Dressed for School Success: A study into School Uniform and Dress Codes in Sweden and the United Kingdom

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Abstract

This study highlights a number of different aspects regarding uniforms and dress codes in the United Kingdom (UK) and Sweden. The study comprises three parts: a quantitative comparison of GCSE pass rates for schools in the UK that do and do not have school uniforms, a qualitative survey study of Scottish High School pupils' perceptions about their uniform and a qualitative interview study of Swedish teachers, administrators and pupils about their school dress, rules regarding school dress and school uniforms.

Regarding whether uniforms improved academic results by comparing GCSE pass rates in the UK we were unable to find conclusive evidence to suggest that schools which had uniform policies performed significantly better than other schools.

Regarding Scottish pupils’ perceptions of their uniforms, pupils from lower-educated backgrounds were more likely to perceive that they were told off by teachers about not wearing the correct dress. When asked whether pupils felt more equal compared to their peers, those from lower-educated background were more likely to think that uniforms do not help to level out class difference compared to pupils from better educated backgrounds. Regarding bullying, even though uniforms existed at the school studied bullying due to what pupils wore to school still existed and pupils perceived that bullying due to other factors such as physical appearance also occurred.

Regarding the results from interviews with teachers and administrators in the Swedish town studied, most teachers took a fairly relaxed attitude towards pupils’ dress although the dress code of not wearing outdoor clothes in High Schools was policed quite strongly. Teachers saw the issue of female pupils dressing overtly sexually as the biggest problem and this was dealt with on an individual level rather than a class level.
High school pupils’ opinions of their dress code varied. Some hated the school rule that they were not allowed to wear outdoor clothes, whereas for others it was not seen as a big deal. A number of pupils thought that what you wore in class does not affect their learning outcomes. Very few pupils thought that introducing a uniform would be a good idea. Pupils at Sixth Form College had a more mature attitude towards their dress and were able to reflect back on their experiences from High School. They did not think that the issue of dress was a major issue in Sixth Form College however this did vary slightly between the three schools studied. Pupils at two of the schools perceived the dress code of the third school as being more formal, but this was due mainly to prejudice according to a number of pupils. The large majority of Sixth Form College students thought that introducing school uniform would be a bad idea and that bullying would not be eradicated because pupils can always pick on other attributes, not just clothing. However there were a couple of Sixth Form College that thought that introducing it would be a good way to reduce peer-pressure to buy the right clothes in High School.
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“Though we may be the effects of power relations, we are not helpless objects formed and moved by power, but individuals constituted as subjects by governmental practices of power and normalisation, and we can choose to respond to, or resist, these practices. An example, here, is of schoolchildren: they are placed in an institution which strict codes, rules, regulations, imperatives and ideas of subjectivity that they are meant to follow - but rarely do. And the students who do readily conform to the models of 'good subjectivity' are invariably ostracised by their peers - they are the teacher's pet, or brown-nosers, or geeks. They are often unpopular precisely because they do what they're supposed to. Although schools may work to produce 'docile bodies' they are just as likely to produce rebels’ (Danaher, 2000, pp 128.)
Introduction

Schools are thought of as places of learning. However, there is another "hidden curriculum" whereby pupils learn to, for example, carry out instructions, sit quietly, wait their turn and be well behaved in general. It could also be said that another unspoken goal of schooling is to learn how to dress properly in society i.e. learning to tuck in one's shirt, learning which type of shoes are acceptable etc. This is done when teachers, school administrators and pupils themselves discipline pupils into wearing the right kind of clothes. But does putting children in uniforms or even telling them what not to wear through a dress code really make them learn better at school?

Well, it doesn't seem like we have a comprehensive answer to this question. Surprisingly, there seems to be a lack of research in this area. In Sweden to the author’s knowledge there has only been two perception studies of pupils' (Gustafsson, 2008) and teachers' (Lowén and Jovanovska, 2005) opinions about school uniform. These studies were only based on qualitative data and were performed over a short period of time. In the United States, however, quantitative studies have been conducted in order to see if their is a trend between introducing uniform policy and improving results (amongst other factors). The USA is interesting since a large number of state schools introduced school uniforms in an attempt to reduce gang violence and increasing political pressure (President Clinton mentioned uniforms in his state of the union address). Other aims of the school uniform were to: improve results, increase racial equity and to improve school ethos in general. Uniforms were seen as the miracle cure for all the problems in school. But the results showed that uniforms made no difference in pupils’ academic achievement. A large amount of recent research has been conducted by a group lead by David Brunsma. In a quantitative study from the USA of over 4000 schools, it was found that uniform policies had a slight negative effect on academic results (Brunsma, 2001). As an aside Brunsma finds those factors that do have a positive effect on pupils' academic achievement are: academic preparedness, pro-school attitudes and pro-school attitudes amongst peers (Brunsma, 2004, pp 122). The authors also found that school uniforms have no effect on substance use, behavioural problems or attendance. He later found that school uniforms do not significantly alter 8th graders’ perception of the school safety climate. One can also ask the question, as we will later on in this study, do uniforms help to make a more equal society? One study (Morris, 2005) showed that in one class in America
teachers tended to tell African American and Latino pupils to correct their dress (telling them to tuck in their shirt) more so than the White and Asian pupils, even though the White and Asian pupils’ behaviour was similar. In this case Morris argues that this helped to increase racial inequality rather than to decrease the inequalities.

