and the coach are considering placing her in the international level. In addition to RG, she also thinks friends and family are an important part of her life. Mary's parents' both work in the category "Professionals" and she lives in the Beech area.

### **3.1.2 Group B (16-19 years old)**

#### *Alexandra*

Alexandra is an individual national rhythmic gymnast who trains approximately 12 hours per week. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the training hours have gone down quite a bit, which she finds frustrating. She has trained RG for about 5 years and resides in the Pine area. She has currently a part-time job in addition to training and school, which she does not feel affects either. Her parents work situation is categorised into "Clerical support workers" and "Plant and machine operators and assemblers".

#### *Beatrice*

School, friends and rhythmic gymnastics are an important part of Beatrice's life. She has practised rhythmic gymnastics for about eight years and lives in the Birch area. Before committing to rhythmic gymnastics, she has tried several different after school activities such as cross-country skiing and dance. Under normal circumstances (before the Covid-19 pandemic), Beatrice trains around 12 to 15 hours a week and is an international gymnast. She has cut down on her training hours, because she wants to focus more on schoolwork. Both her parents' work falls under the category "Professionals".

#### *Louise*

Louise is one of the older gymnasts in the sample. She has been in the sport for almost 10 years and what she loves the most about rhythmic gymnastics is competing. She is an international gymnast and participates in both group and individual exercises. Louise has decreased her training amount, because she wants to train a little less and have time for other things. She now trains about 12 hours per week. Her parents' work is categorised under "Professionals" and she lives in Willow Town.

**Table 3:** List of participants

Name	Gender	Age group	Training hours	Years in RG	Level of performance	Social class
<b>Alice</b>	Female	A	10-15 hours	3-4 years	National	High
<b>Anne</b>	Female	A	17 hours	3-4 years	National	High
<b>Charlotte</b>	Female	A	15 hours	5 years	National	Middle/high
<b>Diana</b>	Female	A	20 hours	6 years	International	Low
<b>Elizabeth</b>	Female	A	20 hours	7 years	International	High
<b>Margaret</b>	Female	A	13-15 hours	2-3 years	National	Middle
<b>Mary</b>	Female	A	13-14 hours	4-5 years	National	High
<b>Alexandra</b>	Female	B	12 hours	5 years	National	Middle/Low
<b>Beatrice</b>	Female	B	12-15 hours	8 years	International	High
<b>Louise</b>	Female	B	12 hours	9 years	International	High

### **3.2 Similarities and difference in the sample**

The girls informed me that they train between 12 and 15 hours per week. There are only two gymnasts that train more than 15 hours per week. Furthermore, the ages of the

gymnasts are quite similar. However, it could be argued with that the adolescent age group (13 to 19 years of age) does not allow for a great difference in age range. But there are only three gymnasts that belong to age group B. This could also be explained with that there is generally a huge drop out from sports at this age (Bakke et al, 2016, p. 194), and therefore, there are not that many within this age group to recruit. The sample's social class is also quite similar. Most of the sample has a "high social class" background, three of the gymnasts come from a "middle social class", and one from a "low social class".

The main differences in the sample are the level of gymnastics and how many years they have been in the sport. In the sample there are four international gymnasts and six national gymnasts. However, a few of the national gymnasts did mention that they were going to become international gymnasts. Also, there is quite a wide range of how many years the adolescents have been practicing rhythmic gymnastics. The range varies from 2- 3 years to 9 years, which in this age group I would say gives variation.

### **3.3 Presentation of the analysis of the results**

Giddens and Bauman have both described a new modernity (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 262). Bauman discusses how society has become fluid and rapid, and individuals are, therefore, given the task to develop their identity through the market and consumption. This coincides with what Giddens argues; that because of the new modernity and the lack of stable social roles, the individual's identity is formed through reflexive choices – also known as the *reflexive self*. So that leads to the question; what does it mean to be a gymnast in this day and age? It is seemingly rather complex. The gymnasts are part of the global world through travel, social media and, in a way, through their existence. They are practicing rhythmic gymnastics in their local clubs and they have other social arenas to engage in such as school. Consumption of sports equipment and other items are apparently quite a natural part of this. In addition, social media seems to be present in most people's life, including these adolescents. Which leads me to reiterate this project's overarching research question, and the two supplementary questions:

*How do adolescents experience the rhythmic gymnastics community (RGC) in the Oslo region?*

- 1) *In what ways are experiences from the RGC meaningful for the adolescents' identities?*
- 2) *Is "relative poverty" experienced in the RGC, and if so, in what ways?*

From the interviews I conducted to answer these questions, several themes emerged from my ensuing analysis of the data generated: the young womens' identity projects, consumption habits, the fluidity of inclusion/exclusion, the meaning of social media in their lives, and few experiences of relative poverty. These themes are seemingly separate; however, they are very much interrelated, but in order to discuss them I needed to separate them heuristically. I have divided the results by answering the supplementary questions to understand the adolescent's experiences of the rhythmic gymnastics community as a whole.

### **3.3.1 In what ways are experiences from the RGC meaningful for the adolescents' identities?**

In this section, I will present the findings from the interviews with the rhythmic gymnasts connected to identity. Firstly, I will present the findings connected to "the importance of being a gymnast" and to what degree the gymnasts find rhythmic gymnastics important. Secondly, "the gymnastic lifestyle" will be presented and how this is meaningful to the gymnasts. Then, I will discuss how and why, communicating about RG could be central to identifying as a gymnast. Fourthly, I will argue how the sense of feeling socially included might have a connection to their participation in rhythmic gymnastics, and how this could strengthen why RG is meaningful to them. Moreover, I will discuss the "ballet bun" and the leotards in rhythmic gymnastics, and what it means for the gymnasts. Further, I will present and argue how social media might be meaningful for the adolescent. Lastly, I will connect the findings about identity to Giddens theory of the *reflexive self*.

#### *The importance of being a gymnast*

Sport is said to be a very important part of an adolescent's life (Seippel et al, 2016, p 14) and I interpret that the findings from this study add weight to this claim. For most of the interviewees, rhythmic gymnastics and being a gymnast *is* an important aspect of their life albeit to varying degrees. The study illustrates that younger adolescents (from

Group A) consider being a gymnast a very important part of their lives because they either like RG very much or they use so much time on the sport that they consider it to be very important.

Yes. Being a gymnast...shows...is a part of me as it is what I do in my free time. Yes. It is RG that I do in my free time, I do it voluntarily, so I feel it is part of me. (Alice)

Alice is a young gymnast, and this also echoes the other young gymnasts' thoughts on the importance of RG in their lives. The elder gymnasts, however, seemingly have a different take on the subject. Louise and Beatrice do not find being called a "gymnast" very significant. Although Beatrice does think it is a bit cool to be called a "gymnast", she does not consider it very important. Louise on the other hand, focuses on that she finds it very irritating that people do not recognise RG as sport because people, therefore, do not think of her as an athlete.

...when I say that I am an elite athlete and if people say, "no it is not a sport". I become like "eh, here we go again" ...I think that it is very important that people think that it is a sport and that it is very difficult. One is almost looked down upon because they think it is so easy... It is very annoying. It frustrates me a lot when they confuse RG and artistic gymnastics. It is very annoying. And when they say, "you only throw balls around". It is not exactly it... (Louise).

Even though, Louise says she does not think it is important to be a gymnast, she does not like that people find the sport easy, nor that they do not recognise it as a sport. In a way I believe that rhythmic gymnastics is important to her because she finds herself defending the sport. So, being an athlete and a gymnast is probably important to her on some level. Louise has also trained a lot when she was younger but has now chosen to cut down to 12 hours per week, to have time for other things in her life. However, even though she has decreased her training amount, she still trains quite a lot. According to a report on sports and its position during adolescents' free time, female adolescents aged 13 have, on average, 16,6 training sessions a month, however this decreases with age. Female adolescents at high school have on average 13-14 training sessions per month (Bakken, 2019, p. 48). Louise and Beatrice have followed the trends that were found in

the report on training and adolescents. However, they still train more than the average female adolescent. From my experience of rhythmic gymnastics, it is normal to train three hours in a stretch, which would mean that since both of them train about 12 hours a week, they would have four training sessions a week. This adds up to 16 trainings per month. I believe this indicates, in some ways, the importance of RG in their life.

### *The “gymnastics lifestyle”*

Another important finding with regard to the importance of rhythmic gymnastics in their life, is that the study shows that most of the gymnasts define a “gymnastics lifestyle” as something they would want to have or have had at some point in their career, irrespective of their performance level. This finding seems to be consistent across all of the interviewees, even though, traditionally, if you have many training hours and are an international gymnast, you would probably be considered to have a “gymnastics lifestyle”. I find this interesting and, in some ways, very positive for the rhythmic gymnastics community in the Oslo region. This could indicate that clubs in the Oslo region offer rhythmic gymnastics training and competitions that fit the gymnast’s wishes and desires.

Most of the interviewees believe that a “gymnastics lifestyle” involves a lot of training hours and that one generally devotes a lot of time and energy on gymnastics. When asked, Elizabeth says in her interview that she would love to have a “gymnastic lifestyle” in the future.

Um, wake up, maybe do a workout, then eat and all that, maybe a few hours of school, and then even more training, and then go to bed. Then do the same the next day... Um, because, then I would have the possibility to be become very, very good. And because, I could do what I like to do best. (Elizabeth)

For Elizabeth, a lot more training would be welcomed, even though she does have quite a big training load already, something which I believe, from my experience, is required and necessary to be an elite gymnast. Furthermore, I interpret this quote as meaning it is something that Elizabeth would really like to do at some point in her rhythmic gymnastics career that is, become a very good gymnast, but also that she wants to devote more of her time to RG because she loves the sport. I also think this excerpt

illustrates that she probably is a very dedicated gymnast. Elizabeth mentioned that she would love to go to a championship. This could, also, indicate that she has high expectations for herself and big goals to excel in RG.

Louise and Beatrice have cut down on their training load to have time for other things, such as schoolwork or friends. Even though, rhythmic gymnastics is a central part of their lives, for Louise especially, she indicates that she does not typically have a “gymnastics lifestyle” anymore. Here is an excerpt from the interview with Louise.

Louise: If you are at the elite level, it is school and then it is just to train, and then go to bed at once because the training lasts for a long time. At least if you are really serious about it, then it is probably: wake up, training, school, training... Then you have a day off on Sunday or another day when you can do homework. And, possibly on Saturdays you can train around 4 to 6 hours and then you get the evening off. It goes like this for the most part...

Interviewer: Yes. Do you feel that you have a typical gymnastics lifestyle?

Louise: No, not anymore. I had... But I have become a bit sick of it. So, I have reduced it slightly. And I am now doing it for fun, and I am not so serious. I have kind of adapted, so that I can mostly do what is fun, and get to train and try not to come last.

From this excerpt, I believe it is clear that Louise does not believe she has a typical “gymnastic lifestyle” because she has cut down on her training hours to have time for the fun parts of her life. Nonetheless, I do believe that at the time when she did have the “gymnastic lifestyle”, it was an experience that had some significance for her. She has had the opportunity to choose how much she wants to train and how serious she wishes to be in the sport. Louise made such changes, which has changed this part of her life. This indicates and illustrates Bauman’s major point on how changes in modern society influences the person one becomes. Even though, she does not train as much as she used to, she still finds the sport fun, but also has time for other leisure activities. This coincides with my assumption, that even though teenagers have a lot of choices, Louise’s experience does indicate that RG has helped developed her identity. This does

not necessarily mean that Louise has RG as a central part of her life, but participation in sports symbolises success and happiness (Wiklund et al, 2019, p. 443). This could imply that even though RG is not her sole goal in life, that being “sporty” and “active” are seemingly important notions to still have, and maybe for Louise this might also be a vital part of her life. As in modern society taking care of our bodies and health is up to us as individuals (Wiklund et al, 2019, p. 443), maybe, this notion is something the older gymnasts have in the back of their mind, since they are still in rhythmic gymnastics? To take this further, it seems to be that results and performance are quite central in the “RG lifestyle”. Almost all the interviewees talk about performance and competitions to some degree. For example, Elizabeth wants to become a good gymnast and even Louise talks about not coming last. This, to my mind, indicates that the talk about results and performance in RG could be a way of showing that they are “sporty” and “active”.

