

“Although football is mainly for men...”

The portrayal of gender in regard to physical exercise in Finnish EFL  
textbooks

Bachelor's thesis

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## JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa tutkittiin sukupuolen kuvausta kahden suomalaisen englannin kielen oppikirjan liikunta-aiheisissa kuvissa ja teksteissä. Oppikirjat olivat Yippee! 6 Reader ja Wow! 6 Study Book. Molemmat ovat tällä hetkellä käytössä peruskoulun vuosiluokilla 3–6 ja kirjat seuraavat eri opetussuunnitelmaa. Yippee! 6 Reader (2016) seuraa uudempaa Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteita 2014 (POPS 2014) ja Wow! 6 Study Book (2015) Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteita 2004 (POPS 2004), ja tämä mahdollisti tulosten vertailun. Analyysissä keskityttiin siihen, onko sukupuolten esiintyminen kuvissa ja teksteissä tasapuolista ja millaista liikuntaa tytöt ja pojat kirjoissa harrastivat. Lisäksi haluttiin selvittää, onko kirjojen välillä eroja ja voisiko eri opetussuunnitelmien käyttö selittää näitä eroja.</p> <p>Sukupuolten tasa-arvoon oppikirjoissa on kiinnitetty huomiota jo pitkään. Aiemmat tutkimukset oppikirjojen sukupuolikuvauksesta osoittavat, että oppimateriaaleista löytyy miesten ja naisten epätasa-arvoisia ja sukupuolia yleistäviä kuvauksia.</p> <p>Tulokset noudattivat hypoteesia, jonka mukaan miespuolisia hahmoja esiintyy oppikirjoissa keskimäärin huomattavasti enemmän kuin naisia ja sukupuolille on annettu toisistaan eroavat roolit. Vaikka tutkimus mukaili aikaisempien tutkimusten tuloksia oppikirjojen miesvaltaisuudesta, ei laajoja yleistyksiä suomalaisten oppikirjojen tilasta voi tehdä. Mahdollisuuksia lisätutkimukseen on kirjasarjojen laajemmalla vertailulla.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Measor and Sikes (1992: 2) address the concern of unfair education systems where pupils' ability is not the only aspect that assures their success, but that there are other factors, such as sex, that influence their chances of success. Jääskeläinen et al. (2015) share this concern and feel that also in Finland, the leading country of gender equality, sexes are treated differently at school and guidance to stop that is needed. Indeed, it is found that gender inequality can be seen, for example, in teaching materials. It is not unusual that in a textbook there are a multiple number of males compared to females in images and in text. Roles of the sexes might also be stereotyped and narrow. I recognize this phenomenon from the time when I was in primary and secondary school. That was a different time and that is why I found it interesting to see how gender is portrayed in textbooks today. Furthermore, I was inspired by Laakkonen's (2007) master's thesis in which she analysed the portrayal of gender in seven EFL textbooks in text and in images, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The present study will address the issue of the portrayal of gender in two Finnish EFL textbooks. The focus is on text and images that relate to physical exercise, e.g. doing sports. The reason for choosing this particular theme was that physical exercise was one of the few themes that were popular enough to be constantly present in both of the textbooks and therefore allow a wide data collection. Furthermore, exercise as a theme is broad enough topic to analyse since both sexes are involved and the topic is discussed in the text and portrayed in the images as well.

The study's general aim is to find out whether the textbooks treat males and females equally, e.g. portray them equally often both in the images and in the text and give them equal variety in the type of physical exercise that the characters do. Furthermore, my goal is to find out if the textbooks differ in their portrayal of gender due to the difference of curricula. Even though portrayal of gender has been researched extensively, also in Finland, there has not been a study that focuses on these specific EFL textbooks used in elementary school. Furthermore, the focus on physical exercise in relation to gender both in the images and in the text has not been studied and therefore, my approach is novel and fills a research gap.

## 2 BACKGROUND

This study focuses on the portrayal of gender in EFL teaching materials, it being a topic that has already been researched in Finland and abroad as well. However, my study observes two Finnish EFL textbooks used in elementary school, and this particular data has not been studied previously. In this section I start by discussing the various definitions of gender and then explain what gender equality means in the Finnish national core curricula. Gender equality in teaching materials is also explored and finally the definition of exercise is covered and gendered differences in exercise in Europe and in Finland are discussed.