As regards research about uniform in the UK, little research has been done to our knowledge. Swain was able to establish that in a class of 10-11 year olds in a UK primary school with a rather loosely enforced uniform policy, boys created their own power hierarchy based on clothing. For example, if you went to school wearing the wrong type of shoes you were likely to be stigmatized by being called ‘gay’ (Swain, 2002). Thus in this study, even when having a uniform, pupils create their own groups which gives them the right to discipline other pupils who do abide by the rules by calling them names. These 'rebels' are the 'ethical subjects' that Foucault writes about and Danaher (Danaher, 2000) argues that school is a good breeding ground for such rebels due to its institutional rules and regulations designed originally to produce 'docile bodies' (see the opening citation to this report).

So why, if the research from the States points to the fact that uniforms do not make any difference towards a child’s education, should we introduce school uniforms?

There is an increasing debate in Sweden about introducing more stringent dress codes and even uniforms in some cases. A Christian Democrat Councillor on the Schools' Board of Norrköping Municipality recently proposed a motion to introduce school uniforms in all of Norrköping’s local schools on the basis that it would reduce bullying. Her motion was turned down however due to the lack of empirical evidence (Norrköping, 2009). (Of course, as Gereluk mentions, rigorous scientific testing to see if uniforms reduce bullying would be almost impossible.

One would need to have two control groups, one group of students that had stricter-dress code, as opposed to the another group that did not have dress codes. One would further need to have all the other variables held constant (Gereluk, 2008, pp 13)

Some independent schools in Sweden, however, have debated introducing stricter uniform policies (DN, 2005) and at least one privately run, fee-taking independent school, Sigtuna, does have a school uniform that its pupils must wear for at least one day a week. The debate on
uniforms in the UK still rages on. Not all primary schools have school uniform and there is some protest against introducing school uniforms (2009, Hodginkson) as well as protests about schools introducing school uniforms that are too expensive (2009, Wainwright).

The reason for conducting this research is to study this issue further in order to contribute to the debate. My interest in this subject started in 2002 when I had just moved from England to Sweden as a 22 year-old. On the bus to work I met an English boy who had just moved from the UK to Sweden and was attending a well known international independent school. We got onto the subject of school uniform and his remark was that he was bullied more in the UK where he had gone to a school with a uniform policy compared to his Swedish school at the time which did not have a uniform policy. As in the Swain study, he was teased at his former UK school for having the "wrong" make of trainer, something I found very interesting. Another reason why bullying was not common at his current Swedish school could have been that most, if not all pupils, who went to that school would have been from a high socio-economic background. Therefore differences between social classes were probably small making the hierarchy between pupils smaller compared to the Swain study where differences between children from well-off and poor backgrounds would probably have been greater.

My aim from the outset was to compare the UK and Swedish systems, however on second thoughts this task is nigh impossible since the systems are so different. However it is interesting to analyse the discourses in the two countries and to make some small studies. First we need to know a little about the two schooling systems.

In the Swedish system pupils start school in the year in which they turn 7 and it is compulsory for pupils to have 9 years of basic education until the age of 16 where they may enter Further Education (gymnasium) to attend a national programme of study which can qualify them for skilled jobs or entry into Higher Education. Most pupils attend municipality-run schools although there has been a change in legislation in the 90s which means that independent schools can start up. If a pupil from the municipality goes to this independent school, then it receives the same amount of money to educate the pupil as the municipality school would have received. The programmes of Further Education are roughly divided into two main categories: preparatory for higher education and vocational. There is a general trend that pupils from a middle-class
background tend to populate the preparatory programmes whereas pupils from lower class backgrounds choose vocational programmes as Fanny Ambjörnsson has previously described (Ambjörnsson, 2007). Regarding dress and uniforms, Swedish schools do not have uniforms, but they do have dress codes and most commonly this means that outdoor clothing should not be worn in class nor should pupils wear symbolic clothing that could cause offence. The lack of uniform and less rigid dress codes have led to pupils expressing themselves through their clothes in order to find their identity, something which has been documented in a thesis by Jacobson (Jacobson, 1998).

In the UK the school system is a little different. Pupils enter compulsory education at the age of 5 and then there is 11 years of compulsory education before pupils can take GCSE qualifications which can be used when applying for jobs or Further Education. Most schools are now two tier i.e. Pupils attend primary school until aged 11 where pupils enter secondary (high) school. Compared to pupils in Sweden, pupils in England are more heavily monitored and take many more tests from an earlier age. Also it is more common for children to be divided up according to ability. This can be either by attending a different school altogether (in a few areas pupils can still take entrance exams at 11 years old to try to get a place at a highly academic Grammar School) or in different sets in the same year group, for example in one year group you might have a top, middle and bottom set in mathematics. There is also a much larger private sector than in Sweden which results in far less mixing between the lowest and highest socio-economic groups compared to Sweden, where sons and daughters of labourers may go to the same school as professors’.

The aims of this study are therefore to try to analyse the discourse in the UK and the Sweden and try to find answers to the questions

- do uniforms affect academic achievement in the UK?
- what are pupils/teachers’ perceptions of the effects of bullying and dress?
- how much time do teachers spend correcting dress and what are pupils/teachers’ perception of this?
what do pupils/teachers think is good/bad about their current dress code?

what would the benefits be of changing to a stricter/less strict dress code?

are we producing 'docile bodies' or rebels by introducing dress codes and uniforms?

when teachers/schools enforce (middle class) dress codes are they actually creating a positive or negative learning environment and which group(s) of pupils does this benefit?

