

Who are admitted to a sport school?

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This article discusses the recruitment of pupils into a secondary school with a physical activity profile in Sweden. Two cohorts of girls and boys were studied longitudinally between the age of 13 – 15 (n=156). They were accepted into education in fierce competition (the number of the applicant was 437). The selection criteria were sport merits, not school marks. Thus the aim of running the school, besides the general curriculum, is sport talent identification and talent development. One of the assignments of the longitudinal and multidisciplinary research project Malmö Youth Sport Study (MYSS) is to establish who the chosen ones are, and to relate the result out of different factors – gender related, physiological, psychological and sociological. The article conclude that a number of social and socio-economic

factors clearly influence the talent identification: the socioeconomic status and amount of sport capital of the parents, the pupils' marks, and their birth month.

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Introduction

Secondary schools with a physical activity profile have become popular in Sweden, both among youngsters and local politicians. This trend has been both acclaimed and criticized (Eliasson et al. 2012; Ferry & Olofsson 2009; Ferry et.al 2013; Ferry 2014; Lund 2010, 2014; Peterson 2008). The impact of these sports profiles is unclear. In this study we focus on the first secondary school with a physical activity profile in Sweden, founded in 2005. It started as “Malmö FF’s Academy” in 1992. It allowed boys to be trained by the same coaches in school as in the club. After turning into a secondary school, the program eventually included other sports – both team and individual sports. The decision to start the school as a public school was made by the municipality of Malmö. However, it appears that no statement was made as to the purpose of the school. Still, a contract between the municipality and one sports club stated:

In order to increase the number of pupils that leave secondary school with passable grades, thereby being able to proceed to upper secondary school level, the municipality, in cooperation with four sports clubs, has worked out a secondary school education with a profile... A further purpose is to prepare talent opportunity in an organized way during school hours.

This seems to imply that pupils’ sport interest exerts a bad influence on their school results, and that coordination between school work and sport practice would increase their grades. At the same time, increased sport practice would additionally lead to better sport results.

In addition, the 2018 Malmö municipality home page stated about the sport school: “The focus is to provide all pupils with skills and capacities that enable them to create a life that offers great opportunities and good health, today and in the future. As the wellbeing and learning of the pupils come first, we work with clear strategies to strengthen both of them. As a pupil you get the opportunity to train your sport during school hours with coaches from the sports movement. To be admitted you have to audition”.

These formulations no longer contain any contradiction between sport engagement and school grades. Instead, the focus is on the ambition to ensure the health of the pupils, even in a longer perspective. This seems to imply that sport activity in youth leads to a healthier lifestyle in adulthood. It is also emphasized that it is sport results that form the basis for being admitted to the school.

Although the purpose of the school is not clearly defined, the focus seems to lie on good grades, good health and good sport results. It is well known that good grades as well as good health are strongly related to social background (SCB 2016). For this reason, it is relevant to map the social background of the secondary sport school pupils.

An additional factor that might influence who are accepted into the school is the so-called Relative Age Effect (RAE). The effects on talent selection of this phenomenon, which are today widely agreed upon within the scientific community, refer to the consequences of differences in physical maturity within a cohort of children (Cobley et al. 2009; Peterson 2011). Our hypothesis is that RAE also emerges in the process of being accepted to sport schools of different kinds (Peterson 2011; Saether, Peterson & Vazjwar Martin 2017; Ek et al. 2020).

The aim of this article is to present the social and sport background of the pupils when accepted at the age of twelve, as well as the variation in month of birth. In upcoming articles we will illustrate their talent development.

Material and methods

We are conducting a large-scale multidisciplinary and longitudinal study on two consecutive cohorts at a sport school. Malmö Youth Sport Study (MYSS) involves girls and boys who are today young women and men ($n = 156$). Our intention is to increase the knowledge of how to create an activity that is inclusive and enables a commitment to sport and a lifelong interest in physical activity and sport (a health perspective) and at the same time a successful talent identification and talent development (an elite perspective). The project was started in 2012 by researchers from Halmstad, Lund and Malmö universities. The researchers represent different disciplines and faculties, and hence different angles related to the research questions (Peterson et al. 2017). The project builds on the *Bunkeflo project*, which studies the relation between pupil health, school grades and physical activity (Ericsson & Karlsson 2011, 2012; Lahti et al. 2019). MYSS is also inspired by “The Decisive Years” (*De avgörande åren*, Franzén & Peterson 2007; Peterson 2011, 2014), a research project studying children and youth sport as a socialization arena. MYSS is based on baseline data and three-year, six-year and (eventually) twelve-year follow-ups.