### 2.1 Gender

The aim of my study being the portrayal of gender in Finnish EFL textbooks, it is significant to first define gender. It is important to pay attention to the difference between sex and gender. Galanes and Adams (2013: 96) define the difference by stating that gender refers to characteristics and psychological features of masculinity and femininity that are learned whereas sex refers only to biological attributes. West and Zimmerman (1991: 21) give an example to clarify this difference, according to which women can appear to be unfeminine, but that does not make them “unfemale”. There is the difference between sex and gender, biological sex of a woman being female and gender meaning the feminine type of behaviour. Therefore, when talking about sex, words *male* and *female* are used. Additionally, Measor and Sikes (1992: 5) point out that all differences between the genders apart from the physiological differences are made by society.

More diverse definitions for gender are provided by Suortamo (2010: 30–31) and he emphasizes the importance of three genders, social, cultural and psychical, especially in school context. Social gender contains the roles, behaviour and identity building. There are no fixed roles for girls or boys, instead children often try both feminine and masculine settings. When socialising into gender children learn the rules that apply their gender. Cultural gender, then again, is determined by all the stereotypes, expectations and images that are attached to gender. This cultural gender can be considered as a role that is learned. This is because children sense the gender expectations from early on. Lastly, psychic gender is the subjective awareness of gender, which includes the creation of gender identity, being a lifelong process. The present study focuses particularly on cultural gender, since the aim is to see what images and ideas are attached to gender in teaching materials, and are there notable stereotypes that could have a clear link to expectations of how girls and boys should behave.

It is found that children perceive ideas about gender and make generalisations based on gender already at a very young age. In a study by Kärkkäinen and Niemi (2001) it was found that Finnish sixth graders used to stereotype the roles of men and women and they also divided the tasks of women and men based on traditional gender-roles. Tarmo (1989, cited in Piironen 2004: 27) as well found that pupils aged 7 to 12 years have stereotypes about gender, since they associated characteristics to a person even if the only thing the children knew was his or her gender. An ordinary girl was depicted as calm and quiet and was described through her social relationship more than a boy. A boy, on the contrary, was described more in terms of sports and his skills. These findings support the decision of the present study to focus on primary school textbooks, since assumptions of gender are made early on.

Today the discussion on multiple sexes is extensive but the present study focuses only on two sexes, males and females. This was decided because I was not able to find any alternative sexes in the two textbooks that were studied.

## **2.2 Gender equality in curricula and in teaching materials**

Brief definition on gender equality is provided by Suortamo (2010: 29), according to which gender equality means that men and women have the equal rights to fulfil themselves and take part in the action in the society. According to Jääskeläinen et al. (2015: 21) the Finnish national core curriculum 2004 (POPS 2004) states that in teaching one has to take into account the differences between girls and boys. However, the researchers criticise the curriculum for seeing girls and boys as separate groups that should be treated differently. Indeed, in the Finnish national core curriculum 2014 (POPS 2014) the same sort of remark of girls and boys was not made and instead, the curriculum puts emphasis on the fact that teaching materials should contribute to selecting material that improves gender equality. Nevertheless, several studies have found that textbooks, regardless of the subject that is taught, are not gender equal and often emphasize masculinity and the role of males (Villanen 2011; Laakkonen 2007; Stockdale 2006; Piironen 2004).

There are some major differences between POPS 2004 and POPS 2014 when considering gender equality. In POPS 2004, the issue of gender in education is expressed, but in a much more narrow way than in POPS 2014. It is stated in POPS 2004 that gender equality is being promoted in the Finnish education, but there are no concrete examples of how that is going to be done. Gender equality is mentioned in relation to general values in education, physical education and in student

counselling (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2004: 14, 258). In POPS 2014, however, gender equality is present in a much more visible way. There are references to gender roles, gender identities and gender awareness, together with various other sections (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014: 16, 18, 26–30).

Acknowledging gender especially in school environment is very important, since it is a place where pupils spend time while they are still forming their world views (Suortamo 2010: 26). Suortamo (ibid.) also states that at the age of pre-puberty the pupils learn to evaluate whether boys and girls are treated equally, and that is a good time to strengthen their knowledge on gender equality. *Act on Equality between Women and Men 2014* states that the teaching institution has to ensure gender equality and teaching material has to support that work. However, in a study by Tainio and Teräs (2010: 5–6) that concentrated on textbooks of mathematics, Finnish and literature and student counselling at grades 3, 6 and 9 it was found that males tend to be presented in textbooks systematically more than females. Furthermore, the portrayal of males and females tend to follow traditional stereotypes of gender. The focus of the study was on e. g. gendered vocabulary, textbook illustration and the texts that dealt with gender and gender-equality. This sort of gender inequality is found to be present in textbooks worldwide and in Finland as well. Stockdale (2006) has discovered gender-inequality in her study of English EFL textbooks and Measor and Sikes (1992) as well address the issue of gendered primary school textbooks. In Finnish context Villanen (2011) has found that third graders' textbooks of several subjects including maths and Finnish emphasize masculinity. Furthermore, Laakkonen (2007) studied gender representations in Finnish EFL textbooks that were used amongst eight-graders and high school students, and she also found that there are different roles assigned to males and females, and overall masculinity seems to dominate.