This paper is made up of a number of short studies. I will present my finding in the following way. Firstly, in order to understand where we are today, I will present a short history of school uniforms based on evidence from the literature. Then I will briefly outline the methods used. Then I will present results in order to answer to question: are academic results affected in English state schools that do have uniform compared to those that do not. Secondly I will present results from a perception study from a Scottish High School and will attempt to see what pupils think of their school uniform and which social groups benefit from uniforms. Finally, I will present results from interviews in Sweden where pupils, teachers and head-teachers present their perceptions of school dress codes and uniforms in order to analyse the discourse in Sweden. I will finish by presenting a discussion and some conclusions of this study.
History of school uniforms

In order to understand today's discourse, it is necessary to understand the history of school uniforms. To a large extent, this section is based upon Brunsma's book *The School Uniform Movement and What it Tells Us about American Education* (Brunsma, 2004).

If we go back to the Hellenic era, school children wore no uniforms. The first recorded use of uniform school dress was the *cappa clausa*, instituted in 1222 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury and is a sleeveless, roomy cloak which goes down to the feet.

*The school uniform in England has had a long tradition in both university and primary school and is steeped in symbolic imagery of class and social status, as a piece of material culture acting as a marker of class and social structure.* (Brunsma, 2004, pp 4)

Uniforms originated, according Brunsma, in the 16th century when administrators at Cambridge university wanted to keep fashion out of academia. Students at the time wanted to express themselves by wearing the *in* materials such as silk and lace as well as wanting to flaunt a variety of flashy colours. However these fashions were a contrast to the uniform that they were meant to wear: a long robe with a skullcap (a type of hat). Graduates, those who had passed their undergraduate studies, were allowed to wear a different type of cap, but ruffles and linen shirts were scornfully looked upon. Brunsma writes that even though the University attempted to impose strict uniforms and dress codes, students still managed to wear what they wanted to. (Ibid, pp 4)

According to Davidson and Rae (Davidson and Rae, 1990) the model for school uniform in Britain, and subsequently the United States, is based upon Christ's Church Hospital in the 16th century. The “cassock-like cloaks” which children were forced to wear were designed to mark out those coming from a lower class, something which is contrary to current debate where uniforms are meant to be a leveller of class difference. Those who wore these cassocks were the charity children – not those from the well-off classes. 100 years later, breeches were added to the cassock.
The role of uniforms, according to Myers (Myers, 1963), was to encourage docility and obedience towards “the rightful authority”. In the UK and the USA, however, the uniform would become a status symbol for those families who had enough money to send their children to private and elite public schools. Therefore uniforms in Britain have been used as a social marker, either to label the poor, in the case of Christ's Church School, or a sign that you are very affluent or clever.

Another reason, according to Brunsma, why uniforms were enforced was to instil a sense of a group feeling upon the working classes, diluting any feeling of individuality and class expression. The unwritten message was, he writes, that you are all the same, you will do your duty and take your place in the industrial machine. Brunsma notes that even by wearing a pair of jeans, showing your belly-button or, in the case of Swedish children, wearing a woolly hat or wearing your jacket indoors, that you are following society's uniform. Even though individuals think that they are in charge of their own styles in reality they are not since they adhere to a greater society, a thought in line with Foucault who rejects the idea of the self-governing subject (Danaher, 2000).

Davidson and Rae (1990, pp 25) write that school uniform in England may represent an “unseen, insidious, mode of social control”. By not following the uniform it was seen as diverging from the values held by the institution and therefore punishable by sanctioning procedures. In terms of Foucault one can divide up those who followed the uniform as being 'good' pupils and those who did not follow the uniform as being 'bad' pupils. The sanctioning procedures were highly influenced by the disciplinary techniques taken from the prisons (Danaher, 2000, pp 53) and school is one of the four Foucaultian disciplinary sites along with the prison, the army barracks and the workshop.

Synott and Symes (1995) also comment that despite the idea that within schools uniforms would get rid off class differences, each school would have a different uniform – different styles, different emblem – meaning that differences between schools remain. In fact this is still relevant and it is not uncommon in the UK for boys to get beaten up when walking out of the school gates by pupils from a rival school and therefore some politicians advise children to change out of uniform when then leave school each day (Clark, 2008).
Brunsma notes that much like the days in the 16th century, in the 1900s there was often rebellion against the traditional uniform. A classic case is from 1972 when 18 Eton students were disciplined when going to town in “hippie” clothes (Eton school boys were meant to wear their black top hats and tails both on and off campus, but often did not).

School uniforms did disappear for a short time after the Second World War due to a lack of material. The Free Speech Movement in the UK and the USA led to a change in regulations concerning student dress and grooming and even though UK parents are mostly in favour of uniforms due to their durability and cost-effectiveness, Brunsma argues that their tradition and symbolic capital have mostly been abolished. In the early nineties some public schools in England, such as Ampleforth and Wellington, demanded little more than casual wear without academic or social standards suffering due to the deregulation (Davidson and Rae, 1990) (however looking at these schools websites in 2009 they have both gone back to a more traditional uniform/dress code). In the United States of America, uniform policies were introduced in order to deal with the rise in increasing violence in schools, something that Bill Clinton talked about in his State of the Union Address in 1996.