The project includes social, psychological and physiological studies, as well as gender aspects. The sociological study consists of two question-

naires, for pupils and parents, respectively. This article focuses on the parent questionnaire, which was carried out in connection with introductory meetings in school at the start of Year 7 for the relevant ages.

The questionnaire which was handed out to the parents of 156 children comprised questions on parents' ethnic background, education, occupation, housing conditions, material wealth (access to a number of properties, such as cars or boats – for sleeping in – summer house or caravan, number of brothers and sisters, as well as parents' own experiences of and attitudes to sport. When possible, comparisons are made with the entire population of Malmö where relevant municipal statistics are available (Malmö kommun, 2012). This is as close we can get to a representative control group, despite the fact that about thirty percent of the pupils were not resident in Malmö when admitted. In some respects, a comparison is also made with all applicants to the secondary sport school during the applicable years as well as for RAE including all children born in Sweden.

For most of the questionnaire the number of answers to different alternatives is stated. Some questions were processed in greater detail. For parents' occupation we made use of SEI, the socio-economic index for the entire population of Sweden (SCB 1984). SEI classifies those who are gainfully employed as workers, civil servants and employers, plus one further category for those who are not gainfully employed, such as pupils, home workers, unemployed, persons with long-time sick leave and conscripts. The three major groups are subdivided. Accordingly, workers are distinguished by educational level, by producing goods or services, civil servants by educational level and whether or not they have any subordinates, while employers are divided by educational level and number of employees. Employments are classified as full time or part time.

Three questions covered families' experience of sport. First, whether the parents themselves had been actively engaged in sport, secondly, whether they had served as coaches/leaders in a sports club, and thirdly, whether any sister or brother had been active in sport. We established a score where each parent that had been active in sport or as a coach/leader was given one point and a sporting brother or sister one point. Thus, the score variation was 0-5.

To elucidate RAE, we compared the distribution of quarter of the year when pupils were born with the corresponding distribution in these cohorts in Sweden (SCB 2000, 2001 and 2002).

Statistical comparisons were made by χ^2 test.

Results

The response frequency was 98%. Even internal dropout in individual questions was very limited, as emerges from the response frequencies below (number of answers within brackets). A presentation is made below of the questions with their answers, including as far as possible comparisons with the entire population of Malmö.

Question 1: With whom does the child live? (N=153)

As many as 84 percent live with both parents. The others live with one of them or alternatively with both.

Question 2: How does the child live? (N=137)

In Malmö, 82 percent of the housing consists of apartment blocks and 18 percent are individual houses. About 46 percent of the apartment blocks are rented apartments, 38 percent are condominiums and 15 percent ownership dwellings. In the parent group, a large majority lives in private houses (Table 1).

Table 1. *Form of housing in 2012 for parents of MYSS pupils 2013/2014 (%). Statements about mixed dwellings are not included.*

Tenancy	12
Owner apartment	10
Terraced house	14
Terraced house	64

Question 3: In which country were the parents born? (N=153)

The proportion of children (aged 0-17) in Malmö with a foreign background in 2008 was 56%. Of the mothers, 82 percent were born in Sweden. Among the others, 22 different countries were stated, albeit no country more than three times. The fathers born in Sweden also constituted 82%. Among the rest, 23 different countries were stated, none, however, more than three times. In the group including all applicants to the school, 34% had a foreign background, 18% of whom were admitted.

Question 4: Does the child have any brothers and sisters? (N=135)

Most children have one sibling (Table 2). The gender variation is low, which is reasonable.

Table 2. *Number of brothers and sisters for MYSS pupils 2013/2014 (absolute numbers)*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Brother</i>	<i>Sister</i>
0	42	39
1	69	70
2	20	16
3	3	8
3	2	1

Question 5: Has the family access to a car, boat (with possibilities to sleep in), summer house, or camper? (N=153)

Nearly everyone has a car, every fourth family has a summer house, and hardly anybody has a boat or camper.

Question 6: What is your current job? (N=156+150=306)

Within the whole group, 68% are employed full time, 8% part time, and 14% are their own employers. Nine out of ten (90%) are gainfully employed in various ways, which is a very high figure compared to the population of Malmö (64%, $p < 0.0001$). Somewhat more men than women work full time, even among those who are their own employers.

Question 7: What education have you completed? (N=156+150=306)

The parents' educational level agreed well with that of the entire population of Malmö (Table 3).