Textbooks and teaching materials affect one's views on gender. However, this impact might not always be acknowledged. The requirements and rules that are not stated in the official curriculum are a part of hidden curriculum (Broady 1989: 33). According to Tainio and Teräs (2010: 8), the school practises emphasize the view that boys and girls have different categories, and have characteristics attached to them that are stereotyped. Measor and Sikes (1992: 65) agree when stating that there is a social code for behaviour at school and teachers might even act as role models for children, and that this is done indirectly. Furthermore, children's experiences may differ even though that would not be the aim (ibid. 56). When considering hidden curriculum from the viewpoint of gender equality, these sorts of unknowledged attitudes that are passed on are a part of hidden curriculum that still exists in the field of education. It is worth considering that even though

most Finnish people's state of mind were gender equal, gender inequality might still be strengthened unknowingly. Jääskeläinen et al. (2015: 21) believes it to be important to treat critically the way in how the teaching material at school builds gender, since there are still materials published that repeat the stereotypes of society and maintain gender segregation.

After all, Laakkonen (2007: 16–17) considered textbook to be the core of all teaching materials in her study and stated that textbooks represent the reality. Uusikylä (2002, cited in Villanen 2011: 7) confirms that in Finland teachers are still tied to textbooks, those being the material teachers mostly lean on. Both Laakkonen and Uusikylä's view on the importance of textbooks in the classroom are over ten years old, but they seem to be accurate even today. Similarities can be found between textbooks and hidden curriculum, and therefore, choosing to analyse particularly textbooks is justified.

### **2.3 Exercise**

*Exercise* is defined by Oxford Dictionaries (2017) as an activity requiring physical effort, carried out to sustain or improve health or fitness. Since the study is about physical exercise, other definitions of the term are not mentioned here. *Sport* is defined by Oxford Dictionaries (2017) as an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment. The reason these two definitions are given here, is to show that there is a clear difference between the terms exercise and sport and in this study exercise is an umbrella term that covers sport as well. However, to avoid confusions concerning the multiple meanings of the word *exercise*, the term *physical exercise* is used from here on.

There are differences in the sports males and females do, and also in the level of activeness. An Eurobarometer survey (2010, cited in Talleu 2011: 9–10) from 2010 that studied the physical exercise of males and females in Europe states that 37% of European women said they take part in sports once a week whereas the percentage for European men was 43. However, the gap between the sexes seemed to be widest with younger people. It was found that in France and Denmark there were notably more girls than boys that had never done any sport apart from their physical education classes at school. The motivation for practising physical exercise also differed between men and women. Men seemed to be interested in competing but for women it seemed to be more important to preserve their health or improve physical appearance. However, in this category girls had a wider variety of sports that they practiced when comparing with women. The final difference was the gender-differentiated sporting practices. Generally in the EU women were attracted to sports such

as dance, gymnastics and ice-skating, but men to football and rugby, or other sports that are close combat sports or have a lot of room to play. Extreme sport was also the type that interest men more than women. Still, according to the survey, there are women and girls that challenge these segregations and practise sports from an opposite category, one example of this being weightlifting. Turpeinen et al. (2011) found that between the ages 3 and 18 the three most popular sports amongst boys in Finland were football, ice hockey and floorball. Girls had more variety and it was not easy to name specific sports that specifically girls were interested in. However, the national survey in 2009–2010 reveals that girls did sports such as gymnastics, horseback riding, dancing and figure skating multiple times more than boys (Turpeinen et al. 2011: 24).

This shows that Finland does not greatly differ from the rest of Europe in regard to gendered differences in sporting practises - males being generally attracted to competing and females to preserving their health. However, according to Turpeinen et al. (2011), the gap between the sexes in Finland has narrowed over the years since females have taken more and more part in organized activities. Thus, it is presumable that the gap between the sexes in physical exercise is even narrower today.

### **3 THE PRESENT STUDY**

In this chapter, the research aim and questions are introduced and justified. Furthermore, a description of the data and methods that were used in the study are provided.

#### **3.1 Research aim and questions**

The overall aim of the present study is to explore the portrayal of gender in relation to physical exercise in the Finnish EFL textbooks. In order to find it out, I settled on three research questions that will give the answer to the main aim of the study. The first question is:

- What kind of gendered differences are there between the type of physical exercise (e.g. doing sports) males and females do in the Finnish EFL textbooks?