Furthermore, another finding is that all of the interviewees have learned something from rhythmic gymnastics, which has influenced them in other parts of their lives. A typical example is discipline and structure in their schoolwork.

I am pretty convinced that there are many values and such that I have learned from the RG community. Because there is a lot of structure and discipline in the RG community that I have taken with me, also in other arenas of my life. So, kind of, the way that I have changed is that I feel that I have become more structured and disciplined. (Beatrice).

According to Beatrice the structure and discipline of the RG community has changed her. This could be interpreted as that she also has changed her reflexive self (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 227). She has learned that through discipline and structure she can get results. Therefore, if she transfers these skills to, for instance, schoolwork, which could be a reflexive choice, she can possibly get good results at school as well. Even though Beatrice gives a clear example that she has learned discipline and structure from RG, and that it is especially transferred to schoolwork, these notions could also be linked to being a “sporty” and “active” person, which has become essential in modern society (Wiklund et al, 2019, p.442). For example, doing a sport, any sport, for so many years and hours, it might possibly give you the label “athlete”. But does any sport give you a



disciplined and structured life or identity? One could assume that since rhythmic gymnasts are, according to the participants, quite disciplined, that the gymnasts thrive upon being structured and that reflects what a gymnast should be. These notions are probably found in most elite sports, however, RG, I believe is an extreme example as it requires a lot of repetition and precision, which is a prerequisite to master the sport. I also believe that the structure and discipline one embodies through rhythmic gymnastics could be imperative measures for being “fit” and “taking control of their bodies” (Wiklund et al, 2019, p. 442), because of the heavy training load many of the gymnast have, the structure of training and the traditional training culture. I would, in fact, argue that all of these notions are part of the “gymnastic lifestyle”.

An example of traditional training culture is described by one of the gymnasts: Beatrice had an experience at a training camp abroad that was an eye-opener for her because of the difference in training cultures.

It was an extraordinary experience. The girls were very disciplined, and the coaches were not always that nice. And the training was very hard and lasted a long time – for me who was not used to training that long... And in the gym, it was completely different than it is in Norway. They did not talk. There was not a sound and the training was bam, bam, bam. And it was super-hot. There was a lot of screaming and loud voices. It was more to do with how the girls were there. It was not just at training, but in the locker-room before training, nobody was talking. There were not a lot of smiles and laughter either. It was like.. I got perspective... I got, kind of, a reality check. (Beatrice)

This excerpt from the interview with Beatrice illustrates that she found this experience to be valuable. However, I also interpret her words to be an illustration of “culture shock”. Beatrice clearly states how different the training culture was abroad, compared to what she is used to in Norway. Even though this is not a direct translation to her identity and her development, she does consider it *a reality check*. I understand that in either of two ways or perhaps both?; 1) that after this experience she understands and respects that there are different training cultures, or 2) that Beatrice had a revealing experience on how these countries become so good in rhythmic gymnastics. Also, this experience in itself, does perhaps indicate that she had/has? a “gymnastic lifestyle”

because she has experienced a camp abroad and at the time became possibly even more dedicated to the sport.

### *Communicating about RG*

An additional finding in this study within the identity theme is how the gymnasts communicate about RG with each other. Above, Louise talked about how she finds it frustrating that a lot of her peers, at for instance school, do not even know what rhythmic gymnastics is and that she has to argue why it is a sport. Some of the other interviewees have had the same experience. The question here is why does she feel the need to defend her sport? There are several possibilities; 1) she identifies as an athlete and when someone does not recognise RG as a sport her identity is being threatened, 2) maybe because RG is one of the few sports that only includes females, and the sport is quite small in Norway compared to, for example, cross-country skiing (Norges Idrettsforbund og Olympiske og Paralympiske Komite, 2020, pt. 1) a feeling of marginalisation occurs, or 3) that she wants the beautiful sport to be acknowledged in a way that it deserves. Despite the reasons behind defending RG, it is seemingly important for several gymnasts. I believe this has something to do with the fact that gymnasts identify themselves with rhythmic gymnastics, because they use so much time and energy on the sport. I remember when I was an active gymnast, my whole world revolved around RG and from what I understand from the sample at some point in their career their life revolved around the sport too. Therefore, because of the level of involvement it likely becomes your life and identity, and therefore, the gymnasts might need to defend the sport because it has little interest in the Norwegian public eye (Perzynska-Biskup et al, 2012, p. 49).

The participants in the sport are the only ones who know what being a rhythmic gymnast is and requires. So, communicating about RG could be a way of sharing interests and what is important for the gymnasts. Another example of communication and rhythmic gymnastics can be illustrated by Mary's thoughts. Mary says she also talks about RG with friends outside the gym, because all her friends are generally interested in each other's sports. She also talks quite in-depth about RG with her friends from the gym.

At training, it is mostly about competitions, if we are dreading it or if we are excited [about the competition]. But if I am with them in my spare time, then it is quite a lot of RG [talk], but also other pleasant things. Other things... If there has just been a competition or if there is going to be a competition, then that. Or if there something exciting about to happen, like getting new music, then we listen to each other's, and things like that. (Mary)

I believe this indicates that Mary and her gym friends are genuinely very interested in rhythmic gymnastics. All the interviewees seem to have the same view to varying degrees. Most of the younger gymnasts talk about RG with their friends at the gym. However, from the participants I can possibly conclude to a certain degree that the older the gymnast the less interest they have to talk about rhythmic gymnastics. I believe that Alexandra, for instance, illustrates this possible assumption.

No, not that much really. Or it really depends on if my coach does something weird, and then there will be a bit of talk about it afterwards, kind of... No. We have enough of it. We talk about other things really. (Alexandra)

Alexandra undoubtedly sheds light on the fact that she does not want or have the need to talk about rhythmic gymnastics with other gym peers. I find it interesting that Alexandra says "*We have enough of it*". Louise and Beatrice, who are in the same age group as Alexandra, also give the same impression. They have done rhythmic gymnastics for the longest period of time out of the sample. This could have a connection to that the three gymnasts also have other interests. For instance, Louise also participates in dance, Alexandra has a part-time job and Beatrice has chosen to cut down on the training load to focus on schoolwork. This indicates that rhythmic gymnastics is not their only interest and importance in life. It could also indicate that they have become more confident in what rhythmic gymnastics is to them. Maybe it is "just" an after-school activity for them? Perhaps this is a natural part of growing up? They are perhaps gaining new experiences, new interests and more responsibilities, and possibly the sport is in general just one aspect of their life, and not the main priority. However, the three gymnasts still feel a sense of belonging to the sport and this brings me to the next finding: social inclusion.

*The RGC and the sense of feeling included*

All of the gymnasts felt to varying degrees that they were socially included in their respective clubs. Most of the gymnasts felt that they were welcomed and had a lot of friends. Beatrice and Louise were particularly enthusiastic about their inclusion. Beatrice finds it important to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of unity in her club, which she indicates below:

...I don't have many in my age group in the club, as I mentioned earlier, but I absolutely feel, as a mentioned earlier, a sense of belonging... that our club sticks together and we are together about it. We are our club, and we stick together. We train a lot and see each other a lot. Yes. We have a good time together. (Beatrice)

Beatrice echoes what most of the interviewees also state, that they have a good time together despite age differences. This definitely illustrates that social interaction with peers (Spaaij et al, 2014, p. 25), is an important factor for the gymnasts. It is also a very important intangible measure to indicate the gymnast's feeling of inclusion in the club. Another aspect of the social dimension that I believe is central for social interaction with peers is their interests, which is illustrated by Louise.

I just get along very well with them and they are really nice people. They are quite similar to me, even though they are 2-3 years younger. We have, more or less, the same interests. So, I have a lot of fun with them. The environment is so good. (Louise)

Louise acknowledges that even though there might be some age difference between herself and the others, they still get along because they have the same interests. These interests were not discussed further, however, I do believe this is an important notion to feeling a sense of social inclusion. I would argue that as the individual's social interaction with peers influences their consumption wishes, identity, values, norms and club culture, one does not necessarily feel a pressure to fit in (e.g consumption pressure or relative poverty).

However, even though, most of the interviewees feel included in the club, at least four of the gymnasts have, at one point, felt excluded. One of the gymnasts felt excluded on a regular basis. However, this gymnast loves to practice and has a very nice time in the gym, despite that she felt excluded sometimes. Maybe the love of RG overcomes the need to feel socially included? Perhaps this indicates a strong rhythmic gymnastics identity? Furthermore, in most cases, they stress that the feeling of being excluded is a one-time thing or that the issue has been solved. This could also be understood as a degree of social inclusion in different settings. Generally, one does not either feel excluded or included, but like in this case, some degree of it, but one does not have that feeling all the time (Spaaij et al, 2014). Margaret's experience of being excluded is a consistent finding with several in the sample.

Hmm. When it comes to training and such, I have not felt it. Sometimes they have been doing stuff together, and they have not asked me. Once I was at our cottage, so I think they understood that I was at the cottage, because they did not ask me... (Margaret)

So, even though, she thought they knew about her plans, she did feel a degree of exclusion (Spaaij et al, 2014). However, I interpret from Margaret's statement that she also understood why she was not invited. She generally contends that the environment is very good and warm, and everyone is friends. This illustrates that, even though, gymnasts have a nice training environment, it can be normal to feel excluded at some point and it might not even be deliberate. To take this a little further; could this be an illustration of social class differences? Maybe, the private sphere is more connected to social class differences than in the rhythmic gymnastics community itself? Margaret has the opportunity to go to her family's cottage in the private sphere, perhaps her gym friends do not and are not used to being able to travel to a cottage.

In all I get the general feeling that most of the gymnasts feel a sense of belonging and are socially included in the rhythmic gymnastics community, because they find that the other gymnasts are nice, have the same interests and enjoy their time together. This I believe strengthens why they find rhythmic gymnastics important in their life. Also, I think the rhythmic gymnastics culture with symbols, such as hair and body, intensifies social inclusion and identifying as a rhythmic gymnast.

*The "ballet bun" and leotards: A symbol of rhythmic gymnastics*

In the consumer society we live in today, the images of the body that include health, fitness and beauty have become more important (Featherstone, 1991, p.177), and this is illustrated, in this study, through hair and body images in RG. At competitions, the participants in the study all agree that the hairstyle, a form of a "ballet bun", has to be almost perfect with lots of hairspray, pins and hair nets. Also, all the rhythmic gymnasts in the sample have different hairstyles at training versus competitions and they all have different takes on why this is the case.

I think, maybe, that some believe that having a good bun, then the competition will go well as well. Also, maybe at the competition, when you are representing your club and yourself, then you want everything to be as perfect as possible. (Elisabeth)

Competition is a party, where you are so supposed to be pretty, kind of. And prettier, nicer and little bit more dressed up. It takes a longer time to fix. At a normal training session, it does not matter that much, but at a competition, one is supposed to be a little be more dressed up. (Diana)

...one might give an impression, that if one has a loose bun with lots of bumps in the bun, then it does not have a very professional look. (Beatrice)

In the International Code of Points for Rhythmic Gymnastics it clearly states: "*The hairstyle must be neat and trim and the make-up clear and light*" (Federation Internationale De Gymnastique [FIG], n.d., Rules, Rhythmic.). The Code of Points does not, however, exact a penalty if the hairstyle is not *neat and trim*. However, according to Beatrice and Elizabeth they believe the bun that is done for competitions is not just to do with appearance but has a practical function; it looks professional, and indicates that you are ready to compete. However, Diana and Beatrice, think that it also has something to do with the appearance. It is, in a way, a part of the gymnastics culture that is formed through the international federation, traditions, coaches and gymnasts. Madanipour (1998, p. 189), shares this observation, where symbols, for example, "ballet buns", create, in this situation a rhythmic gymnastics culture, and it could be an important factor of social inclusion. To further this notion, one can, therefore, argue, that making

the perfect bun, is an important part of being included into the rhythmic gymnastics culture and, therefore, it is essential to one's identity as a gymnast. It is a symbol of being a rhythmic gymnast.