Table 3. *Educational level for parents of MYSS pupils as well as for the entire Malmö population at 2013/2014 (%)*

<i>Education</i>	<i>MYSS</i>	<i>Malmö</i>
Lower secondary	8,5	14
Upper secondary	38,5	38
Tertiary	48,0	42
Other	5,0	6

In the population of Malmö at large, the proportion of women with tertiary education is higher than that of men (45–38%). The same relation, albeit with a somewhat greater difference, applies to MYSS parents (55–37%, Table 4.).

Table 4. Educational level for parents of MYSS pupils distributed by gender (%)

<i>Education</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>Father</i>
Lower secondary	21	11
Upper secondary	19	45
Tertiary	55	37
Other	5	7

Question 8: What is your current occupation? (N=156+150=306)

The most common occupation among the parents was that of official. Two thirds of the parents were senior or mid-level officials. There were also a relatively large number of self-employed persons (Table 5). The differences between the two years are rather small.

Table 5. Distribution by occupation according to SEI for the parents of MYSS pupils 2013/2014 (%)

<i>Occupational category</i>	<i>Cohort 1</i>	<i>Cohort 2</i>	<i>Total</i>
Workers	11	6	8,5
Junior officials	3	5	4
Middle level officials	26	23	24,5
Senior officials	33	49	41
Self-employed	20	11	15,5
Not gainfully employed	7	6	6,5

Question 9: Families' sport experience (N=153)

Among the mothers of the pupils, 70% had been active in some sport, compared to 89% among the fathers. It emerges that in 67% of the cases both parents have been or still are active, and in 27%, one parent. On what levels the parents have been active does not emerge, but 53% of the fathers and 16% of the mothers have acted as coaches in their children's clubs.

A third of the pupils have no brothers or sisters, but most of the others have one or more siblings that have been active in the same and/or another type of sport (Table 6). Only eight pupils (5%) have parents that lack experience of sport. Seven out of these eight pupils had one or more siblings that had been active in a sport club, and some of them still were. *Thus, out of 153 pupils, only one had a family that lacked sport experience*, according to our way of measuring (score = 0). The most common score for the pupils is three or four points out of five.

Table 6. *How many of the children had brothers and sisters who have also been active in sport? (%)*

	<i>Same sport (N=144)</i>	<i>Another sport (N=138)</i>
Yes, brother/s	36	36
Yes, sister/s	18	34
Both brother and sister	11	11
None	34	20

Question 10: statements about sport as a youth activity (N=153)

In addition to the question about parents' sport experience, there is a question about attitudes, where parents are asked to relate to a number of statements about sport.

Table 7. *Below you will find a number of statements about sport as a youth activity. How do they agree with your own views? (N=153, the dropout rate for individual questions 1-6 was 3, 3, 5, 3, 4 and 6, respectively)*

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Quite good</i>	<i>Neither nor</i>	<i>Quite bad</i>	<i>Bad</i>
Sport gives children knowledge about club activities	71	57	14	5	3
Sport fosters good practitioners	86	59	5	0	0
Sport is far too elite-oriented at a young age	20	38	64	20	6
Sport teaches children to function in a group	116	30	4	3	0
Sport is a good complement to school and leisure activities	126	19	3	1	0
Sport takes too much time from school	9	25	50	25	38

Relative age effect

Table 8 contains a comparison between groups of children, which shows how RAE was created at the selection to the school during the years in question. There is a considerable surplus of pupils born during the first quarter of a year and the equivalent shortage of pupils born in the fourth quarter ($p < 0.05$).

Table 8. *Distribution by quarter of the year of all children born in Sweden and of pupils admitted to the school (%).*

<i>Quarter of birth</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
All children born in Sweden	25	27	26	22
The sport school	35	28	24	13

Discussion

The background factors regarded within social sciences as being of the greatest importance when dividing citizens into different groups, which are later affected in different ways and with different results, are age, gender, social class/group (educational level and occupation), ethnicity and geographical location/population density (Engström 1999; Schelin 1985). The parent questionnaire includes questions about most of these factors as well as questions about sport habits (Bourdieu 1987; Engström 2010).

The connection between background and physical activity has been demonstrated in many studies and public reports in the post-war period. There has been evidence since the early 1950s that members of higher social groups do to a greater extent participate in sport clubs than members of lower ones (von Euler 1953). The proportion of individuals doing exercise shows the same pattern (Diderichsen et al. 1991). Exercise habits are strongly related to educational level (Engström 1989; Blomdahl 1990). The recruitment to various sports illustrates social imbalance (Schelin 1985). In sum, sport and exercise habits are clearly stamped socially and culturally (Bourdieu 1986 1992; Engström 1989, 1999, 2010).