*I challenge all our schools to teach character education, to teach good values and good citizenship. And if it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear school uniforms.* (Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address, 1996)

In recent years, at least in the UK, there is a move back towards a more traditional uniform in many state schools and many schools have opted to bring back the blazer as part of school uniform. The UK government has also recently published a policy paper which encourages schools to adopt a school uniform policy and states a number of anecdotal arguments for introducing uniforms. Another current issue regarding school uniform and dress codes regards symbolic clothing in schools i.e. clothing carrying racial or political statements or Muslim headscarves (Gereluk, 2009). The ways in which countries and schools have decided to deal with these issues is varied. France, due to their strong tradition of the separation of the church and the state (laicité) introduced a carpet ban of the niqab, whereas in the UK each individual school has been left to decide its own rules – often leading to stricter dress codes and uniform policies.
We argue that since school is a middle class arena the defining of school uniforms, at least in the UK, is an attempt by administrators and school leaders to increase pupils’ cultural capital and the impose middle class habits upon all children, despite the fact that not all pupils are receptive to these actions.
**Method**

This study uses a variety of methods: a quantitative comparison of UK school data from 2007, a quantitative comparison of pupils' perception of their uniform in one UK (Scottish) school and a series of qualitative interviews with teachers and pupils at four state run schools in Sweden.

In Sweden the four schools are based in a medium sized town in the South of Sweden. One school is for pupils attending grades 7 to 9 (compulsory education, children aged 13-16 years) and the three other schools are for pupils attending grades 10-12 (optional Further education, 16-19 years). These schools will be referred to the Swedish High School (SHS) as the Swedish Sixth Form College 1, 2 and 3 respectively (SSFC1, SSFC2, SSFC3).

The UK school chosen was a High School in Southern Scotland where the number of pupils who receive free school meals (a measure of the poverty in the area) was low (~5%) compared to other areas of the country. This school did have a uniform but with a comparative amount of freedom.

More time was given in order to collect empirical data in Sweden and the results below are based upon approximately 40 interviews with teachers, headteachers, a school welfare officer (*kurator*) and pupils (aged 15-19).

Regarding the interviews, I followed the ethical rules laid down by the Swedish Research Council and made it clear to participants that there answers would be made anonymous, that they could refuse to answer a question, and that they could stop at any time.
**Results**

*A Comparison of GCSE pass rates for English schools with and without School Uniforms*

As has previously been shown in the literature from the USA (Brunsma, 2004), wearing a school uniform does not improve academic achievement. I chose to attempt to conduct a similar study using data from the UK’s Department for Children, Schools and Families from January 2008. The aim of this short quantitative part of the study is to find an answer to the question: *is there any significant difference in academic achievement of UK state schools that do or do not have school uniforms?*

I have removed all independent and selective schools from the Department’s data set in order to be able to compare schools on a fairer basis. The sample covers in 343 schools in total and of this sample only 8 schools (2%) do not have uniform policies.

In the UK education system, GCSE stands for the General Certificate of Secondary Education and is a qualification which almost all pupils take at the end of year 11 (after 11 years of compulsory education). GCSEs are available in a number of subjects; however the most common are English, mathematics and science. It is unfair only to compare GCSE pass grades since schools in the UK differ as regards pupil background therefore the contextual value added (CVA) score is introduced. CVA compares pupils progress between Key Stage 2 and 4 and accounts for pupils' social background (gender, ethnicity, special educational needs, first language eligibility of free school means, a postcode-based deprivation measure to name a few). Comparing the CVA score allows to compare schools on a fairer basis.
Table 1: Percentage of pupils (per school) attaining five GCSE examinations grades A* to C and CVA values. Averages and standard deviations (SD) are given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5 GCSEs A*-C</th>
<th>CVA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All schools in study</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>1000.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Uniform Schools Only</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>996.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform Schools Only</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>1001.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly one must be very careful interpreting the data since a) there is an extremely small number of schools that do not have uniforms, and b) the choice of school districts (LEAs) is not representative of the whole country (In 2007 there were 3343 secondary schools in England according to the Department for Children, Schools and Families).

The results of the findings show that, looking at GCSE pass rates, non-uniform schools achieve slightly better than the uniform schools in the study, however these results are not statistically significant. If we compared CVA scores then non-uniform school pupils perform slightly worse looking at the CVA score compared to uniform school however these results are also not statistically significant. Therefore this evidence points to the fact that there is no statistically significant difference between the academic achievements of schools that do have uniforms and those that do not. This is regardless of whether we look at GCSE pass rates or CVA score. Again we must stress that the small size of these samples means that this conclusion cannot be generalized. These findings are consistent with those of Brunsma and Rockquemore (1998) for their study of US schools.
Scottish Pupils Perception of their Uniform

A study trip was conducted to a Scottish High School during November of 2009. An anonymous survey was filled in by all those in S4 (15 year olds) who attended school that day, therefore these results can be said to be representative for that year group, but not the country in general.

The school has a uniform policy, but there was a degree of flexibility. Regarding trousers, the uniform policy required them to wear either tailored trousers or skirts (girls). The trousers should be dark in colour. Regarding clothing worn on the top half of the body, pupils could EITHER wear a white shirt and school tie OR a polo shirt with the school logo on (four colours to choose from). If the tie option was chosen there was also a V-neck jumper (three colours) with the school logo on that pupils could wear. If the polo-shirt option was chosen then there was also a sweat-shirt with the school logo that could be worn together with this.

The school also had a dress code that is a list of clothes that are not allowed to be worn. Items that were not allowed to be worn were: hooded tops, jogging bottoms, and jeans.