Through this question I find out whether females and males act differently when exercising or talking about physical exercise. For example, is there a type of physical exercise that only males do or vice versa. By using this question it is possible to see if there is a pattern in the portrayal of

gender. It seems natural to follow this question with:

- Are the two sexes presented equally often concerning physical exercise?

As discussed earlier, the lack of female characters in teaching materials is not unusual, and through this question I look into the situation in my data, both in the text and in the images. Finally, since the textbooks that are studied here follow different national core curricula, the last question is:

- How do Finnish EFL textbooks *Wow!* and *Yippee!* differ in their portrayal of gender in physical exercise; what kind of significance did the renewal of the Finnish national core curriculum have in relation to gender and physical exercise?

With the last question I wish to analyse the differences in the textbooks' portrayal of gender, assuming there are some. I also explore whether the differences were caused by differences in the curricula.

### 3.2 Data and Methods

The study's data consists of two Finnish EFL textbooks: *Yippee! 6 Reader*, published in 2016, and *Wow! 6 Study Book*, published in 2015. Both of the books are published by Sanoma Pro Oy. The books are used in elementary schools' grades 3–6. The criterion for choosing the EFL textbooks was that they have to follow different national core curricula and they both have to be currently used in schools. *Wow! 6 Study Book* follows POPS 2004 and *Yippee! 6 Reader* POPS 2014. The framing to this particular school level was because children acquire gender roles at a young age. Also, at that age children might not question the roles that are assigned to them, and impressions of gender are not even noticed. Therefore, when starting to use these books they already have some established ideas about gender roles - impressions that the teaching material can either change or maintain. Furthermore, since these textbooks are used also amongst sixth graders', they have wider vocabularies and more extensive chapters than books that would be used only amongst, for example, third graders. The vocabulary and longer chapters enable the increasing role of varieties in gender representations.

Data consists of both images and text, and therefore content analysis was chosen as a method. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are possible when doing content analysis, since it involves a systematic reading of both texts and images. G. Payne and J. Payne (2004: 51, 54) point out that

content analysis used to concentrate on the frequency of words or topics and was seen as quantitative research. In qualitative research, however, the focus is on addressing values and attitudes, and meanings are looked for beyond words. They state that when using content analysis to analyse a text, one has to pay attention to the sequences in which items occur, and also to the structure of those sequences. That is exactly what happens in the present study.

In order to answer the research questions both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. Quantitative content analysis was used in order to find out whether the sexes were presented equally often in the textbooks. Qualitative analysis came forward when figuring out what the quantitative results meant, and how they could be explained. First I studied both textbooks individually. I decided to concentrate on images first and that meant that I counted each person who is exercising (e.g. doing sports) or suggested doing exercising in the pictures. Leisure activity was included as physical exercise, such as walking on a beach or children chasing one another. Then again, walking to the school or walking on the street was not considered as a form of physical exercise since it did not require physical effort, nor was it a leisure activity. Additionally, a person who is holding a ball was counted, since the picture indicates that he/she would play some sport. The characters represented in the images were divided in three groups: 1) males 2) females and 3) unidentified characters. Therefore, all the human characters that were represented in the images were counted, both animated and photographs. That was done in order to quantitatively find out whether the sexes are represented equally often. Attention was also paid to the type of physical exercise males and females did in the images.

After completing that, I moved on to the text. In order to find out what kind of differences there are in the type of physical exercise males and females do in the textbooks, I did the following. Each time physical exercise was mentioned in the text, I took notes which stated whether the person talking about physical exercise is male or female and what is the sport or type of physical exercise that is in question and who is the person that is performing the exercising. Then all named male and female characters that discussed physical exercise were counted in order to answer the second research question. In other words, also the people that are not exercising in the text but only mention it were counted. The decision of counting only named characters was made for the sake of clarity. Finally, I compared the results of *Wow!* and *Yippee!* in order to find out how they differed in regard to the images and the text. By doing this I hoped to answer the third research question, which aimed to find out if the difference in curricula had relevance in the way the textbooks portrayed gender in physical exercise.