The only longitudinal study of leisure activities, sport and exercise habits in the Swedish population so far was conducted by Lars-Magnus Engström. Over 2000 persons born in 1964 were followed for a period of 25 years, with follow-ups at the ages of 20, 25, 30 and 40. By means of such a comparison it is possible to capture characteristic and relevant features uniting and separating the MYSS parent group from the whole Malmö population. When Engström compared habits around the age of 40 with background factors at the age of 15 (Year 8), it turned out that the factors significantly related to exercise tendencies 26 years later were the grade in physical education, grades in theoretical subjects and social group affiliation based on the father's occupation. There are, however, also explanations of physical exercise habits in middle age that are linked to current conditions, in other words to what characterizes individuals on the basis of actual life circumstances.

The factors whose explanation value is significant are educational level, place of residence and friends' exercise habits. By compiling information from 14 and 40 years of age, it turns out that the physical education grade at age 15 is the only element that adds to the explanation of exercise habits at the age of 41.

"If we know the place of residence, the educational level and the tendency towards physical exercise among friends, the information we have received from the age of 15 has no major explanation value for the exercise tendency at 41 years of age. On the other hand, social position, PE grade and grades in theoretical subjects at the age of 15 contain a very good explanation value concerning exercise habits around 40 years of age if we do *not* know anything whatsoever about current circumstances. The interpretation must be that the information we have received from age 15 has a high correlation with the social position in the middle age, which is in turn related to exercise habits at that age" (Engström 2010, pp. 83-84).

Engström's longitudinal study has enabled MYSS to study the reproduction of sport habits by comparing the habits of one age group into late middle age, even though this is a group that is older than the pupils' parents (Engström 2010), with two cohorts of secondary school children. In MYSS, children's and young people's physical exercise and competition values are processed longitudinally in, principally speaking, the same way as in Engström's study. To sum up, it can be stated that it is possible in several respects to make a very clear and even unambiguous description of the parent group.

The first sign refers to the upper middle class, characterized here by parents who were largely born in Sweden, have a high educational and occupational level and are occupationally dominated by senior officials and employers who live in well-defined families in detached or terraced houses.

There is no division of Malmö's inhabitants according to SEI. An indirect comparison can, however, be made via the joint basis of division formed by educational level. In such a comparison, MYSS parents with a tertiary education comprise all senior officials and a smaller section (40%) of employers. Under these conditions, the figure of 47.7 % for tertiary education (48%) agrees fairly well with that of senior officials along with 40% of the employers. This enables us to plausibly conclude that the comparison between MYSS parents and the entire Malmö population shows a similar picture as far as occupational setup and educational level are concerned (Galobardes et al. 2006). Still, in such a comparison, the average MYSS parent group has higher education and contains a lower share of workers and

junior officials but a higher proportion of senior officials and academically educated employers.

Statistics show that the proportion of Malmö inhabitants with tertiary education has increased from 33 percent in 2002 to 42 percent in 2012, with men now making up 38 percent and women 45 percent, respectively. The importance of education on the labor market has been growing in Malmö as well as globally. A functioning school system, along with the rise in educational level, constitutes an important basis for social and economic sustainability. Still, the differences between urban districts remain large, which is partly a consequence of the gap between the foreign and the Swedish born (Malmö kommun 2012, p. 45).

Our comparison so far has been between MYSS parents and the gainfully employed Malmö inhabitants at large. When the inhabitants are divided by urban districts it turns out, however, that as a group the MYSS parents is more similar to the population in some districts than in others.

To give a picture of welfare in Malmö broken down into its ten districts, a welfare index has been compiled consisting of 43 indicators. For each indicator, the districts are ranked according to the results of a scale from one to ten where, for example, the highest gainful employment frequency is given 10 points and the lowest 1 point. All ranking values are summarized for each district and are divided by the number of indicators. This results in a mean, which can give an indication of district development (Malmö kommun 2012, p. 15).