Another aspect of hair and body image which is found in this study, is when the sample talks about leotards, which Anne describes in this way:

Yes, it is kind of our dress. It is kind of dress up. We have on our leotard when we are going to compete. (Anne).

In line with, the “ballet bun”, the leotards have the same function – appearance and a practical reason - they mark the difference between training and performance. A “ballet bun” keeps hair from hindering performance, while leotards are form-fitting allowing for maximum unhampered movement. Therefore, I believe that leotards are a way to express that you are a gymnast, since it is what everyone uses in a competition situation. As a gymnast, coach and judge, I think I have only experienced once that a gymnast has competed in something other than a leotard. According to the Code of Points, the head judge would actually issue a point penalty if a gymnast is not wearing a leotard (Federation Internationale De Gymnastique [FIG], n.d., Rules, Rhythmic.) However, I do not believe this to be the main reason why gymnasts wear leotards. I think it has to do with culture and tradition in rhythmic gymnastics. As Anne points out, the leotard is used to “dress up” for competitions. In a way, it has the same function as when you dress up to celebrate a birthday, marriage or baptism. It symbolises that you are part of a celebration, such as a competition. This could indicate that leotards, as well as the “ballet bun”, are a symbol which is important, to be part of gymnastics community and identify as a gymnast as Madanipour (1998, p. 189) and Giddens (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 279) discuss. Perhaps there is an irony here, as while one is “dressing up” for competitions, one is, in reality, by donning a leotard, “undressing” and in a way “showing” the body off. This notion is rather interesting, as in April 2021 a German artistic gymnast took a stand against “showing off” her body in the European championships. She chose to dress, unlike the classical artistic gymnastics leotard, in a leotard that covered most of her body. The gymnast explained that she wanted to feel good, but when puberty hit the traditional leotards become uncomfortable: “Feeling good and still looking elegant? Why not?” (German gymnasts' outfits, 2021). I find this

very interesting and quite revolutionary for the artistic gymnastics community because the German goes against tradition to feel comfortable on the competition floor. In the RG community you can see these types of leotards, however, it is not that widespread, and from what I understand it is more of a fashion statement than anything else.

Furthermore, the hair and body image that is created through the RG community is, in a way, a symbol of feeling a sense of belonging. I would also argue that it is a way of presenting oneself to the community. The question is, therefore, that since our society is influenced by the all-pervasive social media (Barccarella et al, 2018, p. 436) do the gymnasts use social media to represent themselves?

### *Identity through social media*

Bauman discusses that today's society is driven by the market (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 278-280). It is, therefore, natural to include social media as it is part of the market and a huge part of our lives. All the girls in the sample use social media accounts, the most common being Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat. Some of the girls also had Facebook but did not use it frequently. Eight of the ten interviewees used social media for RG purposes. This could range from actively looking for anything to do with rhythmic gymnastics or posting about their own RG experiences such as from competitions or training. From what I understand, the sample uses the different social media platforms for different things. For instance, most of the gymnasts use Snapchat to communicate with their friends and Instagram is used to post pictures. The gymnasts all agree that Snapchat is the social media platform that is used the most. Anne gives a good idea of what type of things she posts on social media:

I can post pictures of me from, for instance, when I was up in the mountains or when I had my birthday or if I have been on holiday... I have posts from training... or the first time I managed to straighten my leg in a ring balance, I was really proud and wanted to display it. (Anne)

This description of what Anne posts on social media is mostly consistent with the others in the sample. Many of the gymnast's post pictures of themselves and RG friends from competitions or training, and in some way, I believe this a part of their reflexive self (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 227). I would, therefore, argue that many of the gymnasts from the



sample use social media to express the importance of rhythmic gymnastics in their life. In a way, presenting the gymnast's identity on all of these accounts is an important aspect of social media. By using social media to express one's interests, such as posting a RG picture, one creates and re-creates their identity (Baccarella et al, 2018, p. 434-435).

Although many of the gymnasts find social media good, several of them do acknowledge that there are several down sides. Alexandra, for example, does not like to use social media much, because she is afraid of the possible consequences.

What if people thought “why did she post that picture?”. Just to get few comments... “How many comments did she get?”. I can see when people post, and how many [comments] they got. So I... I just do not feel the need to post...  
(Alexandra)

It seems like Alexandra is aware of how many “comments” and “likes” one gets on social media, and she finds this aspect scary. This notion can be connected to Giddens' discussion on “ontological security”, which simply put, is about protecting oneself from risks, unpleasant situations or anxieties (Cahir, 2013, p. 4). In this case Alexandra is preventing “risk” by not posting pictures and films on, for example, Instagram, because she does not want to put herself in an unpleasant or stressful situation. I interpret this to mean that she is avoiding risk (by not posting on social media), because she is scared of not getting enough comments, likes or maybe overall acceptance by her peers. I believe this is probably not uncommon in our society today, as social media is a platform that many people have access to and, therefore, a comfortable place to “not be nice”. This fear of not being accepted or excluded could result in some gymnasts avoiding these platforms. So, in effect social media has its dark sides. Research does acknowledge how social media has many negative side effects, such as cyberbullying, witch hunts, fake news and privacy abuse (Baccarella et al, 2018, p. 431). These side effects of social media of course can have many negative consequences on the individual, and probably our identity. Nonetheless, nearly all the gymnasts use social media to show their “followers” what they are doing.

### *How do these findings connect to Giddens theory of the reflexive self?*

Based on these findings about identity and the role of rhythmic gymnastics in their life, it is fitting to go more in-depth with the help of Anthony Giddens' perspective of identity. Giddens believes that the individual's choices and actions construct our identity or what he defines as *the reflexive self* (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 227). Beatrice, for example, reminisces on her time at an international training camp, and Louise has on occasion had frustrating situations with peers who do not even recognise RG as a sport. These experiences are part of developing their identity as gymnasts (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277). I believe these experiences and occasions are important stories illustrating the narratives of their lives, and how RG is a large part of it. All the gymnasts talked about the typical "gymnastics lifestyle" and the amount of training hours that must be included in a typical lifestyle, but Giddens also argues that a lifestyle is based on the individuals' choices (An Interview with Anthony Giddens, 2003, p. 396). Many of the gymnasts, such as Elizabeth, Beatrice, Louise and Alexandra reflect upon their choices on how many training hours they want to train, and why. While they have all made different choices, these choices are part of forming the "gymnast" label, which they believe reflects who they are (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 278). Moreover, the way the adolescents communicate about their sport, I believe is linked to that of the *reflexive self*, because it is the gymnast's way of telling their story and in that way narrating their identity through choices and desires (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277). Another important finding that could be linked to Giddens theory, maybe more indirectly, is that most of the gymnasts feel a sense of belonging. Although, this aspect is not discussed in depth within the *reflexive self*, I believe the sense of belonging to the RGC is imperative to being a "gymnast". In a sense, the feeling of belonging and being a gymnast, is a way of narrating and creating your story of yourself. An additional aspect of feeling included in the RGC is the required hairstyle and leotards. The "ballet bun" and the leotards are symbols of rhythmic gymnastics, so when the gymnasts have learned to perfect the bun and have bought a leotard, they can now identify as a gymnast and have a "gymnast lifestyle" (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277-278). Furthermore, this could be connected to how the gymnasts use social media to express their identity. For example, as Anne explains, she is creating a "story" of her life from when she was on holiday or celebrated her birthday and showing "typical" poses in rhythmic gymnastics. This coincides with the "reflexive self" and how the gymnast expresses through her body (for example with a gymnast's

pose) and choosing to post it on social media, which could illustrate that the adolescent has a “gymnast lifestyle” (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277).

### **3.3.2 Is “relative poverty” experienced in the RGC, and if so, in what ways?**

Relative poverty is about comparing resources between each other and it is a relative feeling (Edwards, 2008, p. 202; Chung et al, 2009, p.1396). I interpret this to mean that people compare everything from for instance, products, to salaries, to houses, to power and knowledge. I do not believe from, my experience through this study, previous research and theory, that relative poverty is solely about comparing resources. From the interviews with the gymnasts, I found that the rhythmic gymnastics identity, consumption, inclusion in the RG club and community, and social media create a platform for comparing resources between gymnasts. All the gymnasts compare items and products with each other. It varied as to what type of products and in what way, but generally, most of the gymnasts felt it was natural to compare the items they owned with other gymnast, friends and peers. Also, I believe that relative poverty includes consumption pressure, because this could result in feelings of being excluded, embarrassed or being “poor”.

To understand the notion of the experience of relative poverty in the RGC, I will firstly introduce the findings on consumption of RG equipment which also includes brand awareness and preowned equipment. Secondly, I will delve into the discoveries of who pays for the equipment and what views the gymnasts have on travel costs. Thirdly, I want to present and consider the gymnasts thoughts on comparing items with each other. Lastly, I will present and discuss whether the rhythmic gymnasts experience consumption pressure in their community.

#### *Consumption of rhythmic gymnastics equipment*

All the gymnasts in the sample consume rhythmic gymnastics related items and products, that are necessary to perform rhythmic gymnastics. Apparatus was, therefore, the most frequently answered when I asked what equipment is most important in RG. Rhythmic gymnastics often involves quite a lot of equipment. From the interviewees I have learned that they need apparatus, toe shoes, elastic bands, weights, note-books, leg warmers, back warmers, knee protectors, hoop covers, ball pumps, cushions to stretch

on and leotards. All the equipment is used for training, with the exception of leotards which are used for competitions and exhibitions. I have compiled a price list with the cost of the equipment (see Appendix H), to give an idea of how much the equipment required costs. In addition to the price list, I have given a short explanation of what the equipment is used for. The cost of equipment I have found on a Norwegian rhythmic gymnastics Facebook provider, and two big sports shops in Norway. The leotard prices I have established through the interviews.

All the interviewees believed that leotards were the most expensive equipment, and some of the interviewees also mentioned that some of the apparatus could be quite dear. Charlotte discusses the cost of leotards:

Leotards. The price varies on how nice they are and such. One kind of has to have a nice leotard. And then it has to match the apparatus and things like that. Leotards are probably the most expensive. But one should not have such an expensive leotard, because it will be too expensive... It is expensive to make leotards, I think, the diamantes and the fabric costs money, and they have to get their money back in a way. Yes... (Charlotte).

Charlotte seems to have an idea as to why leotards are expensive and what has to be considered when looking to buy one: the apparatus you are going to use with the leotard and possibly the music. These factors might add to the cost. I know from my own experience that if one has a routine with, for instance, clubs performed to tango music, most likely one would want to find a leotard that is red and black, to suit the music style and also find an apparatus to match the leotard. This could be related to the hair and body image and the reflexive self (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277). Since most of the interviewees usually choose a piece of music together with the coach, the leotard and apparatus is also discussed and coordinated. I interpret this as a way of giving the judges and audience an impression of the gymnast and the coach's work. I believe, therefore, that consumption of leotards is connected to the way gymnasts present themselves and one way of identifying as a gymnast. In fact, it seems, that a leotard may not just be a required equipment but a sort of a symbol of RG.

Charlotte believes that the company's manufacturing leotards need to get paid fairly. This notion is consistent with most of interviewees; they all understand that it does cost quite a lot when there are a lot of diamantes and fabric involved. When I asked the interviewees what they thought about RG equipment being so expensive there were varying, interesting answers. Some of the gymnast thought it was crazy that for example leotards can be so expensive. Others thought that they felt sorry for gymnasts and families that could not afford the most expensive or what they wanted of equipment. Also, some of the interviewees maintained that the reason why some of the equipment is quite expensive is just because it is "the nature of the game". Beatrice illustrates this point very well.