Because of the diversity of the image types and the amount of people that might be in one relatively small picture the counting was outlined as follows. Firstly, the character was classified as unidentified if he/she is entirely in the picture but it is impossible to deduce the sex. Also, the character might be so small in the picture that the recognition is impossible. However, at times it was possible to recognize a character that only showed one part of their body in the picture based on their clothing. For example, if there are six footballers in the picture and one is shown only so that his leg is showing, he was counted as a male with the rest of them because his shorts are the same as his male team players'. Secondly, the focus was set only on people that are at the front of the pictures. There were pictures where there are people both at the front but also in the background. Because these people in the background would have been difficult to count and because they are considered only as background illustration, they were excluded from the analysis. That is because the main focus of the reader is directed at the people at the front. Thirdly, there were a couple of pictures in the textbooks where the amount of people present is so enormous that it would have been impossible to count every person, it being also unnecessary. These kinds of images were scarce, and that is why the analysis does not suffer when these pictures are not included in the analysis. Finally, no picture was counted twice, even though the same picture would appear twice in the textbook. This was decided in order to prevent the data from being misleading. Furthermore, in *Yippee!* there were two main characters, a girl and a boy reporter, that are present almost in every chapter, both in the images and the text, but usually in a rather small role. There was a similar situation in *Wow!*, where there is a female reporter constantly present in the chapters. These characters were not included in the image analysis and the analysis of the text because of their constant presence in the textbooks. However, in *Wow!* there is a male main character who is actively present throughout the textbook, not just in the form of a reporter or such, and therefore he was included in the analysis.

## 4 ANALYSIS

In this section the results of the study are presented and discussed. The focus is first on the equal presentation of the sexes in the images and the differences that were found in the type of physical exercise males and females do. Then the focus shifts to gender in the text. Because the division to images and text does not reveal all findings, there is a subdivision where the relationship between the images and the text is discussed. The EFL textbooks *Wow! 6 Study Book* and *Yippee! 6 Reader* are covered separately in order to be explicit and therefore the final section is dedicated to comparing the findings of both textbooks and discussing the Finnish national core curricula as well.

#### 4.1 Gender in the physical exercise images

##### *Wow! 6 Study Book (2015)*

Table 1. points out that there are 66 male, 27 female and 21 unidentified characters in the images. Based on those numbers, males seem to dominate the textbooks when it comes to physical exercise images, with 58.9% of characters being male. The difference between the share of females' 24.1% and the unidentified characters' 17.0% is not great, and seems to even emphasize the supremacy of male characters in the images.

Table 1. Sexes in the physical exercise images of *Wow! 6 Study Book (2015)*

<b>66</b> male characters <b>(58.9%)</b>	<b>27</b> female characters <b>(24.1%)</b>	<b>19</b> unidentified characters <b>(17.0%)</b>
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The quantitative analysis of the sexes in the images indicates that there are no female characters playing sports that would be traditionally characterized as male dominated, such as American football, hockey and basketball. While males dominate in those sports, females are portrayed as for example, cheerleaders, dancers and surfers. However, on page 32 there is one illustrated picture of two girls doing karate. Even though that picture might be seen as an attempt to challenge traditional gender roles in sports, at the same page there are pictures of boys doing judo, boxing and wrestling. Because of the lack of images where girls would do sports that are stereotypically masculine, it can be concluded that the writers of the book did not try to even out the stereotype of gender differences. Also, there is a lack of female characters in activities such as skiing and fishing, which seems confusing, since neither of the activities are generally seen as masculine. There are some shared physical exercise forms that both females and males do which are: horseback riding, surfing, playing with a boomerang, chasing each other and dancing.

One has to pay attention to the amount of unidentified characters as well. 21 unidentified characters is a lot, especially since the amount of female characters is only 27. It might be that the authors did not want to identify the sexes at every turn and intentionally made such an amount of characters that could not be identified. These unidentified characters are involved in types of physical exercise such as playing football, chasing each other, rafting and ski jumping.

***Yippee! 6 Reader (2016)***Table 2. Sexes in the physical exercise images of *Yippee! 6 Reader (2016)*

<b>68</b> male characters <b>(62.4%)</b>	<b>34</b> female characters <b>(31.2%)</b>	<b>7</b> unidentified characters <b>(6.4%)</b>
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In *Yippee!* there are 68 male, 34 female and 7 unidentified characters, as can be seen from Table 2. The male-dominance in the sporting images is apparent with the percentage of males in the images being twice as much as females'. The amount of unidentified characters is relatively low, only 6.4% of all characters.

American football as well as soccer is presented in relation to males only, with one exception. There is a picture of a girl holding a football (on page 38), indicating that she herself would play, but there is no picture of the girl actually playing. In fact, there are no females playing baseball, football, basketball or American football, whereas these activities seem to be popular amongst boys. Instead, girls are portrayed e.g. swimming and dancing.

At times it seems as if the writers deliberately tried to include equal amount of males and females. On page 63 different kind of physical exercise is shown in a sports field and there is equal amount of boys and girls, 16 altogether. That seems equal in numbers, but there are differences in the type of physical exercise the characters are doing. Girls are portrayed as skiing, warming up, hitting and throwing a ball, cheering and screaming. Boys are portrayed as warming up, shouting, running, catching a ball, practising, getting dressed and skating. Even though girls are being active in most events, one could criticise the choice to make only girls scream and cheer. Almost all boys appear to be active but gender roles could be seen to have switched showing a boy skating with one foot in the air, it looking more like figure skating than skating. However, these incidents where gender roles are reversed were scarce.

