**Physical Education, Body Shape and Borders: Inclusion and Exclusion**

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Girlhood Scholars draw attention to the school as a major space in girls’ lives. Physical Education (PE) classes at school were addressed, within the framework of girlhood studies, as a unique space: They are the only classes that deal with the corporeal body of the students; students’ bodies are exposed and become the object of others' gaze.

So far, the perspective of Borders has not been implemented into the field of PE. The term ‘Borders’ is commonly used to describe geographical and spatial separation as well as social cultural segregation. ‘Borders Crossing’ describes the blurring of borders as well as the processes of negotiating boundaries. In my talk, I will use these terms – Borders and Borders Crossing, to explore inclusion and exclusion dynamics in PE space.

PE in Israel, as in many countries, is formally associated with health promotion, socialization of youngsters and cultivation of self esteem and wellbeing. As a formal pedagogy, it claims to be a space of equality, i.e. it is presented as a space which is not limited to a specific sex, race, socio-economic status or body shape. Thus, PE is stated as a space in which borders are blurred and where the opportunities to engage and succeed are open to all. However, research shows that while PE classes significantly contribute to the self esteem and wellbeing of some girls, for many others they become a source of exclusion and distress. Specifically, girls who are characterized as thin and fit are more likely to experience themselves as “good in PE” and enjoy the values and benefits it aims to provide, while others – over weight girls or those who subjectively experience themselves as not fit enough, are more likely to be excluded, and face shame and embarrassment. Thus, implicit segregation, organized by body shape constitute the PE space.

The research that will be presented is the first to deal with PE in Israel from a gender (and feminist) perspectives. The research consists of a critical review of the PE curriculum, interviews with physical educators, observations and focus groups with girls. In my talk, I will address the following question: **How do physical educators maintain and strengthen (or weaken) hegemonic body based borders in PE?**  I will show that most physical educators are aware of the existence of body shape diversity and of the educational value of inclusion, but only a few succeed in translating this value to actual borders blurring, while most take part in re-establishing them. I will show that both formal and hidden massages, given by physical educators, clearly state that the proper body should be thin and fit, and encourage those whose bodies do not fit these characteristics to engage in body modifications practices, that will give them the chance to cross the borders and be included.

**Ornit Ramati Dvir** is a Phd student at the Gender Studies Program at Bar-Ilan University. Among her areas of interest are: Women in the workplace and female adolescents, with a focus on the field of Physical Education. Her chapter in the area of Gender and Physical Education has recently been published in the first Hebrew volume dedicated to various aspects of adolescent girls and their bodies. In concurrence, she works as an advisor for various companies aiming to remove hidden barriers and promote gender equality, and runs several empowerment programs for teenage girls.