I feel, absolutely, that these leotards are very expensive. Especially when you measure it up against that it is not necessary to use so much money on something that is kind of superficial. It is kind of overpriced... One wants to appear a bit professional and have everything in order... But I can imagine that people feel that the leotard has a lot to do with how you appear, and RG is about the first impression... It is a sport that is not about how you look, but it is about that everything has to be pretty and clean to look at, and that you have to appear self-confident... And since this is important for the sport, one might feel that, for example, the hairdo and leotard and everything has to be right. Because everything has to look easy and perfect... It's about that it is an aesthetic sport.  
(Beatrice)

Beatrice acknowledges that the leotards are expensive, especially when it can, in some instances, be seen as superficial. She also states further in her interview that when you compare RG with other sports such as skiing, where you need skis to pursue the sport, one does not "need" an expensive leotard to perform in rhythmic gymnastics. This I believe is an essential difference to when comparing consumption habits and needs in sports. Rhythmic gymnastics is in many ways, an aesthetic sport and thus has different requirements.

Like, Beatrice elaborates above, leotards, in a way, alter the gymnast's appearance which is an important factor in rhythmic gymnastics. I interpret this as it almost legitimizes the expensive leotards, because the better the first impression and the

prettier the leotard, the better it is for the overall impression of you as a gymnast. This might also be even more important in RG, since it is a judged sport. Although, all the gymnasts in the sample find the cost of leotards horrific and crazy, they do find it justified because of all the handwork that goes into it. This I believe illustrates Bauman's and Giddens point that consumption and society (in this case the rhythmic gymnastics community in the Oslo region) is interrelated. Gymnasts seems to need to consume the "perfect" leotard to give a good first impression and narrate their rhythmic gymnastics identity, so they feel included in the RG community.

In a way, the choices are not a reflection of what the gymnasts really want, but an echo of what the RGC, according to the interviewees, represents i.e., elegance, self-presentation and professionalism. I would also argue that the consumption of leotards is one way of fitting into the "gymnast box". This box might represent the individual gymnasts' character through their choice of music, leotards and colour of apparatus, however, it seems there is no room for "thinking outside the box". The leotards are supposed to be beautiful with lots of diamantes and different fabrics, because this is seemingly the way the gymnasts should present herself on the competition carpet. Therefore, the gymnasts consume either a new or a preowned leotard to fit the RG identity. It could conceivably be argued that the RGC, by limiting the choices and freedom accorded to the gymnasts, makes Giddens theory of the reflexive choice, less applicable in this instance, (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 277)? However, I believe that, even though, the RGC gives, in some sense, guidelines for the outfits, it does give the gymnasts and coaches the possibility to be creative and innovative when designing a leotard. Here you can "play" with different colours, fabrics and diamantes. However, while this notion may not apply when gymnasts buy a preowned leotard, the leotard can be used in a different way than the previous owner, for example, one can use a different apparatus or different colour apparatus with the leotard. In that way, the gymnasts can create a different impression and therefore, "make it their own". In some ways the RGC seems to, if not directly, encourage relatively expensive leotard consumption.

*Is it enough to "just" buy the equipment necessary?*

It does not seem to be enough to buy just any apparatus and equipment. The participants seem very aware about which brands the different apparatus should be. From the gymnasts I understand that there are certain brands that are more popular to use than

others in their respective clubs. I found that some brands are more popular in one club, and other brands are more popular in another club. However, most of the gymnasts do acknowledge that even though the brands are popular, it is important to find the right brand for you. They all recognise that one should use equipment that they think is easier to use. Elizabeth has experienced that some brands are more popular than others.

I mean, I notice that, at least before, that a lot chose Sasaki balls instead of Pastorelli balls. And the Pastorelli ball is a bit cheaper, or at least it was, and then it was the expensive Sasaki ball everyone wanted. That was what I felt then. I have had both types of balls, and now I have figured out that I like Sasaki best. And that does not have much to do with that everyone else likes it better, but that I figured out it is a better fit for me. (Elizabeth)

I interpret that Elizabeth and the gymnasts she associates with have a strong awareness of which brands most gymnasts chooses. In this case it is also the most expensive product that is preferred, even though, she states that it does not have anything to do with the other gymnasts. She finds that the Sasaki ball is the best for her. Even though the Sasaki ball is the most expensive, I interpret that the price does not have much to do with the consumption of the ball. Rather it is an individual choice based on ball experiences. This finding is consistent with the other gymnasts in the sample. They do not necessarily choose a piece of equipment because of the price, however, in some instances they do happen to be the dearest product.

Also, many of the gymnasts are influenced by social media to consume products. Elizabeth explains how she ended up liking a certain brand of toe shoes:

The famous RG gymnasts have sponsors. And say, that one follows them on social media and they advertise a lot for them [the sponsors], one can be influenced and want the stuff they have because one idolises them. This can make you not want the stuff you already have...I saw a lot of good gymnasts had Dvillena toe shoes, so I tried those. I then found out that they were really good, so I changed [toe shoes] to them. (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth's statement corresponds well with Bauman's theory of *consumerism*, which is about how people have wants, longing and desires (Bauman, 2007, p.28). Since, Elizabeth clearly wanted to try Dvillena toe shoes after seeing that some of her RG idols using this brand. As for Elizabeth, one could argue that Bauman is right because he believes that consumption is an investment for the individual (Elizabeth) and this could improve self-esteem (Bauman, 2007, p.54-56). Elizabeth might not have directly said that it improved her self-esteem, but she did acknowledge that she thought the toe shoes were very good, and she actively changed her toe shoe consumption to the brand Dviellena.

Another interesting finding within consumption of RG equipment is that some of the brands do not produce the "best" or the most "popular" items across the board. Louise illuminates this notion further:

...because Pastorelli does not have the best of everything. But everyone has Pastorelli hoops. And then, there are several that have Pastorelli weights, back warmers and leg warmers and such. Chacott has become very known recently. We did not even know what it was before. They have become very known for their ribbon, ball and clubs. I really like the ribbon, ball and clubs from Chacott... Most of the brands are used, but with different things. (Louise)

Louise's statement does illustrate that the most popular apparatus (likely 3-5 different types of apparatus is required per gymnast) might be from different brands. It is clearly not straight forward what is recognised as the best apparatus brand and what is more popular. However, from both Elisabeth and Louise we can get an understanding that apparatus brands are important and have a certain value attached to them. This leads me to a question: Is this typical for only RG, or can this also correspond with other sports too?

Nevertheless, Louise has also experienced not having the most popular equipment. Louise finds that one type of toe shoes is better for her than the toe shoes that are very popular in the community. She argues that she thinks that the toe shoes give her feet a better shape. However, she has found that going against the majority has some difficulties.



I felt... I was a little bit embarrassed about it. I was a bit like.. I felt everyone was looking at them [the toe shoes]. “wow you are weird because you are using sock toe shoes”... To put it simply, I was a bit embarrassed. (Louise).

The consumption of a different type of toe shoe can be connected to the moral dimension of social inclusion, because Louise is consuming something different, she becomes in a sense excluded from what is “normal” (Spaaij et al, 2014, p. 25). However, Louise seems happy enough to “stick to her guns” and still consume the product. She does feel a sense of inclusion in her club, even though, she felt embarrassed about the toe shoes. Louise’s feelings do not quite coincide with the rest of the participants, some of the gymnasts do not appear to care if they had something different, however, a few did feel a bit embarrassed if they did not have the “right” brand or equipment. During all the interviews I got an impression that the individual’s choice and the awareness of the apparatus brands are central to the consumption of RG products in the respective clubs and for the gymnasts in the sample.

Furthermore, I am going to argue that some consumer products can be a “symbol” of belonging to a club (Mandanipour, 1998, p. 189). All the gymnasts could name a few items that one could buy to either support the club or show that you are from that club. These items could be everything from jerseys to lunchboxes and bottles to tracksuits. All these items had the club’s logo on it and most of the gymnasts had at least one of them. All the gymnasts had the club tracksuit to show that they were from their club, especially on competitions.

I think it is important to have a club tracksuit. Because then you can feel that you are part of the club. But you must have it anyway. It is not like, if you don’t have the club tracksuit, then you are not part of the club. But I think that everyone has the tracksuit, so I don’t think it is a problem. (Alice)

Alice’s statement does illustrate that the tracksuit is important and that everyone has one. It is a symbol of being included and shows that you are a part of the club culture. This finding is probably not only significant for the RGC, this notion is most likely also found in other sports too, because most sports clubs have some form of uniforms or tracksuits. Furthermore, Beatrice remembered an item that did not have a club logo, that

she connected to the club: a stretching pillow. Even though, this might be an item that is not necessarily important to have, she did immediately notice that everyone had them when she started in the new club.

A lot [of gymnasts] in my club have these stretching pillows that look like a ‘smiley face’... or emoji. But I don’t know... I remember when I changed clubs that I thought it was quite funny that so many had these smiley pillows. I was just used to using a knee-protector or my jacket [to stretch]. (Beatrice)

Even though, these pillows are not directly linked to the club with a logo, it does show that these items are popular, and in some way shows a group identity. Through the consumption of these pillows, it might make the gymnast feel included in the club. The pillow, therefore, represents a symbol of inclusion in this specific club. In other clubs, there might be different items, or even the same, that creates a form of unity. Several of the other interviewees mentioned a backpack which almost everyone in the club had. This could in some instances also backfire because some of them might not have “the pillow” or “the backpack”, however, I did not get the impression from the interviewees that this was an issue.

#### *Consumption of second-hand equipment*

As all the gymnasts consume RG related products to practice and compete in rhythmic gymnastics, I wanted to obtain information on whether or not the gymnasts also consumed second-hand equipment. All the gymnasts that I interviewed have at some point in their RG career bought equipment second hand. Most of the interviewees have bought used leotards. A few have bought used apparatus, however, they find that buying used apparatus does come with some issues, such as too much wear and tear. Mary and Beatrice talked quite a bit about consuming used apparatus and used leotards.

I have bought a used leotard and a ball, that I have used quite a bit. What was stupid was that it was a Sasaki ball, where the valve was broken, and they did not say that...I had just got a ball pump, and when I went on trips, it would give less pressure in the balls. It was, therefore, smart to have a ball pump, and then we thought that we could just pump it up when we got home, but that did not work... (Mary)

When I was little, I bought used equipment, but in later years as well, I have bought a lot of used leotards...When it comes to leotards, I believe it is a really good thing [buying second-hand]. This I have thought about prior to the interview... To buy second-hand there is absolutely nothing negative about it. To buy a used leotard that is pretty, it is quite easy to make it your own, and there is no one that looks down upon buying preowned leotards. It is very widespread. It is becoming more and more so. So that is very good. Both in that people can buy a used leotard to save costs, but it also reduces the cost when you buy a new leotard and have the possibility to sell it on. (Beatrice).

Although Mary experienced first-hand a negative consequence to buying preowned equipment i.e. a faulty ball, Beatrice, who seems to only buy preowned leotards in recent years believes this is a very good way of saving costs both for the buyer and the seller. In a way, it seems to be a good thing or possibly even a “cool” thing to buy preowned equipment. Maybe that one buys more second-hand nowadays, which is the case according to Beatrice, this might not related to relative poverty? Perhaps it is also a way of thinking and consuming “green”?

#### *Consumption and awareness of other consumer items*

Most of the interviewees were aware of other consumer items that are not sport related. Some of them said that popular non-sport related consumer items were a bigger focus at school rather than in the clubs. When they were asked what is popular at school many of the gymnasts could name a lot, like for instance Charlotte:

A LOT. There is so much. There are, for example, Air Force shoes, Juicy pants, and yes. Hmm. AirPods, Douchebag backpacks, Day handbags, Svea jackets. Yes.. Is there anything else? Yes, and there is Superdry and Abercrombie and Fitch jumpers and such. There are a lot.

Charlotte’s statement illustrates that there is an awareness of labels and brands of consumer items, which is consistent with most of the other gymnasts. However, most of the gymnasts observed popular non-sport related consumer items everywhere, also in the gym. The items the gymnasts observed were everything from technology such as iPhones, to different clothing items, to specific shoe brands, to jackets and a particular

backpack. Although, the awareness of popular items did vary between the gymnasts, I found that some gymnasts were aware of labels and brands, and some gymnasts were more conscious of types of clothing such as flared leg pants. This observation does not appear to be linked to age, social class, level of performance nor the number of years in the sport. I got the impression that being aware was a perfectly natural and normal thing. However, maybe the notion of feeling aware is one way of feeling pressure or maybe relative poverty? Perhaps, the awareness of other consumer items overrules their consciousness of consuming sport related items?