**4.2 Gender in the text*****Wow! 6 Study Book (2015)***Table 3. Named characters' sexes in *Wow! 6 Study Book (2015)*

Named male characters: <b>4</b>	Named female characters: <b>2</b>	Unidentified characters: <b>1</b>
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There is a difference in the visibility of male and female characters in the text. Four male

characters are mentioned talking about physical exercise and in addition to that three famous athletes are introduced on pages 30–31: Babe Ruth, Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan. Only two females are found to discuss physical exercise in the textbook and no female athletes are mentioned. The difference between four boys and two girls is certainly not devastating but the complete lack of female athletes when there are three male ones is significant.

The textbook seems to imply that American football, baseball and basketball would be sports for boys. Even though sports are not gendered very noticeably in *Wow!*, there is one chapter that seems to highlight gender in sports. On page 30 the main character Chris has to do a project on American sports. The sports that are introduced are baseball, basketball, hockey and American football. There is no mention of female players, only men. This kind of focus on only male players, and the fact that the person working on the project in the chapter was a boy, insinuates that females are invisible when it comes to American sports and that there are no famous women that play American sports. Even though this is just one chapter of the textbook it strongly implies that certain sports are for males only.

Amelia challenges the idea of gendered sports on page 82 telling that she is going to a football camp in Uppsala. Esta, on the other hand, being the other female that mentions physical exercise, tells that she likes to relax in a disco sometimes (p. 50). This remark coming from one of the two female characters indicates that dance would be a hobby for girls. Then again, there is no specific type of physical exercise in the text that could be characterized only for girls or boys because of the lack of named characters in the text.

There are differences between the agencies of genders. Throughout the book there are other females that were talked about in relation to sports or physical exercise in general, not just Amelia and Esta. The main characters' mothers and sisters are told to exercise, but none of these characters are given a name. Therefore, the characters that are given a name are considered to be in the centre of attention when talking about physical exercise. Those named characters are the ones that the reader links with the physical exercise. Therefore, even if there were more females than just Amelia and Esta to exercise in the text, they are always the male character's relatives, only mentioned on the side. This remark leads to the conclusion that in *Wow!* males and females have different gender roles; males being the active ones in relation to sports since they are given a name and females more passive, staying nameless.

Overall there is no clear distinction to what type of physical exercise males and females do. There are non-named males and females that did sports that are not stereotypically for men or women, such as cycling and tennis. By showing males and females interested in sports that are not stereotyped, it indicates that the sex of the participators does not matter. It is challenging to make generalisations, since most of the exercise in *Wow!* is mainly present in the pictures, as can be noticed of the small amount of named males and females.

### ***Yippee! 6 Reader (2016)***

Table 4. Named characters' sexes in *Yippee! 6 Reader (2016)*

Named male characters: <b>8</b>	Named female characters: <b>8</b>
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Altogether there are 8 named females that are introduced to discuss physical exercise and eight males as well. This shows that the amount of both sexes in relation to physical exercise is equal in the text. However, when focusing on what the characters discuss about physical exercise, some differences were found.

An ongoing phenomenon that was found when analysing the text of *Yippee!* is that girls talk about physical exercise, but the subject of exercising is male. There are gendered pronouns or the character's names used from where the sex can be deduced. Examples of this provides a chapter on pages 64–65 where the main characters go to a sporting event, and the sports the two girls follow have male contestants. However, when male main characters report about sports the participants' sex is not revealed. Also, on page 90 a girl briefly talks about a kung-fu fighter and actor, who is a local hero and legend in Hong Kong. The girl is the one that talks about physical exercise, but the subject of exercising is male. There is no incident in the text where a boy would talk about a famous female athlete, and even the situations where boys talked about their female acquaintances exercising were scarce.

In most cases, boys seemed to share interest in football and ice-hockey. Nevertheless, in *Yippee!* there are two girls who play sports such as soccer, rugby and hockey and therefore challenge the idea of gendered sports. The findings show that girls as well share interest in football, since two out of nine girls played football, and the rest did not have shared interests. It is challenging to generalise the characters' interests in the text since the number of named characters talking about physical exercise is quite low.

### 4.3 Relationship between the text and the images

#### *Wow! 6 Study Book*

Even though most of the textbook did not emphasize gender when it came to sport, there was one incident where that was done. On page 38 there is a section where the reader can learn about the United States. There is a subheading for football and the text says that “Although football is mainly for men, cheerleaders are still an important part of any top game”. On top of the text there is a picture of three smiling female cheerleaders. By bluntly stating that football is mainly for men, it excludes women and makes it a clearly gendered sport, where females are welcomed only in a different role from a football player, a cheerleader.