All pupils were in year group S4 (15 to 16 year olds) and the sample was 50% male and 50% female. In order to group the pupils into categories, pupils were asked if their parents had been to primary school, secondary school, college or university. I have categorized pupils into their parents' highest education level (i.e. If their mother went to university and their father went to secondary school then the highest education level of either their parents would be higher education). 30% of pupils had one or both parent whose highest education level was Higher Education (group C), 42% of pupils had one or both parents whose highest education level was Further education (group B) and 28% of pupils had one or both parents whose highest education level was Secondary education (group A).

Despite knowing that the school had a uniform policy I thought it might be interesting to see how pupils themselves perceived their school's policy. In answer to the question: Does you school have a dress code or uniform, most pupils replied that there was a uniform, but there was some freedom. 64% of group A pupils answered that the school has a strict uniform/dress code
compared to group B and C pupils who mostly answered that yes there is a uniform, but there is some freedom (see Figure 1 below) (67% and 71% respectively).

![Figure 1: Does your school have a dress code/uniform?](image)

Pupils were asked what they liked best about their uniforms (Figure 3). The most common pupil response (they could write freely and the results have been interpreted by the author) was that they liked the fact that there was some freedom of choice in their uniform. However, group A and B pupils were more likely than group C pupils to think that nothing was good about their school uniform. A minority of pupils thought that the best thing about uniforms was that they decreased competition or decreased bullying.
Figure 3: What is best about your school uniform?

Likewise pupils were asked what was worst about their school uniform (Table 2). A number of observations can be made here. Group A and B pupils thought that the equal worst thing about the uniform was simply the fact of wearing uniform or the fact that you can't wear what you want. Whereas group C pupils were not so concerned about the uniform, but the worst thing for them was not having freedom to choose what they want to wear themselves.

Table 2: What is worst about the school uniform/dress codes and why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A – secondary</th>
<th>B – further</th>
<th>C – higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of variety/can't wear what you want/the look everything</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of variety/can't wear what you want</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some of it, but not all</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nothing</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the arguments used to enforce uniforms is that they are the great leveller erasing all class and other social differences. The question was posed: If you wear school uniform, does it make you feel more or less equal to others in your class? The results are very interesting (Figure 4). Firstly it was more common for pupils to reply, ‘No, it makes very little difference,’ or ‘No, it makes little difference,’ rather than, ‘Yes, I feel a little more like an equal,’ or ‘Yes, I feel much
more like an equal’. It was more common for group A pupils to think that uniforms did not make any difference in making them feel more like equals compared to group B or C pupils (82% of group A compared to 64% group B and 68% group C replied either No, it makes very little difference or No, it makes little difference). However the majority of pupils still thought that uniforms did not make them feel more equal to others in their class compared to outside of school.

Figure 4: If you wear school uniform, does it make you feel more or less equal to others in your class.

It is also interesting to see how many pupils chose to customise their uniform since according to Swain were there is a relaxed uniform there can arise conflict between pupils who create their own rankings of e.g. trainer shoes. Firstly according to Table 3 it was more common for group A and B pupils to customise their dress compared to group C (9 out of 24 group C pupils did not customise their dress whereas 2 out of 22 and 3 out of 33 pupils in group A and B respectively did not customise their dress). According to Table 3 it is most common that pupils' shoes are the things that they customise most often. This was more common amongst group A and B pupils (68% and 79% respectively) compared to group C pupils (38%). Note that the schools written dress code policy does not outline which type of shoes which should be worn. Other common
ways to customise their dress were: wearing the tie differently and wearing a shorter skirt. Less common ways of customising dress were: wearing non-uniform clothes, wearing designer label jumpers instead of school logo jumpers, wearing tracksuit bottoms, and wearing jeans. One pupil (in group C) commented that you can't customise the uniform.

Table 3: What part of the uniform do you customise?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customisation</th>
<th>A – Secondary</th>
<th>B – Further</th>
<th>C – Higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wear trainers/other shoes instead of proper shoes</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear the tie differently</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear a shorter skirt</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear a non-uniform cardigan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear a designer label jumper</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear a hat/baseball cap, t-shirt</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear tracksuit bottoms</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear jeans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wear a different school jacket and shirt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can't customize it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also interesting to find out how much time teachers spend correcting pupils dress since teachers have only a limited amount of time in order to teach pupils and therefore time given to disciplining pupils is taken from teaching time. Figure 5 shows pupils’ responses divided into social groupings. It was most common for group A pupils to reply that teachers told them off once a day, whereas the most common response from group B and C pupils was that teachers told them off hardly ever. This is interesting since according to the responses from the previous question a similar number of group A and group B customise their dress i.e. they should give the teacher reason to discipline them on the grounds that they are not wearing the correct dress. But responses from this question show that it is more common for group A pupils to perceive that they get told off more often compared to group B. Therefore there is a slight tendency for teachers to correct the dress of those from the lowest social group compared to the other two however whether this a conscious decision or not is left unanswered however this is something that teachers should be made aware of. This can be compared to the results of Morris (Morris,
2005) who showed that teachers corrected the dress of pupils from the minority groups more often that those from the middle classes.