Table 9. *Welfare index for Malmö districts 2012.*

<i>District</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
Västra Innerstaden	7,9	1
Limhamn-Bunkeflo	7,4	2
Husie	7,4	3
Centrum	6,1	4
Oxie	6	5
Kirseberg	5,3	6
Hyllie	4,7	7
Södra Innerstaden	4,4	8
Fosie	3,3	9
Rosengård	2,6	10

Source: Malmö kommun 2012

The districts reaching the highest index value in 2012 comprise Västra Innerstaden, Limhamn-Bunkeflo and Husie. Among the variables that enable us to compare the MYSS parent group with Malmö districts, these are the three districts that show the greatest agreement. Our information suggests that, if we had had access to the same 43 indicators, the MYSS parent group would probably have had a higher index than Västra Innerstaden. The predominance of senior officials with a tertiary education indicates that, from a socioeconomic point of view, the parent group can be classified as upper middle class.

Since the pupils represent two admission periods, we can state that their composition appears stable and can be expected to be repeated in other admission periods. As the differences that exist between the cohorts refer to the categories of senior officials and employers, this does not contradict the picture of a relatively similar composition from one year to another. It should also be mentioned that this composition does not seem to arise due to social recruitment imbalance, as the only selection criterion used in the admission to the school involves pupils' sport merits and assessed talent.

The second feature characterizing the parents of the comprehensive sport school children is that the sport capital possessed by parents and/or brothers and sisters seems to be a prerequisite both for applying and being admitted to the sports school. The process of children passing on their parents' interests and occupations is and has always been an important part of social reproduction ("the apple doesn't fall far from the tree", "doctors' children are likely to become doctors" etc.). It is often noticed in sport that the children of elite sportspersons follow in their parents' steps. While these are actual examples of clear overrepresentation the statistical likelihood for this to happen is very small. When it nevertheless happens and explanations are sought after, genetic factors are often highlighted. Like other research, our study rather emphasizes the importance of social factors such as sport capital and attendance on the field.

It is of great importance to have supportive parents, siblings and relatives, as well as family members who have been active in sport, even if the level has not been very high. Parents (or other significant grownups) who have done sport possess their own sport capital, in the sense used by Bourdieu (1987), which both facilitates and motivates their children to start and helping them to continue. They can be said to be transferring their own sport capital to their children. In a study of football players born in 1984, a non-systematic survey of the background of elite players revealed that practically everyone had access to sport capital within the family. Besides, a

remarkably large share of them had a family member who is or has been an elite sportsperson (Peterson 2011). Still, what is as essential as getting support is to receive the right kind of support. It is a matter of being supported on one's own terms, being controlled from the inside rather than from the outside.

These observations support the results of Rolf Carlsson's study of successful athletes (Carlsson 1991). The study clearly highlights the importance of the social environment for developing to successful elite sportspersons. Good coaches, leaders and supportive parents were important ingredients in the success concept. It was also essential that the specialization on a successful sport did not start until relatively late, after other sports had already been tried (Carlsson 1991).

The only pupil who lacks family experience of sport is the exception to the rule; a sport capital gathered by parents and/or siblings is a prerequisite for being admitted to the comprehensive sport school. This could be compared to the statement made by the Swedish Sports Confederation (RF) that 650,000 Swedes act as leaders and coaches within the sports movement (CIF 2018), which corresponds to ca. 5 percent of the population, compared to 99.4 percent in the parent group.

The issue of parents' sport capital also includes the one regarding attitudes, where the parents are asked about their relation to a number of statements about sport. From the answers emerges a very positive attitude to sport. The strongest agreements (95% 'very good' or 'quite good') refer to sport being a good complement to school and leisure activities, and to teaching children to function in a group. An equal number of agreements, albeit with fewer 'very good' responses, applies to the statement that sport fosters good practitioners. Fewer agreements, forming a total of 84% for 'very good' or 'quite good', are received by the statement that sport teaches children about club activity. There are two statements where the parents show ambivalence rather than unanimity, one being that sport is far too elite-oriented in youth, and the other that it takes too much time away from school. In both cases, the 'neither good nor bad' alternative is the one ticked off the most.

A third characteristic of comprehensive sport school pupils concerns what time of the year they were born, which may produce a relative age effect, RAE (Cobley et al. 2009; Peterson 2011). One hypothesis accompanying MYSS from the very start is that RAE also affects selection to sport schools of various kinds (Peterson 2011; Saether, Peterson & Vazjwar Matin 2017; Ek et al. 2020). Evidence of RAE can be found when the birth pattern concerning the quarter of birth within a selected group differs from that of

the group or groups from which the selection has been made. The interpretation of this emerging pattern can be that the likelihood of being selected is greater the earlier in the year the applicant was born. The evidence of RAE in the sport school, an effect that may be related to the physical maturity of the individual, was also confirmed (Ek et al. 2020).