Gendered notions of sports were significant when another sex was completely absent when discussing or presenting types of sport. As mentioned earlier, there are pictures and information of three famous athletes in *Wow!*: Babe Ruth, Magic Johnson and Michael Jordan (p. 30). What is questionable is that there are no famous female athletes in the book, neither in the images nor in the text. It seems a confusing solution to include three famous male athletes and no females, since naturally there are famous female athletes in the world. The lack of female athletes, both in pictures and in text, conveys an attitude according to which American sports are very masculine, and can falsely indicate that there are no famous female athletes in the field.

#### *Yippee! 6 Reader*

What seemed like a repeated pattern in *Yippee!* was how girls could talk about physical exercise and doing sports, but there was no portrayal of them in the sports-related images. For example, on page 85 there is a girl named Máire who tells that she plays football, hockey and tennis. However, there is only one picture of Máire in the chapter and in that picture she is not shown playing anything. What is controversial is that on the same page there is a picture of Máire’s twin brothers and another male playing hurling.

Another interesting chapter in regard to the relationship between the text and the images and the level of activeness was found on pages 64–65. Four characters are reporting on a sporting event. John and Adam report on swimming and football, and based on what they tell to the reader, it is not obvious whether the contesters are males or females. That changes when Lin and Amelia report. Lin mentions how Nikolai Putin wins the boxing match and Amelia tells that John Smith is leading the pole vault. In the image on top of the text there are three girls that are standing in a sporting field leaning on each other and laughing. The picture was counted as a sporting picture because of their

clothing and the sports field behind them, even though they do not do any physical exercising in the picture. The relationship between the picture and the text is problematic for two reasons. The girls report physical exercising that is performed by males, and there is no equivalent case where the roles would be reversed. In addition, there are no pictures of a group of boys just standing and laughing when the text is about physical exercise. The chapter underlines the different roles females and males have in the textbook, which are that females seemed to report male performance and are not presented as active participants as often as males are.

#### **4.4 Comparison of *Wow!* and *Yippee!***

This study focused on two EFL textbooks from the same publisher. When the books were compared, there was a clear increase of female characters in the newer textbook, *Yippee!* both in images and in text relating to physical exercise. Due to that increase, there is more variety in the type of sport females do in pictures and in the text; there were more females that are involved in, for example, football and hockey. However, the type of sports that the boys did both in *Wow!* and in *Yippee!* did not seem to change and there seemed to be a clear emphasis on sports such as football and hockey when males were present. Even though the amount of females engaging in physical exercise in *Yippee!* has risen significantly when comparing with *Wow!*, the amount of males in physical exercise pictures is great in both textbooks, and the findings support the previous studies which indicate that male characters dominate in teaching materials. In *Yippee!* there are slightly more contradictions with the portrayal of gender between the text and the images but that probably results from the fact that there are more characters included.

All in all, it appears that *Yippee!* is more gender equal in its portrayal of gender when comparing with *Wow!*. This observation is based on the rising visibility of females engaging in physical exercise and the variety with the type of sports they play. Presumably the use of different national core curricula explains these differences - *Yippee!* following POPS 2014 and *Wow!* POPS 2004. It is in fact stated in POPS 2014 that teaching materials should support the realisation of *Act on Equality between Women and Men 2014* (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014: 14). Since the same kind of remark was not made in POPS 2004, and gender equality being mentioned there fewer times, it is understandable that *Yippee!* appears to be more gender equal comparing with *Wow!*.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was set to find out how gender is portrayed in two Finnish EFL textbooks used in elementary school's grades 3–6, *Wow! 6 Study Book* and *Yippee! 6 Reader*. The focus was on gender in text and images relating to physical exercise. The findings show that there are different forms of exercise assigned to girls and boys and overall male dominance in the textbooks. The results are in accordance with other Finnish studies made on the portrayal of gender in textbooks (Laakkonen 2007; Piironen 2004; Kärkkäinen and Niemi 2001).