#### *Who pays for the rhythmic gymnastics items?*

Most of the gymnasts told me that, for the most part, their parents paid for equipment connected to rhythmic gymnastics. However, most of the gymnasts asked for equipment, such as leotards, for birthdays, Christmas or Christmas calendar. In several instances other family members also contribute to paying for equipment, however, I did not manage to find the reason behind that. Only one gymnast told me that she paid for her leotards herself, with her own money, which she earns through a part-time job or housework. Margaret, states that her Grandma even helps pay for some equipment.

Mum and Dad have paid a lot. But Grandma has also chipped in and is engaged in the sport. So, she has bought some apparatus and has helped with other things. She chips in for a leotard. She has bought two of my apparatus. She has contributed quite a bit. (Margaret)

The finding that that most of the gymnasts are gifted RG equipment for an occasion does not seem to relate to social class, age, level of performance nor years in gymnastics. Elizabeth argues that the reason behind getting, for instance, a leotard for Christmas, has to do with learning that she cannot have everything she wants.

If I get a new leotard, and it is around Christmas, then that could be one of my Christmas presents. Or my birthday present could be a new leotard. So we try to be like, that I don't get everything that I want, so that would mean that I would get something small for my birthday. (Elizabeth)

Thus, even though Elizabeth's parents can possibly afford the leotards at any time of the year, it could indicate that the parents want Elizabeth to learn the value of money and gifts.

*"Have you ever experienced comparing items with others?"*

Relative poverty is about comparing resources (Edwards, 2008), and one of the questions I asked the gymnasts during the interview was if they had ever experienced comparing items with others? (or words to that effect). Most of the gymnast have experienced this at some point, and some even said that they thought it was natural and part of everyday life.

Anne reflects on comparing items with others and I understand that she feels more relative poverty at school rather than at the gym. This can coincide with previous research, where they found that relative poverty was in many instances circumstantial (Chung et al, 2009, p. 1396). However, Anne does acknowledge that there is a bit of focus on popular items in the gym as well.

For example, Juicy pants have become very popular. There are many that have them. And when you get to school, and all of your friends have it, and then you come with pants that aren't that brand. And you do not have them...(Anne)

Even though, in this excerpt Anne does not say what she felt, it does indicate that she does compare items with her friends at school. In a way, I interpret that she has thought a lot about not having the "Juicy" pants and that she really wanted them. This I would argue is the core of relative poverty because she does have pants, but in this instance, not the "right" ones. During the interview she also notes that she finds it sad that the popular items have to be a certain brand: *because it can be quite expensive which could lead to clothing pressure among those that cannot afford it*. Anne mentioned that she has felt clothing pressure and she did not have a great experience with that.

One feels, well, one feels that others think that you are poor or ... "can't you afford that?".. yes.. (Anne)

This statement also coincides with the subjective feeling of unfairness when you compare yourself with others (Chung et al, 2019, p. 1396) and with the social aspect of poverty that Townsend describes (Fløtten & Pedersen, 2008, P. 37-38). Anne's statement could illustrate that she believes that people think that one is "poor" if you do not have a certain product. This can lead to people feeling that it is unfair that some have this product and you do not. Also, from a social aspect, it visibly shows that a certain level of "quality products" have become a normal aspect of an adolescent's life, and that many of Anne's friends have "the right products". From Anne's descriptions it seems that to have "quality products" are an expectation. Louise believes this to be the case.

Now it has, almost, become a matter of "of course everyone has it". So, now I feel that if someone does not have it, then they could feel like outsiders. I don't think about it. But I have seen several that have thought "Oh that is a jacket from H&M", but that happens more at school and not in the gym. (Louise)

Louise does acknowledge that it is expected to have a certain brand and that one can feel like an outsider. It seems this statement relates to what Peter Townsend believed, that poverty is not having resources to have a lifestyle that is socially acceptable (Fløtten & Pedersen, 2008, p. 37-38). So, even though, Louise does not point out that anyone is "poor" (according to Townsend's definition), she points that it is expected to own what is socially acceptable, or you will not be one of "the cool kids". This could mean that Townsend has a good point, that poverty is not necessarily a financial aspect, but is more of social aspect (Fløtten & Pedersen, 2008, p. 37-38). However, Louise thinks these expectations happen more at school rather than in the gym. This could illustrate that comparing items are circumstantial. All the gymnasts, except one, feel that the focus on popular items and comparing products with each other happen more often at school. Although, several of the interviewees do compare items with the rhythmic gymnastics community. Louise, Elizabeth and Mary have definitely compared rhythmic gymnastics items with other rhythmic gymnasts.

Yes. When I look at new leotards, I think that, that leotard I cannot have because it is way too expensive... It is a shame because it was so pretty. But if it was not my type of leotard, then it would be fine. (Charlotte).

When I was younger I thought “wow she was good, what does she have?” and “wow, she had a nice leotard, I really want one too”, “wow, I want too”. I was really influenced by what everyone else said and stuff. (Elizabeth)

I had a really big hoop cover, and the hoop stretched into an oval every time I went to training. And everyone else had [a hoop cover] without pockets. I had this because there was so much to carry. So, I switched to a normal one or just a hoop cover. I thought it actually worked better. (Mary)

Even though, many of the gymnasts believe that they compare more items at school, some do it in the gymnastic community as well. The comparing might not be conscious or reflected upon, however as some of interviewees said, it is a ‘natural’ thing to do. Charlotte’s statement, does not is necessarily about comparing items, however I get the impression that she reflected upon what a pretty leotard is and what type of leotard looks good to her. This I believe indicates that she compares leotards with someone or online or on social media. Also, she does indicate awareness of the cost of the leotard. So that feeling of maybe not having the leotard of her “dreams” because of the cost, does maybe affect Charlotte. I would argue that this notion is a feeling of relative poverty.

Elizabeth acknowledges she has compared items with other good gymnasts, because she wanted to be just like them. This coincides with Louise statement, that she thought the elder gymnasts in the club were role models for the younger gymnasts and, therefore, the younger gymnasts wanted to copy the elder and better gymnasts. It could, therefore, be argued that the younger gymnasts are comparing resources with older gymnasts because they want to be like them. From what I understood from Louise and Elizabeth, I do not think this has much to do with relative poverty per se, however, it has more to do with “what products do I need to be seen as an older and better gymnast”? In a way, this could indicate several things. For instance, that performance and being a good gymnast is important in the RGC and consuming the equipment that the best in the club have might help the gymnast on their way to “glory”? Or maybe the sense of relative poverty is not necessarily about not having the “right” equipment as the “best”, but desiring it and wishing you had it, to illustrate to the community your commitment to RG. Or,

another possible thought, is that this could indicate that consumption is central to being a gymnast and fitting in to the RGC.

Mary on the other hand, switched from one type of hoop cover to another. Even though, I interpret this statement to mean that she changed the product because of practical reasons, Mary did acknowledge that she observed that her friends in her club had a different hoop cover than her. Therefore, I believe that she compared her product with her peers. This does not necessarily indicate relative poverty, but just a general comparing of items.

#### *Considering the costs of travel*

Another aspect to consumption, sport and expenses, is travel. Even though, we did not discuss much of the actual cost of travel in the interviews, I did ask the interviewees whether they thought about the cost of travel for rhythmic gymnastics. Six of the interviewees have at some point thought about the costs of travelling to competitions or training camps. The six gymnasts were all surprised about how expensive it could be to travel, when they either asked their parents or realised the costs when they paid for things during a trip. Three of the gymnasts had not considered these costs. One gymnast had not thought a lot of about it, however, she did acknowledge that she had maybe thought about it at some point.

The three gymnasts who have not really considered travel cost do come from middle/high social class, two of them are international gymnasts, and they have all been in the sport for at least 5 years. Even though, gymnasts that fit into this category do consider costs connected to travel, one could argue that the three gymnasts that did not consider travel costs to a large degree have been in the sport for a long time and therefore think that travel is a natural part of the sport. Also, they might also be unaware of the cost because their parents have no problems with paying for the travel and/or this is not a discussion at home.

Of the six gymnasts that have considered travel costs, one admitted that at some point the gymnast's family got help from the club to pay to travel to a competition. I found this to be a generous offer from the club and this is an indication that in some instances a family's financial situation may not necessarily affect the children's experience in



sport. This might of course be a “one-off” offer, however, I find this encouraging, that there are possibilities and measures for financial support in clubs, specially, since the gymnast thought the trip and competition was an amazing experience.

Alexandra also reflects on the expenses of travelling to competitions.

Yes, we pay for the coaches as well, right. So, I know the costs mount up. And then I feel a kind of pressure to do well, right. Since we fly... that costs quite a bit more. So, it becomes a bit like “I have to do well”, and then I do badly and then it’s like “Oh noooo”. (Alexandra)

Alexandra is well aware of the expenses connected to travelling and because she finds it quite expensive, she puts pressure on herself to do well in the competition. I interpret that she almost feels bad if she does not do to well because of these costs. In a way the thought of the expense almost ruins her sport experiences, since it becomes a stress factor when competing. I would argue that this pressure, is not consumption pressure, however, it is a consequence of awareness of costs and expenses with regard to sport. This indicates that the subjective feeling of expensive travel cost, can affect gymnasts in a negative way.

#### *Do the gymnasts experience consumption pressure?*

While this section intersects to a certain extent, with the one above “comparing resources”, it has its own points to make, as it asks the gymnasts directly to describe and consider whether they have experienced consumption pressure. During the interviews I asked, “If I say consumption pressure, what do you think of?”. The reason behind the question was to obtain insight to what the gymnasts define as consumption pressure. All the gymnasts said in one way or another that they believe consumption pressure is that one feels that one should have the same equipment that everyone else has. Alexandra sums up the general understanding from the participants quite clearly:

That one feels that one should wish to have, or that one feels that one does not have what the others have. That one wants to have new leotards all the time, like everyone else. Or a new ball or apparatus, kind of, since everyone else gets it.  
(Alexandra)

Moreover, I asked “Do you experience consumption pressure?”. In general, most of the gymnasts have not experienced consumption pressure directly in the rhythmic gymnastics community. However, Louise and Margaret give examples where they have felt it to a certain extent. Margaret elaborates that she felt it when she started with RG, because she did not have much equipment, but over the years she now has what she needs. Louise has acknowledged that she likes to wear a different type of toe shoe than everyone else because she likes that type the best. She did not feel pressured to consume other toe shoes or if she did, she did not let on, however she did feel a bit anxious about it (see above). However, Louise makes another point:

But “consumption pressure”, I do not feel there is that much pressure literally, but I do feel that younger people see that the older girls buy new leotards and stuff all the time. So it’s like “I want to be with them”, “I want to be like them”, “I also want new leotards”, “mummy can I get new leotards”. Even though, the ones you have fit completely fine and there is no reason for it. (Louise).

Louise’s statement illustrates that she has not seen direct consumption pressure where someone says, “you should have this apparatus” or “this leotard”. The statement, however, indicates that the consumption pressure is more indirect and, as mentioned above, begins with the “role-models” in the club. The chase for new equipment is not their fault, it is more a matter of the younger idolising the older gymnasts. Louise also argues that if a younger gymnast asks for equipment advice “I will tell them what I like”.

Beatrice has never experienced consumption pressure, but she can see why others might. Neither has Diana experienced consumption pressure, however, she does acknowledge that if she gets recommended a certain type of equipment that would make her a better gymnast she would succumb to some pressure. Especially, if buying, for instance, an apparatus with a certain brand would be for her own good. Mary did not experience it either, however, she could not dismiss the possibility that she could experience consumption pressure without being aware of it. Alice believes that there is no pressure because everyone in the club has the equipment they need. She illustrates her point with that if someone gets a new ball it is not a big deal, because everyone has

a ball anyway. Elizabeth, Charlotte and Anne, also agree with the other gymnasts that they do not experience consumption pressure.