![Figure 5: How often does the teacher tell you/others off for not wearing the right clothes to school/class?](image)

Related to this question is whether pupils' opinion is that teachers should discipline them more or less because of their dress. The results to the question are shown in Figure 6. The observation made from the previous question, i.e. that teachers discipline group A pupils more, should mean that pupils in group A would be more likely to think that teachers should correct their dress less than they do currently and that group B and C pupils are not as bothered. This is not quite the case if we look at Figure 6. 50% of group A pupils compared to 59% of group B pupils replied that teachers should attempt to correct their dress less than they do today. Group C pupils seems happy with the situation since a slightly higher percentage of group C pupils do not want teachers to discipline them more of less as regards their dress code.
Regards bullying the question was posed: Is it common for pupils to bully other pupils because of what they wear to school. The results, shown in Figure 7, are that it is not common for pupils to bully others because of what they wear to school. One cannot conclude from this data whether this is due to the uniform or if it is due to other factors at the school i.e. anti-bullying policy. The results for groups A, B and C are similar.
Figure 7: Is it common for pupils to bully other pupils because of what they wear to school?

As a follow-up to this question, pupils could specify how pupils get bullied because of what they wear (Figure 8). The most common ways to bully pupils because of what they wear (despite there being a uniform policy) was indirect forms of bullying i.e. laughing behind their back, name-calling, pointing and whispering. (Note that pupils could tick more than one answer there the totals are more than the total number of a group of pupils.)

Figure 8: How do pupils get bullied because of what they wear to school?
In the discourse it is thought that bullying will decrease/disappear if uniforms were introduced. There are of course other ways that pupils can bully their peers. The question was posed: Do pupils get bullied for other reasons than what they wear to school? The results are shown in Figure 9 below.

![Figure 9: Do pupils get bullied for other reasons than what they wear to school?](image-url)

It was more common for pupils to give an answer to this question rather than replying that no bullying occurred due to reasons other than dress. Most common amongst pupils in group A was that pupils bully other pupils because of what they look like. Another common response was that they get bullied for being shy/quiet. It was more common for group B and C pupils to reply that pupils get bullied for not being intelligent. Conversely, it was also quite common for pupils to get bullied because they were intelligent. A minority of pupils answered that pupils get bullied by their peers because of their skin colour, because of their origin or being different.

Pupils were also asked how much they or their parents spent on clothes for school and clothes for non-school use, however many pupils did not know the answer to this question therefore I choose not to take it up here.

Pupils could give a final comment at the end of the survey. 9 Group A, 14 group B and 8 group C pupils decided to leave an extra comment.
Table 4: Final comments from Scottish S4 school children. Number in brackets indicates number of pupils who gave the same comment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A     | Negative responses  
Don't like it. We should wear what we want.  
I think we should wear what we want to school. Getting school clothes costs more than it would to wear your own clothes.  
it's not very good  
The uniform is rubbish  
Not having to wear uniform would be good  
This school should not have a uniform. Pupils should be able to wear what they want.  
indifferent  
Everything is okay apart from the trousers.  
positive comments  
it's good  
other  
We should get new school uniform with cool colours. |
| B     | Negative  
uncomfy  
it's rubbish  
Grey cardigans should be allowed. No ties. The t-shirts are stupid.  
I hate uniform  
I think that we should wear what we want all the time (4)  
Think we should get to wear what we want more often  
We should not have to wear a uniform because nobody does anyway.  
indifferent  
I don't really care about school clothing but it would be better to wear what we want. It's not that bad. You have a bit of freedom and you don't have to worry about what you wear everyday.  
it's okay (2) |
| C     | negative  
don't like it (2)  
school uniform should be neater  
I hate uniform and think that we should wear what we want  
it's not good  
indifferent  
I don't mind the uniform that much  
It would maybe give the pupils more freedom if we had more non-uniform days |
positive
It's fine as it is. No discomfort, cheap, reliable, good quality. They're good

It was more likely for those with negative attitudes towards uniform to leave an extra comment. One pupil in group A adds that they think that it is an extra cost buying uniform on top of other clothing expenses something that will be reflected later on by Swedish students perceptions.

Summary of results from Scotland

The results form this study shows that there is still a significant portion of pupils who are not happy with wearing the uniform because it restricts their personal freedom despite the existence of a relaxed uniform policy. Pupils from lesser educated backgrounds do not feel that the uniform makes them more equal to their peers compared to pupils from better educated families. Pupils coming from lower educated families are more likely to perceive that teachers tell them off more often compared to pupils from higher educated backgrounds and also pupils from lower educated backgrounds also think that teachers should spend less time correcting their dress compared to pupils from better educated families. Despite one of the arguments for uniform being that it will reduce bullying it is clear from this study that bullying due to pupils' dress is still present although it is not common. Pupils also get bullied for reasons other than their dress, backing up the hypothesis that bullying will never go away just by putting pupils in uniforms.

This data show that for this school, uniform appears to appeal more to pupils from a middle class (better educated parents) background than those from lower classes who are less happy with the school uniform. The question arises, since these pupils are also more likely to come from a background which is anti-school, does enforcing a uniform actually help to re-enforce pupils' anti-school attitudes and therefore decrease their academic achievement which is contrary to the ultimate goal of uniforms: increasing equality and academic achievement?
Swedish Teachers and Administrators Opinions of Pupils' Dress

Results from the qualitative interviews with Swedish teachers and administrators are presented below under a variety of headings which are organised according to the discourse. My study started off with interviewing teachers therefore it is logical to present these results first.