The aim of the first research question was to find out what kind of differences there are between the type of exercising males and females do in the textbooks. The research question was chosen since generally there are differences in the sports girls and boys play. Appleby and Foster (2013: 1–2) state that according to the society sports such as football, boxing and wrestling seem to be appropriate for boys whereas dance, gymnastics and figures skating for girls. They point out that even though there are no biological reasons that would prevent a boy from dancing, socially created ideas and attitudes about the suitable behaviour for girls and boys stop boys from doing exercise that is dominated by girls and vice versa. According to Turpeinen et al. (2011), a report on equality and physical exercise show that the three most popular sports for boys in Finland are ice hockey, football and floorball, whereas with girls this kind of generalisation is hard to make. It was also found that in childhood boys are generally more active than girls when it comes to physical exercise. Similar gender differences were apparent in the textbooks that were analysed in this study. There were few instances where gender roles were mixed in sports, for example, portraying two girls doing karate (*Wow!* p.32) but boys still dominated in typically male dominated sports such as football, ice-hockey and martial arts in both textbooks. With girls it was difficult to make generalisations, since they did not share interests when it came to physical exercise like boys did, but dancing seemed to be common form of physical exercise amongst girls in both textbooks. *Yippee!* seemed to challenge the idea of gendered sports more than *Wow!* by showing female characters interested in ice-hockey and football (p. 31, 85) but still the number of these kind of mixes of gender-roles remained to be low. Since the research question focused on doing physical exercise, it turned out that a repeated pattern with *Yippee!* was that the subject of performing it was male, even if a female would be the one talking about physical exercise.

The goal of the second research question was to find out if both sexes are presented equally often concerning physical exercise. That was not the case in either of the textbooks. In both textbooks,

there were twice as many male characters in the physical exercise images than there were females. In text level, however, the textbooks differed from each other. There were more named male characters than named female characters in the text of *Wow!* but equal amount of named female and male characters in the text of *Yippee!*. However, as pointed out earlier, even if female characters would talk about physical exercise, the subject of it was sometimes male.

The final research question focused on the differences of the two textbooks and also on their difference in curricula. Since *Wow!* follows the Finnish national core curriculum 2004 (POPS 2004) and *Yippee!* the Finnish national core curriculum 2014 (POPS 2014), differences in the portrayal of gender could be at least partly explained by the difference of curricula. When comparing the curricula it was apparent that POPS 2014 put greater emphasis on gender equality and how school system should improve and pointed out the importance of gender equal teaching materials as well. Equal opportunities for girls and boys were stressed multiple times and it is probable that the writers of *Yippee!* 6 decided to acknowledge gender equality also in relation to physical exercise. As Birrell and Cole (1994: vi) state, sport is not disconnected from our culture and politics. When studying textbooks that remark indicates that assumptions of gender in physical exercise are not only present on the pages of a textbook but outside of it as well.

When looking for reasons to explain the underrepresentation of females in textbooks, hidden curriculum might be one of them. According to Broady (1989), hidden curriculum means the rules and attitudes that are conveyed to pupils subconsciously beyond the official curriculum (discussed more on 2.2). These attitudes might concern gender as well and in fact, it has been discovered that the school practice furthers the idea that there are differences between boys and girls and a line is drawn between the sexes (Tainio and Teräs 2010: 8).

Even though my study successfully shows that there is an unequal amount of males and females in two Finnish EFL textbooks and the sexes are assigned different roles when it comes to physical exercise, the study has its limitations. The present research was small-scale and exploring only two textbooks is not enough to generalise that all Finnish EFL textbooks would necessarily follow the same pattern. To go further with the same approach and research questions, more data would be needed for generalisations. However, my study is in line with previous studies conducted on Finnish EFL textbooks. Still, I believe that further research should be conducted in order to understand how gender is portrayed in Finnish textbooks and to possibly reconsider it.

As stated earlier, textbooks have a great impact on pupils' assumptions on gender and the tasks of different sexes in the society (Jääskeläinen et al. 2015: 21). After completing my thesis I believe that textbooks should be treated critically in terms of gender, no matter what the chapters are about. There is a clear underrepresentation of females in relation to sports in the two textbooks. However, it is clear that in general men are far more at display regarding to sports than women. In Finland it is common to encounter a discussion of ice-hockey without anyone stating that the discussion is on men's ice-hockey - the men's ice-hockey is considered as a norm. Everywhere in the world it seems to be that professional women's sport is less popular than men's. However, when focusing on teaching materials, one could argue whether the world should be showed to children as it is right now or how it could be. Should women and men, girls and boys be portrayed in contexts where they most likely are in real life, or could the reality bend so that children would see males and females in roles that might even be unfamiliar to them, challenging traditional gender-roles? This consideration comes down to the question "How realistic should textbooks be"? I believe that when it comes to education, the portrayal of the real world can change so that equal opportunities are provided to both girls and boys whether the theme is physical exercise or something else. After all, textbooks influence children's thinking.

On a final note, Michel (1986: 49) points out that the under-representation of women in textbooks is itself sexism, a clear indication that women are seen as inferiors in society, because there are as many women as men in all societies. There are over thirty years between that statement and present day and yet males continue to considerably outnumber females in teaching materials, in Finland also. Furthermore, boys and girls are often assigned different activities in textbooks. This is something that the Finnish education system as well as the whole Finnish society should consider.

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