Even though, the gymnasts in the sample do not experience consumption pressure directly, they are all aware of rhythmic gymnastics brands and what is popular in the gym and at school. Since, they are all aware of popular products, to varying degrees, there is some type of consumption pressure. Maybe the rhythmic gymnastics community has a form of Bourdieu's concept of doxa? Where consumption pressure is part of the community, and is somewhat expected, un-questioned and is an underlying existence in RG. For instance, the notion of presenting oneself well is an important aspect, and that requires consumption of for example a nice leotard. In a way, this underlying notion, encourages consumption of equipment and items, but it is "what one does" (Atkinson, 2019, p. 85). Although, it does not seem to be a general feeling "you have to have this ball to fit in", however, it seems to be, as Louise states, more of a personal feeling of wanting to consume the popular equipment. Moreover, a couple of the gymnasts do admit that coaches have a preference as to what type of equipment the gymnasts should purchase. For instance, Alexandra mentions that it is her coach who tells her to buy one brand of clubs. This, in itself, might not be pressure because it is the expert's opinion, however, it might bring about more awareness of apparatus brands.

Furthermore, a possible reason as to why the sample does not feel consumption pressure is that the sport is not a known sport in the public eye in Norway as, for example, cross-country skiing. Therefore, the focus on consumption of RG items has not come under scrutiny because the sport is relatively small and only practised by females in Norway (i.e doxa). Also, the consumption pressure might be almost non-existent within the sample because many are in higher social class. Moreover, even the few gymnasts in the sample who belong to the middle and low social class do not feel consumption pressure either. This could also reflect that the common perception of Norway being a classless society has some truth in it (Bahr Bugge, 2010, p. 129).

However, the gymnasts, as mentioned, are aware that their sport can be expensive. Although the term "expensive" is a relative term, many of the gymnasts estimate that leotards can cost between 3,000 to 15,000 Norwegian kroner. On average most of the gymnasts had a least two leotards, and in some cases more. I find that the higher end of

the range to be quite expensive for a piece of equipment that does not have an important practical use and to quote Beatrice on expensive leotards it could be looked upon as being quite “superficial”. So, this could indicate that the consumption pressure is not necessarily there, but as Louise states, it comes more from the individual gymnasts themselves, rather than peers telling you to buy certain items. So rather than direct consumption pressure, it is a subjective pressure to fit into the “gymnastics lifestyle” that most of the interviewees have had, want or have.

## 4. Concluding comments

In this chapter I will offer some concluding comments to this master thesis. I will begin with some reflections on the main findings. Then, I will present some suggestions for measures that coaches, clubs, regional federations and the national gymnastics federation could perhaps implement to reduce costs, especially with regard to leotards. I will then proceed with reflecting upon the methodological aspects of the study and present what I consider to be the strengths and weakness of this project. Lastly, I will elaborate on a couple of ideas for future research.

### 4.1 *Reflections on the main findings and interpretations*

In this section I will offer some thoughts and reflections on the main findings from this research: on rhythmic gymnastics identity, and relative poverty.

While I did anticipate that many of the interviewees would identify as gymnasts, I was nevertheless struck by the extent to which this proved to be the case; RG was seemingly a major part of their lives and they talked about it with self-knowledge and engagement. Their interviews painted a picture of rhythmic gymnastics in the Oslo region as being a community for socialising, new experiences, structure and discipline, and a place to feel a sense of belonging. Although, these aspects are undoubtedly found in other sports too, I do believe that especially structure and discipline, are probably an even more pronounced part of the training culture in rhythmic gymnastics, because the training consists of a lot of repetition of elements and precision. I also found it interesting that the RGC appears to have certain symbols which illustrate a sense of belonging, as well as identifying as a gymnast. The most significant symbols were respectively, the tracksuit and other club items, and the “ballet bun” and leotards. These symbols not only display a sense of belonging in the club as for instance the tracksuit, but also illustrates that one “puts on your identity” by dressing up for competitions with the “ballet bun” and the leotards. The notion of “putting on your identity” reminds me of Goffman’s illustration of *frontstage*, where the “stage” is the RG carpet and the gymnasts have to present themselves as a gymnast with the costume of a leotard and the “ballet bun” to show the audience the image of a gymnast (Goretzki & Messner, 2019, p.3). In line, with presenting “the gymnast” identity, I also found it interesting that several of the gymnasts used social media to “tell their story” by posting pictures of

their life. I did not grow up, to the same extent, with social media and, therefore, I did not have the same experience of expressing myself as a gymnast on different media platforms. This could mean that the gymnasts today have yet another platform to express who they are, and perhaps social media enhances their identity as a gymnast. All of these findings do, in their own way, fit into Giddens's notion of the *reflexive self* in which choices and consumption of, for example leotards, contribute to the creation of the gymnast's identity (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 276-228). Of course, the choices are not limitless; they have to work within certain parameters, for example, it must be a leotard and not any other garment and the hair must be neat and trim, although this is invariably interpreted by gymnasts to be a ballet bun. However, they are still choices and combined they are very much part of the gymnasts' very strong sense of belonging and feeling that RG is a huge part of their life. Perhaps the RGC functions as "ontological security" for the gymnast, where they feel at home, they know how to act, what is required from them and is in some ways protected from the outside world (Cahir, 2013, p.4). This might offer them security, in a world with pressures of consumption and a seemingly vast array of choices.

Relative poverty does not seem to be a direct problem in the RGC, especially when the gymnasts compare it to other arenas of their life, such as at school. This could have some connection to that the sample was quite narrow (mostly upper- and middle-class participants). Also, it could perhaps have something to do with that families invest in their children's lives, where they might have to make sacrifices in other aspects of their lives to allow their children to do their sport of choice. Since most of the gymnasts felt consumption pressure or a sense of relative poverty more at school, this coincides with previous research, that the feeling of relative poverty is contextual (Rhee et al, 2017; Chung et al, 2019). However, consumption, brand awareness and comparing items do exist in the RGC and is seemingly quite central for the gymnasts. The gymnasts are aware of what their peers have and notice what is popular and not. I find this to be very interesting, and possibly the core of the study, because even though they might not feel direct relative poverty nor consumption pressure per se, there is certainly an awareness of the relative value/popularity of items: leotards being unanimously acknowledged as being the most expensive. However, they all agree that in practice, gymnasts should buy and have the equipment that works best for them in spite of this awareness. Furthermore, the consumption of equipment (i.e leotards, apparatus, tracksuits) appears

to not only have a practical function, but more importantly, a way of expressing oneself as a gymnast. The consumption of leotards, apparatus and other items gymnasts needed to be a gymnast does, in many ways, fit the description of Bauman's *consumerism and society of consumers*. Consumption in the RGC seems to be about wanting and desiring the rhythmic gymnastics products and striving for being the perfect gymnast (Bauman, 2007, p. 57-61). While these notions could in some ways indicate the presence of relative poverty and consumption pressure, it almost appears as if the RGC is rather a leveller. Their feeling of belonging and their identity as gymnasts within this community seems to outweigh some of the negative aspects associated with consumption. This contradicts Sletten's research which concludes that consumption and the feeling of not having enough, could lead to social isolation, being unpopular and less active (Sletten, 2014; Sletten, 2010). It also seems to disprove Bakke et al (2016, p. 207-208) study that concludes that the pressures and expectations of living up to the social standard of society can lead to social exclusion.

#### **4.2 How can others benefit from these insights?**

I think this project offers some interesting insights into what a rhythmic gymnast experiences in their community. However, I do think it can be specifically beneficial to several stakeholders within the RGC, such as coaches at all levels, regional confederations and the national gymnastics federation. Even though, the gymnasts did not directly feel relative poverty and consumption pressure, they did, however, find that leotards, especially, were very expensive. While I do realise that there are already several measures in place that are quite widespread, which aim at decreasing costs of equipment such as second-hand sales, there could be room for improvement. The first measure I would like to suggest at either the club level or even better the national federation level, would be to implement a restriction as to how many leotards a gymnast can use in competition up to a certain level, for example until the senior level. Internationally and nationally, I see gymnasts with four very expensive leotards, one for each apparatus, and I believe this should not be necessary at all levels, but especially not for children or young adolescents. Perhaps the restriction could be one leotard per gymnast? Another measure could be to apply a restriction to the cost of leotards. For example, gymnasts who compete between the ages of 11 to 15 cannot have a leotard that costs more than 3500 Norwegian kroner. I realise that for gymnasts on national teams who, therefore, compete abroad, would presumably have to conform to

international norms, but this is by no means the majority of Norwegian club gymnasts. I believe these two measures could help reduce the awareness and comparison of expensive leotards, because there would be a framework that would give guidelines for consumption of leotards. This might also reduce some indirect consumption pressure.

### **4.3 Methodological reflections**

In retrospect, there are of course several things that I could have done differently. I want to elaborate on two aspects of the project that I believe could, perhaps, have shaped the project a little differently or possibly have had some impact on the results. The first aspect is in the interview process; with the advantages of hindsight and experiences gleaned from the project I think that I could have asked more direct in-depth questions about relative poverty. However, my concern before the interviews was that the concept relative poverty was a hard term to understand for the gymnasts, especially when put on the spot. Therefore, I decided not to ask directly, for instance, “Have you experienced relative poverty in your club?”. I do, however, now believe, that if I had briefly explained what this meant and asked that question, they would have had no problem grasping the concept: they seemed to have some form of tacit understanding of it. This could have gained some significant information. The second aspect is with regard to Covid-19 and the recruitment of gymnasts. My idea of limiting my research to gymnasts in the Oslo region, was because I wanted to do face-to-face qualitative interviews, which would have been an expensive and time-consuming process if the whole of Norway was included. However, as Covid-19 developed with the subsequent restrictions on meeting in person and travel, meeting the gymnasts face-to-face became challenging, or in many cases impossible, so in the end I did eight of the interviews over the internet. So, in retrospect I could have expanded the geographical area and interviewed gymnast from different parts of Norway. This could have possibly given different insights over a broader spectrum of participants.

### **4.4 Strengths and weaknesses**

This study has, as has most research, several strengths and weaknesses. There is a general lack of research on rhythmic gymnastics in Norway from a sociological perspective or hermeneutic paradigm, so contributing to filling this gap can be viewed as a strength in itself. However, this particular angle is very topical and is coming under more and more scrutiny in a variety of fields and therefore, I believe, has a very specific



contribution to make. In addition, I do consider my involvement and my knowledge about the rhythmic gymnastics community a strength, because I have an understanding of the sport, which to the public eye is not so clear. For example, I understand what RG training involves, I know what type of equipment the gymnasts need, I recognise the difference between a group gymnast and an individual gymnast, and I have quite a lot of knowledge about the Code of Points and how competitions are conducted. I believe this knowledge is to the project's benefit, because I did not need to use time asking the gymnast for example, "what are clubs or ribbons?" "how long is a routine?", "what does a competition look like?" etc. Another strength is the methodology. I believe that qualitative individual interviews are possibly the best research design to examine the gymnasts' experiences because it gives the opportunity to get in-depth information about their feelings, experiences and thoughts (Thagaard, 2018, p. 89). However, additional methods, such as participant observation, could have been a useful supplement to the project.

There are of course weaknesses in the project as well. As mentioned above, due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was hard to get gymnasts to participate in this project, because of ad hoc lockdowns and restricted access to the gyms. It was, therefore, impossible to do as originally planned and visit the various gyms and have preliminary discussions with the coaches and gymnasts with the aim of selecting to interview a broad cross section of the gymnast population with respect to, for example, age, training hours etc, but perhaps most importantly, social class. This restricted access has been elaborated on in the methodology chapter. But it has, most likely, created a narrower sample than I would have liked. If the sample was broader the results might have coincided more with previous research, as the study of for example Bakken et al (2016), which had a main focus on low-income families.

While my experience and confidence in my interview skills obviously grew with each interview, I still think it would have been difficult to pose questions that might have been perceived as uncomfortable, i.e. a too in-depth probing into the family's' financial situation, as it was always paramount to protect the participants from any stress or harm. This was my main priority when interviewing the participants. In addition, like in most projects, the timeline has been restrictive for several aspects of the project, especially the method design. Ideally, I think the project and results would have benefited with

having more time to prepare for the interviews, but also having time to do a second and possibly third interview with the participants. I believe this would have given an even more in-depth knowledge into the interviewees' lives and given me time to consider and reflect over more questions and themes that came up during the first interview to investigate further in the next interview with the same gymnast.