Sexualised Dress

The greatest problem amongst teachers at the SHS was with girls who clothed themselves with tops that showed off their bust and/or wore short skirts. According to the headteacher of SHS if this happened pupils could be sent home and asked to change their clothes and their parents would then be called to a meeting. The headteacher said that parents' opinions differed greatly. Some would sympathise with the pupil whereas some would sympathise with the teachers. The reason that the headteacher, and other teachers complained was because the boys could not concentrate on their studies in class if girls wore clothes which were too revealing. In one case a girl came to school and changed during the course of the day into a t-shirt showing off her bust with a provocative text on the front. The girl was sent home and the event did not happen again.

Regarding a sexualised dress code, a current trend amongst Swedish boys is to wear jeans which hang down over the backside revealing both their backsides and their boxer shorts (preferably designer label). In Swedish they call this "häng" or "the hang", but it was not regarded as a problem or something teachers would try to correct, even though one could say that these boys would like to provoke a reaction amongst girls, similar to the actions of girls in the previous paragraph.

Interestingly enough, a very recent Swedish study (Skolfront, 2009) showed that 70% of teachers think that pupils in Sweden dress themselves in a sexualised way and of these 60% think that this is a problem. But, when asked whether schools should have a dress code (banning sexualised dress) 60% were against introducing a dress code.
So what can be said about teachers’ opinions of pupils’ sexualised dress? It is interesting to note that teachers seem to mildly discriminate against girls’ dress rather than boys even though it could be said that boys, by wearing their trousers down and showing their boxer-shorts, are also out to provoke a reaction. Why is this so? I believe the answer has a number of sides to the story. One could be that teachers are consciously or sub-consciously trying to prepare girls for the world of work whereby most often it is not allowed to wear clothes which are too revealing. Another reason could be that teachers are, maybe unconsciously, trying to redress the trends of modern commercial fashion culture (through TV shows such as Pop Idol etc.), whereby young girls are meant to show off their bodies. Thirdly this could be due to a parental-like protection from teachers who think that girls who dress in an overtly sexual way could be putting themselves at risk when leaving school. Instead of only punishing the girls, one alternative route would be to discuss the issue of sexualised dress in a whole class group, together with boys, in order to share the responsibility rather than blame only one group.

**Designer Labels**

One argument in the current discourse in Sweden for introducing uniforms would be to reduce the pressure on those pupils who do not have the money to buy designer clothes. The question arises, how heavy is the pressure to wear designer clothes in Swedish schools where no such restrictions regarding designer labels exist?

In the SHS the opinion amongst teachers was that this trend comes and goes and some classes are worse than others. Whilst at SHS the headteacher was keen to show me the school photo album where he meant you could see the year when big labels on sweatshirts were all the trend. Some teachers meant that parents from well-off backgrounds would buy their pupils designer clothes as a status symbol of their own wealth. I asked a teacher whether any pupils brought up this point with them. His reply was that roughly once a year he would have a pupil come up to him and explain that other pupils had commented that they [the pupil] didn't have designer jeans on. The teachers’ response to this was, "There's nothing wrong with you. It's their problem" to which the pupil would reply, "Yeah, I know." This method of shifting the blame is okay, however I think that such issues could also be dealt with on a whole class level.
Another problem with the designer clothes issue is that a few years ago this resulted in a series of thefts from the sports hall changing rooms of SHS. The value of those symbolic items was such that other pupils would break the law in order to be in possession of these clothes. [These thefts were never reported by the school but were dealt with internally]. The school welfare officer confirmed this picture by comparing with another school where pupils would have to take all their clothes and put them at the side of the sports hall to avoid theft. This picture of designer clothes being of such high value that they are stolen by other pupils can be compared to the situation in some schools in the USA where there has been at least one reported case of a pupil who shot another pupil because they wouldn't give him their designer sunglasses.

In the SHS, the welfare officer meant that the high proportion of pupils who wore designer clothes was a reflection of the middle-class catchment area. One problem that she highlighted was the culture shock that occurred in year 7 when pupils from another catchment, predominantly low-income or immigrant, would came to SHS where pupils predominantly came from better-off backgrounds. She meant that it must not be easy if these immigrant children were invited to see how doctors' children lived and see that it would be completely different from their own home situation.

No teachers or administrators took up that the issue of designer clothes coupled with social class on the whole class level. Upon reflection, I believe that this has in part to do with the taboo which exists around discussing issues of personal or family wealth in public and even if pupils are aware of these differences they are never discussed openly in the class with an adult present. I believe that by discussing openly issues such as this, pupils can be more aware of the situation and therefore maybe increase their self-awareness. Teachers should teach pupils how to improve their self esteem and not compare themselves with others. I believe that this could help do away with many of the problems surrounding bullying and thefts due to differences in clothing.

*Sixth Form College Teachers attitudes towards pupils' dress*

Most teachers I spoke to seemed to be quite tolerant of pupils' clothing, however teachers (as well as pupils as we will see later) thought that dress codes varied depending on which school you taught at. One female teacher at SSFC1 meant that it was okay for girls to come dressed in
tracksuit bottoms and a sweatshirt top which she thought was not tolerated in SSFC3. She thought that at SSFC3 there was a formal dress code amongst female pupils which meant they had to dress up more formally and tracksuit bottoms were not allowed.