In addition to these features, there are further variables characterizing those who are selected. One variable mentioned in the debate about these schools is school grades. The MYSS school government claims that the grades have the highest priority, not the commitment to sport, while simultaneously pointing out that the school results have been among the best in Malmö one year after another. This is confirmed by statistics. The 2017 grades for Year 9 in the municipal schools in Malmö for all pupils, including recent immigrant pupils and others with an unknown background, show that 96.1 % of this school's pupils reached the knowledge requirements in all subjects, which was the highest proportion in all municipal schools (Malmö kommun 2018). The five-year results keep the same level, reaching 88.5% (the fifth highest) in 1916, 96.2% (the highest) in 2015, 94.4% (the highest) in 2014, and 84.0% (the fifth highest proportion) in 2013.

So far we have accounted for a number of factors that supposedly affect the selection to this sport school. What remains to explain is *attributed talent* in the form of a prognosis that individual pupils will in adult age have a capacity to do sport at the elite level. Among the factors supposed to contribute to this prognosis is that the parents belong to a socioeconomically well-situated group, which may be termed the upper middle class. Furthermore, parents and siblings possess an extensive sport capital. After completing compulsory school, the pupils' average grades are at or near the top in Malmö. There is also a clear connection between having been admitted and the quarter of the year when they were born.

Our claim for a clear connection between these factors and attributed talent is supported by previous research. First of all, sport and physical exercise habits are clearly marked socially, socioeconomically, socio-geographically and culturally (Bourdieu 1987; Engström 2010; Seippel, Strandby & Sletten 2011; Ferry & Lund 2018).

Secondly, there is a strong general connection between parents' educational level and children's grades. Even though the educational system is supposed to offer equal chances to receive education for children of different social backgrounds, their proportion with a tertiary education is twice as big if both parents have a tertiary education compared to if they both have a secondary one (SCB 2016).

Thirdly, there is a frequently stated connection between parents' sport capital and children's sport preferences, which makes sport and physical exercise habits clearly socially and culturally marked (Bourdieu 1987; Engström 2010).

Fourthly, there is research demonstrating a connection between talent, grades and which quarter of the year you were born. In short, the greatest probability for obtaining the best grade in sport and health is held by a boy, born early in the year, who has highly educated parents (Svensson 1993). To this should be added those who do sport in their leisure hours.

Based on the effect of these factors on sport school selection, the remaining questions concern *how* and *to what extent* (in relation to each other). Belonging to the upper middle classes and possessing a sport capital are features independent of each other – you can belong to the upper classes without possessing any sport capital, and vice versa. On the other hand, there is a clear and often testified connection between pupils' grades and parents' educational level. If grades are the basis of selection to the school, parents' educational level should explain which pupils are selected (as well as their high grades). If so, we would have an illustrative example of social recruitment imbalance. However, this is not the case. The selection was made exclusively on the basis of sport merits.

This means that there should exist other links between who are selected and the background factors. The question then arises of how sport talent and selection systems function – as to form and contents – to arrive at such a predominance of practitioners with a background like the one described. It seems, as a matter of fact, as if the selection does not reveal the most about the pupils' parents, or even about the pupils themselves. Neither does it reveal most about the school form as such, nor about the MYSS school. Apparently, what the results chiefly reveal is what Swedish children and youth sport look like, as to form and content. This applies at least to the selection and talent development systems, which largely appeal to and are appealed to by well-off group of parents and their children. The systems are integrated into the club sport where the children have had and still have their sport practice, which appeals to some children by highlighting their particular skills as promising talents. As a rule, they have taken part in sport between six and eight years and consider this activity so good or valuable – or such fun – that they wish to continue it throughout lower secondary school. Sport selection and talent development systems like these do not only provide sport schools with pupils – not even primarily – but they structure, under the aegis of the special sports associations, all their practitioners from bottom

to top (club – district – federation) and over time (child – young person – grownup). We can expect that the factors that we have confirmed affect the selection to and activities of sport schools, will also affect club sports at large (Peterson 2018).

Sport schools offer sport to social groups which have otherwise difficulty in receiving it. This also applies to the MYSS school. Still, the composition of the parent group suggests that children from these groups very seldom apply to the school, and if they do so they are seldom admitted. Another way of expressing this is that in this school the number of children of single, low-educated and unemployed mothers with a foreign background is not very high.

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