#### **4.5 Ideas for future research**

There could be a number of interesting off shoots from this study, which would be interesting to pursue. It would be fascinating to extend the geographical area. For example, it would be interesting to include more clubs across Norway in this existing project. A cross- border study, could also be of interest, where one compares two countries that have some similarities, but also some important differences which could have an impact on the results. For instance, comparing Norway with New Zealand. Whereas, New Zealand has a comparable welfare state it does suffer from larger class differences than Norway (Mayeda, 2013, p.86). Perhaps, the feeling of relative poverty might have a larger significance in countries where class differences are more pronounced. This idea could have both a qualitative approach through, for instance, interviews, and maybe a quantitative approach with a questionnaire to obtain an even broader sample. Another approach that could be interesting would be to do qualitative interviews with parents to gain their insight on the matter of consumption and relative poverty in the rhythmic gymnastics community. As has become clear in my research, and not perhaps very surprisingly, parents are the main contributors paying for the gymnasts' consumption. Maybe it is actually parents who experience relative poverty to a greater degree than their children.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A : Interview guide

<b>Problemstilling: <i>Hvordan opplever ungdom i turnmiljøet i Oslo område relativ fattigdom?</i></b>	
<b>Før intervjuet</b>	
<b>Litt om prosjektet</b>	Utstyrspress blant ungdom i Oslo område
<b>Hva jeg ønsker du skal</b>	Det er du som sitter med svarene  Ingen gale svar
<b>Etiske aspekter</b>	Har du lest gjennom informasjonsskrivet? Har du forstått eller har du noen spørsmål?  Det er 100% frivillig å være med på dette intervjuet og du ønsker å delta?  Du kan trekke deg når som helst uten noen konsekvenser  Alt du sier vil være anonymisert (ingen vil kunne vite at dette er deg).  Jeg har taushetsplikt
<b>Lydopptak</b>	Samtalen vil bli tatt på med lydopptaker. Det er kun jeg og veilederen min som vil kunne ha tilgang til det du sier.  Det vil bli slettet når jeg er ferdig med dette prosjektet.
<b>Gjennomføring av intervjuet</b>	

### Husk lydopptaker!!

Tema	Spørsmål	Oppfølgingsspørsmål/presisering
<b>Bakgrunnsinformasjon</b>	Kjønn  Alder  Bosted  Foreldrenes jobb  Type idrett: RG, turn, troppsturn  Antall år i turnmiljøet  Internasjonal eller nasjonal klasse?  Tropp eller individuelt?  Hvor mange timer trener du i uken?  Driver du med noen andre idretter/aktiviteter også?	

<b>Identitet</b>	Kan du fortelle meg litt om hva du synes er viktig i livet ditt?	
	Kan du forklare hva en gymnast er?	Føler du at, det å være gymnast, er en viktig del av å være deg?
	Kan du beskrive en typisk gymnast livsstil?	Fortell meg litt hvorfor du trener?  Bli god i turn? Holde seg i form? Gøy?  Hva er det beste med å drive med RG/turn?
	Kan du fortelle meg litt hva du gjør for å forbedre deg til konkurranser?	
	Føler du at du har endret deg som person i løpet av din ungdomsårene i turn/RG miljøet?	
	Kan du fortelle meg om en opplevelse eller hendelse som har skjedd i turn/RG som du føler er sentralt i din karriere som gymnast?	Hvorfor?

	<p>Kan du fortelle meg hva du har lært av RG?</p>	
	<p>Hvordan uttrykker du at du er en gymnast til vennene dine utenfor turn/RG? (Klær, snakker du om RG, utstyr, reiser)</p>	<p>Hva snakker du og treningsvennene dine om på trening?  Hva er populært å ha på seg på trening?</p>
	<p>Tenker du at noen produkter er viktig å ha for å tenke på deg selv som gymnast?</p>	<p>Eks: drakter, redskap, sko, klær.</p>
	<p>Fortell meg litt om dine valg i RG? Er du med på å bestemme ting selv?</p>	<p>Har du mange valg i klubben i forhold til klær, redskap, drakter, sko, musikk, treningstider og andre produkter? Kan du velge helt selv?</p>
	<p>Hvordan skal du ha håret ditt på trening?  Hva med på konkurranser?</p>	<p>Er det det ulikt? Hvorfor?</p>
	<p>Tror du, du ville vært den samme personen i dag om du ikke hadde drevet med turn/RG?</p>	<p>Hvordan?</p>

<b>Konsum</b>	Kan du fortelle meg om utstyret du trenger i turn/RG for å drive med idretten?	Redskap? Sko? Treningsklær?
	Hva tenker du når jeg sier «utstyrspres»?	Føler du at du opplever «utstyrspres»?  Hvis ja: Kan du beskrive hva du føler?
	Opplever du at noen produkter er viktigere eller populære enn andre i klubben din? Hva tenker du om det?	Hvorfor opplever du det slik, tror du?  Er det noen produkter som er populære som ikke er turn/RG relatert?
	Hvilke produkter har du i baggen/sekken/vesken som du har med deg på trening?	Hvorfor har du akkurat de produktene?
	Opplever du at noen «bestemmer» hva som er populært eller ikke, og på hvilken måte? Eksempel?	

	<p>Hva er det du alltid har med på konkurranse?</p> <p>Kan du fortelle meg om du opplever at du ikke har de populære produktene?</p>	<p>Hvorfor er de produktene viktig på konkurranse?</p> <p>Kan du gi et eksempel?</p>
	<p>Kan du fortelle meg hvordan dere reiser på konkurranser?</p>	<p>Hvor reiser dere?</p> <p>Tenker du på kostnadene til reisene?</p>
	<p>Er det noe turn/RG-utstyr du føler er dyrt? I så fall hva?</p> <p>Hvem betaler for utstyret ditt? Eller andre ting som du kjøper som ikke har noe med idrett å gjøre?</p>	<p>Kan du fortelle meg hvordan du opplever at noe idrettsutstyr er dyrt?</p> <p>Har du noe idrettsutstyr eller andre produkter som er kjøpt brukt? Hva synes du om det?</p> <p>Hvis du betaler: Jobber du? Sparer du?</p> <p>Går det utover noe? Skole? Venner? Trening?</p>
<b>Situasjonsbasert</b>	<p>Kan du fortelle meg litt om populære produkter på skolen?</p>	<p>Opplever du at det er de samme tingene som er populære på trening og på skolen? Kan du gi meg noen eksempler?</p>



	Er det andre steder/situasjoner som du som er viktig for deg?	Hvis ja: er noen produkter mer populære enn andre?
<b>Sosial eksklusjon</b>	Kan du fortelle meg litt om hvordan du opplever det å være i klubben?	Hvordan opplever du samholdet i klubben?
	Kan du beskrive noen ting som viser at du tilhører klubben din?	Eks: Defileringsdress  Synes du det er viktig at folk vet at du er fra din klubb?
	Har du noen gang følt deg utenfor i klubben?  Hvorfor?	Opplever du at man må være en god utøver for å passe inn?
	Kan du fortelle meg litt populære produkter og venner?	Har du mange venner i klubben?  Liker du å være sosial med vennene dine i klubben?
	Synes du det er viktig å ha «riktig» utstyr for å passe inn i miljøet i klubben?	Hvilke følelser får du i så fall?  Er det andre ting som er viktig for å passe inn?
<b>Sosiale medier</b>	Hva er ditt forhold til sosiale medier?	Hvilke sosiale medier er du på?

	Hva gjør du på sosiale medier? Eks Instagram?	Man snakker om at sosiale medier er med på å påvirke oss negativ. Hva tenker du rundt det?
<b>Avslutning av intervjuet</b>		
<b>Spørsmål</b>		
<b>Relativ fattigdom: Opplever du at du sammenligner produkter (idrett og ikke relaterte) med andre?</b>		
<b>Er det noen andre ting som vi ikke har snakket om, som du føler kan være relevant i forhold til utstyrspress?</b>		
<b>Hva synes du om å bli intervjuet?</b>		
<b>Tusen takk for hjelpen i dette prosjektet.</b>		

## Appendix B: Categories of work

This table is based on Statistics Norway's categorisation of occupations (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2011).

Categories of work	Examples
<b>1. Legislators, senior officials and managers</b>	Chief Executive, Administrative and commercial managers
<b>2. Professionals</b>	Civil engineering, medical jobs, teaching professions, IT professions, lawyers, social science and humanity professions.
<b>3. Technicians and associate professionals</b>	Engineering, professions within culture and sport
<b>4. Clerical support workers</b>	Office worker, customer service work, finance and logistics staff
<b>5. Service and sales work</b>	Sales professions, care workers
<b>6. Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers</b>	Farmers, fishermen
<b>7. Craft and related trade workers</b>	Construction workers, electricians
<b>8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers</b>	Transport worker, machine operators, assemblers
<b>9. Elementary occupations</b>	Cleaners, relief work

## Appendix C: Social class

This table is based on Statistic Norway's categorization of occupations (Statistisk sentralbyrå, 2011), which I have broken down into social class groupings.

Social class	Categories of work
<b>High social class</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Legislators, senior officials and managers</li><li>2. Professionals</li><li>3. Technicians and associate professionals</li></ol>
<b>Middle Social class</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4. Clerical support workers</li><li>5. Service workers and shop and market sales workers</li></ol>
<b>Low Social class</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers</li><li>7. Craft and related trades workers*</li><li>8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers*</li><li>9. Elementary occupations.</li></ol>

## Appendix D: Approval from NSD

# NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

### NSD sin vurdering

#### Prosjekttittel

Relativ fattigdom blant ungdom i turnmiljøet i Oslo-området

#### Referansenummer

260918

#### Registrert

16.09.2020 av Katrine Field-Hagelund - katrinef@student.nih.no

#### Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges idrettshøgskole / Institutt for idrett og samfunnsvitenskap

#### Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Fiona Jane Dowling, fionajd@nih.no, tlf: 23262416

#### Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

#### Kontaktinformasjon, student

Katrine Field-Hagelund, katrine.fieldhagelund@gmail.com, tlf: 99557855

#### Prosjektperiode

02.09.2020 - 31.12.2021

#### Status

22.12.2020 - Vurdert

#### Vurdering (2)

---

22.12.2020 - Vurdert

NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 16.12.2020.

Zoom er databehandler i prosjektet. NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene til bruk av

databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29.

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 22.12.2020. Behandlingen kan fortsette.

#### OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Karin Lilevold

Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

#### 30.10.2020 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den 30.10.2020 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

#### MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

[https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld\\_prosjekt/meld\\_endringer.html](https://nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html)

Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

#### TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om helse og alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 31.12.2021.

#### LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og art. 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a, jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

#### PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

#### DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

#### FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1 f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

#### OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Karin Lillevold  
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

## Appendix E: Approval from NIH ethics committee

Fiona Dowling  
Institutt for idrett og samfunnsvitenskap

OSLO 30. oktober 2020

### Søknad 165 – 291020 – Relativ fattigdom blant ungdom i turnmiljøet i Oslo området

Vi viser til søknad, prosjektbeskrivelse, informasjonsskriv, intervjuguide og innsendt melding til NSD.

I henhold til retningslinjer for behandling av søknad til etisk komite for idrettsvitenskapelig forskning på mennesker, har komiteen i møte 29. oktober 2020 konkludert med følgende:

#### Vedtak

*På bakgrunn av forelagte dokumentasjon finner komiteen at prosjektet er forsvarlig og at det kan gjennomføres innenfor rammene av anerkjente etiske forskningsetiske normer nedfelt i NIHs retningslinjer. Til vedtaket har komiteen lagt følgende forutsetning til grunn:*

- *Vilkår fra NSD følges*

Komiteen forutsetter videre at prosjektet gjennomføres på en forsvarlig måte i tråd med de til enhver tid gjeldende tiltak ifbm Covid-19 pandemien.

Komiteen gjør oppmerksom på at vedtaket er avgrenset i tråd med fremlagte dokumentasjon. Dersom det gjøres vesentlige endringer i prosjektet som kan ha betydning for deltakernes helse og sikkerhet, skal dette legges fram for komiteen før eventuelle endringer kan iverksettes.

Med vennlig hilsen

*Sigmund Loland*

Professor Sigmund Loland  
Leder, Etisk komite, Norges idrettshøgskole

**NIH** NORGES  
IDRETTSHØGSKOLE

Besøksadresse: Sognsveien 220, Oslo  
Postadresse: Pb 4014 Ullevål Stadion, 0806 Oslo  
Telefon: +47 23 26 20 00, postmottak@nih.no  
[www.nih.no](http://www.nih.no)



## **Appendix F: Information document to adolescents**

November 2020

Kjære idrettsungdom

### **Invitasjon til å delta på et masterprosjekt om utstyrspress blant ungdom (13-19) i turnmiljøet i Oslo område**

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke utstyrspress blant ungdom i turnmiljøet i Oslo område. I dette skrivet vil vi gi deg informasjon om prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære.

#### **Formålet med masteroppgaven**

En nåværende debatt i media, blant kjente idrettsutøvere, foreldre og ungdom er om det finnes et økt utstyrspress i idretten. Norges Idrettsforbund (NIF) tar problemet på alvor og jobber med å minimalisere utgiftene til barn og ungdom i idretten. I mitt masterprosjekt vil jeg undersøke om hvordan idrettsungdom erfarer eventuell utstyrspress i turnmiljøet (både RG og turn).

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for masterprosjektet?**

Norges Idrettshøyskole er ansvarlig for dette masterprosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor du får spørsmål om å delta?**

Du blir spurt om å delta i undersøkelsen fordi du er mellom 13 og 19 år, driver med turnidrett i Oslo område, du trener ganske mye, reiser på konkurranser og eget utstyr for turnidretten. Jeg ønsker å snakke med deg om dine opplevelser og erfaringer om et eventuelt utstyrspress i din idrett.

#### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

Undersøkelsen innebærer et intervju på ca 45-60 minutter på et sted og tidspunkt som passer deg. I løpet av intervjuet vil jeg blant annet stille spørsmål til deg om hvor du bor, kjønn, hvor lenge du har drevet med turnidrett, om du identifiseres som en gymnast, om du opplever utstyrspress og om du føler press på å kjøpe andre produkter som for eksempel klær, sko osv. Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp med lydopptak og senere transkribert. Jeg vil skrive noen notater underveis i intervjuet.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i mitt masterprosjekt. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke deg uten grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller velger å trekke deg ved en senere anledning.

Å delta på prosjektet vil ikke påvirke treningstiden din, konkurranser eller forholdet ditt til treneren din.

### **Ditt personvern**

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til dette masterprosjektet. Alle opplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt og anonymiseres i masteroppgaven. Opplysninger fra intervjuet vil kun være tilgjengelig for Fiona Dowling (Veileder) og Katrine Field-Hagelund (Masterstudent). Navnet ditt og kontaktopplysninger vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste. Opplysningene fra intervjuene vil bli innelåst og kryptert. Ingen personopplysninger vil bli publisert. Alle intervjuene vil være underlagt taushetsplikt.

Ved oppgavens slutt i juni, vil all data og opplysninger bli slettet.

### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,

- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

### **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om ditt barn basert på ditt samtykke. Masterprosjektet er meldt til Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD) og NSD har vurdert behandlingen av personopplysninger til dette masterprosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

### **Smittevern**

Jeg ønsker å overholde smittevernreglene på det sterkeste. Jeg vil påse at det er minst to meter avstand mellom meg og deg, hyppig bruk av Antibac og jeg vil bruke maske.

### **Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**

Har spørsmål til studien eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Norges Idrettshøyskole ved Fiona Dowling
  - [fionajd@nih.no](mailto:fionajd@nih.no)
  - Tlf: 23 26 24 16
  - Institutt for idrett og samfunnsvitenskap
- Personvernombud NIH: [personvernombud@nih.no](mailto:personvernombud@nih.no)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost  
([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Kontakt opplysninger til personvernombud ved NIH: [personvernombud@nih.no](mailto:personvernombud@nih.no)

Med vennlig hilsen

Katrine Field-Hagelund

[katrinef@student.nih.no](mailto:katrinef@student.nih.no)

Fiona Dowling (Veileder)

[fionajd@nih.no](mailto:fionajd@nih.no)

**NIH** NORGES  
IDRETTSHØGSKOLE

Besøksadresse: Sognsveien 220, Oslo

Postadresse: Pb 4014 Ullevål Stadion, 0806 Oslo

**Samtykkeerklæring ved innsamling og bruk av personopplysning til forskningsformål**

**Masterprosjekt: Utstyrspress blant ungdomsutøvere i turnmiljøet i Oslo område**

Jeg bekrefter at jeg har lest informasjonsbrevet om masterprosjektet, og samtykker til min deltakelse i undersøkelsen slik den er beskrevet der.

Jeg er også kjent med at deltakelse i masterprosjektet er frivillig og jeg kan trekke meg når som helst i løpet av prosessen. Jeg har anledning til å stille spørsmål ved undersøkelsen.

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Utstyrspress blant ungdomsutøvere i turnmiljøet i Oslo område*. Jeg samtykker til:

Å delta i et intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

NAVN: .....

.....

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Dato

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Besøksadress: Sognsveien 220, Oslo  
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Oslo

## **Appendix G: Information to the parents**

November 2020

Kjære foresatte til idrettsungdom

### **Invitasjon til deres barn om å delta på et masterprosjekt om utstyrspress blant ungdom (13-19 år) i turnmiljøet i Oslo område**

Dette er et spørsmål til ditt barn om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke utstyrspress blant ungdom i turnmiljøet i Oslo område. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for ditt barn.

#### **Formål**

En nåværende debatt i media, blant kjente idrettsutøvere, foreldre og ungdom er om det finnes et økt utstyrspress i idretten. Norges Idrettsforbund (NIF) tar problemet på alvor og jobber med å minimalisere utgiftene til barn og ungdom i idretten. I mitt masterprosjekt vil jeg undersøke om hvordan idrettsungdom erfarer eventuell utstyrspress i turnmiljøet (både RG og turn). Formålet med masteroppgaven er å få en utdypende forståelse av relativ fattigdom i gymnastikk og turnmiljøet i Oslo området. Relativ fattigdom i dette prosjektet er et samlebegrep for å forstå eventuelt press på å kjøpe idrettsutstyr og andre forbrukerprodukter. En vanlig praksis i masteroppgaver er å ha en problemstilling og i denne oppgaven lyder den slik:

*Hvordan opplever ungdom i turnmiljøet i Oslo området relativ fattigdom?*

#### **Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?**

Norges Idrettshøyskole er ansvarlig for dette masterprosjektet.

#### **Hvorfor får ditt barn spørsmål om å delta?**

Ditt barn får spørsmål om å delta på dette prosjektet fordi hun eller han er ungdom (15-19 år) og driver med turnidrett i Oslo området (Oslo og gamle Akershus). I tillegg trener ditt barn ca 10 timer i uken eller mer, reiser på konkurranser og eget idrettsutstyr. Disse kriteriene er valgt for å få best mulig forståelse av relativ fattigdom i turnmiljøet.

### **Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?**

For å besvare problemstillingen vil jeg foreta individuelle intervjuer. Hvis ditt barn deltar i dette prosjektet vil intervjuene ta ca 45-60 minutter på et sted og tidspunkt som passer for deres barn. I løpet av intervjuet blir det blant annet stilt spørsmål om bosted, kjønn, foresattes jobb/utdanning, hvor lenge barnet ditt har drevet med turnidrett, om det å være gymnast er en del av identiteten til ungdommen, om barnet ditt opplever utstyrspress, blir påvirket til å kjøpe utstyr og andre produkter som de andre gymnastene har i klubben og om sosiale medier bidrar til eventuelt utstyrspress. Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp med lydopptak og senere transkribert. Jeg vil også skrive noen notater underveis i intervjuet.

Ønsker du/dere å se intervjuguiden på forhånd kan du ta kontakt med Katrine Field-Hagelund.

### **Det er frivillig å delta**

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis ditt barn velger å delta, kan barnet trekke samtykket når som helst uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for ditt barn hvis du ikke ønsker å delta eller senere velger å trekke seg.

Å delta på prosjektet vil ikke påvirke treningstiden, konkurranser eller forholdet mellom ditt barn og treneren.

### **Personvern**

Opplysninger vil kun brukes til formålet til prosjektet. Vi behandler opplysninger konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Opplysningene fra intervjuet vil kun være tilgjengelig for veileder (Fiona Dowling) og masterstudent (Katrine Field-

Hagelund). Navn og kontaktopplysninger vil bli erstattet med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrig data. Datamaterialet vil bli innelåst og kryptert. Ingen personopplysninger fra intervjuet vil bli publisert. Intervjuene vil bli underlaget taushetsplikt.

Ved oppgavens slutt, vil alle opplysninger og data bli slettet.

## **Rettigheter**

Ditt barn og dere som foresatte har disse rettighetene:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

## **Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om ditt barn?**

Vi behandler opplysninger om ditt barn basert på ditt samtykke.

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### Ønsker ditt barn å delta på prosjektet?

Ønsker ditt barn å delta på prosjektet send en epost til Katrine Field-Hagelund

Med vennlig hilsen

Katrine Field-Hagelund

[katrinef@student.nih.no](mailto:katrinef@student.nih.no)

Fiona Dowling (Veileder)

[fionajd@nih.no](mailto:fionajd@nih.no)

**NIH** NORGES  
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## Samtykkeerklæring ved innsamling og bruk av personopplysning til forskningsformål

### Masterprosjekt: Utstyrspress blant ungdomsutøvere i turnmiljøet i Oslo område

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Jeg er også kjent med at deltakelse i masterprosjektet er frivillig og barnet mitt kan trekke meg når som helst i løpet av prosessen. Jeg og mitt barn har anledning til å stille spørsmål ved undersøkelsen.

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *Utstyrspress blant ungdomsutøvere i turnmiljøet i Oslo område*. Jeg samtykker til:

At mitt barn deltar i et intervju  
Jeg samtykker til mitt barns opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

NAVN (BARN): .....

.....

Sted

Dato

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## Appendix H: Equipment and price list

Equipment and price list		
Equipment	Explanation	Price (in Norwegian Kroner)
<b>Toe shoes</b>	Shoes used for Rhythmic Gymnastics	From 200 to 300 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Clubs</b>	Main equipment in Rhythmic Gymnastics	From 550 to 920 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Ball</b>	Main equipment in Rhythmic Gymnastics	From 295 to 1150 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Rope</b>	Main equipment in Rhythmic Gymnastics	From 225 to 350 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Hoop</b>	Main equipment in Rhythmic Gymnastics	From 350 to 360 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Ribbon</b>	Main equipment in Rhythmic Gymnastics (usually used in high level RG)	From 720 to 1170 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)

<b>Hoop cover</b>	To keep the hoop protected	From 250 to 360 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Ball pump</b>	A specialised RG ball pump	Ca 250 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Knee-protectors</b>	Used to protect the knees on hard surfaces	Ca 280 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Back-warmer</b>	Used to keep the back warm during trainings.	-
<b>Legwarmers</b>	Used to keep the calves warm during trainings.	Ca 200 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)
<b>Leotard (includes pre-owned and new)</b>	A piece used in competition (similar to a gymnastics leotard).	3000-15 000
<b>“Tracksuit”</b>	Club tracksuit with is used for competitions and trainings	-
<b>Stretching cushions</b>	Usually used to protect the legs/ankles/knees on hard surfaces when stretching	-
<b>Stretchy bands (2 types)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Used for resistance in conditioning exercises.</li> <li>2) Used to increase flexibility and resistance in typical RG positions.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) From 149 to 249 (XXL, n.d., Resistance band; Intersport, n.d. Treningsstrikker)</li> <li>2) 200 (FameRGTurn Tone B.Landerud, n.d.)</li> </ol>