*Summary of teachers’ attitudes towards pupils dress*

We have seen from teachers’ responses that the subject of pupils’ dress is not regarded as a big issue. Even though they may choose to correct pupils’ dress by telling them to take off their jackets and hats in class, it is not a major issue. The issue seems greater at High School (13-16 year olds) rather than Sixth Form College which could be due to increased maturity of the pupils. The problems were: pupils whose dress is too overtly sexualised and the pressure to buy designer labels (in some cases). In my opinion, it is not enough to discuss these issues with just the individual pupil and their guardians, but this needs to be discussed on a larger level, maybe a class level, in order to increase self-awareness and strengthen pupils’ confidence. It could also be of such importance that it should be discussed with all the parents of the school.
Swedish Pupils’ Perceptions of School Dress Codes and Uniforms

I was interested in getting pupils’ opinions about the dress codes in their current school and, in the case of Sixth Form College students, their previous High School. I therefore conducted a series of interviews over a number of weeks in order to gauge the opinion of High School pupils and Sixth Form College pupils.

The first question I posed to pupils was to describe what they wore to school that day and why they chose it. In the class of Swedish 8th graders who I interviewed (15 year olds), it was common for boys to wear trainers, jeans, t-shirt and in some cases a jumper. A few of the boys had jogging bottoms instead of jeans. None of the boys wore a collared shirt and most who wore a jumper wore a sweatshirt as opposed to a v-neck jumper. No pupils wore a tie. Amongst girls there was slightly more variation. Most girls also wore trainers, jeans or leggings, a top and a jumper. It was more common for girls to wear accessories than boys, although a common accessory amongst both boys and girls was a mobile phone with earphones showing. Only one girl in a class of twenty-five 15 year-old pupils had an expressed style. Most pupils chose to wear the clothes that they had put on either because they were comfortable or because they looked good. A couple of pupils said that they chose to wear those clothes because they were the ones that were clean. One boy wore a pair of jogging bottoms with a football club logo because he was a fan of that club. Regarding designer labels there were very few, if any, High School pupils who mentioned that they wore labelled clothes, even if they actually did in practice.

However in the Swedish Sixth Form Colleges it was obvious that a greater proportion of those that I interviewed, who were chosen at random, had an explicit style. One weakness of the study was that in the Sixth Form Colleges relatively few males were interviewed, but of those who were, two were in the school sports team and proudly sported their team training top and trousers. These boys also followed the schools’ (Social Science) Sports programme. Another boy on the Social Science international programme had what he called ‘British casual culture’ clothes and had a collared shirt on. The other boys did not have a specific style and wore mainly trainers, jeans, t-shirt and jumper. However just from walking around SSFC1 and from previous experience it is common for boys at Swedish Sixth Form Colleges to wear outdoor jackets and
beanie (woolly) hats in the corridor, in the dining hall and also in classroom (until the teacher tells them off). Amongst the girls at Sixth Form College there was a self-uniform depending on which programme you attended. Those girls on academic programmes tended to wear clothes than were in fashion and could be bought on the high street. There was seldom a girl on these preparatory programmes that diverged from this self-uniform. Most of those girls also wore jewellery and a modest amount of make-up. One girl on the Natural Science programme however did not wear as much make-up and wore a woolly jumper instead of a tight-fitting top and expressed that she saved her money for the future more than before. Of those girls who had a style that diverged from the current modern fashions, some had ‘rock’ or ‘punk’ styles. These girls were on the Media programme at SSFC1 and the Nutrition programme at SSFC2 respectively. SSFC2 also had a Child Care programme, however I did not manage interview any of these female pupils but from teachers’ opinions it was not uncommon for these girls to come dressed in clothes that were more provocative i.e. short skirts and low-cut tops.

I also asked pupils how much they spent on clothes. In Sweden up until you go to Sixth Form College, every parent receives a grant per child, however this grant is less for each increasing number of children in the family. When entering Sixth Form College this grant is no longer given to the parent instead the grant is a study grant which is given directly to the pupil. However if the student is absent from school then this grant decreases. Even when in High School, many parents choose to give all of the grant to the child so that they can buy their own clothes and manage other expenses. It was less common for High School children to work extra in order to pay for their expenses but there were a couple that worked part-time. At Sixth Form College it was common for pupils to work part-time in order to help pay for clothes, amongst other things, and it was common for pupils to work over the summer holidays.

The results of my observations and from pupils’ responses about what they wear and why they wear them show that Swedish pupils choose the clothes they wear mainly because they are comfy or because they look good in them. Many, particularly girls, said that they followed current fashions and bought their clothes in high-street stores. It was more likely that pupils in Sixth Form College had found their own style compared to the High School which is likely coupled to increasing maturity and also to the fact that by Sixth Form College, all pupils receive an earmarked grant which they use to spend on the clothes.
Schools in Sweden do not have a uniform as I stated before, but the majority of schools do have a dress code. Usually this means that they are not supposed to wear outdoor clothes in class and they are not allowed to wear symbols or messages that would incite racial or any other type of hatred. But what do Swedish pupils think about these rules? Among the High School pupils that I interviewed there were a significant number who disliked their schools’ dress code especially the rule about not having jackets on in class. In one group interview in SMS I asked the kids

**Sam:** What do you think about the school’s dress code for example the rule that you’re not allowed to wear outdoor clothes during lesson time?
**Linnéa** [female]: Bad. [**Erika** agrees: I hate it]. Y’know, it’s really cold [in the classrooms].
**Kevin:** It’s just an old rule which they don’t want to change.
**Erika** [female]: I don’t get it. What difference does it make if you have your jacket on in class or not? It doesn’t get in the way does it? Gloves I can understand because it stops you from writing.
**Linnea:** But you should be allowed to wear a jacket in class. We’re allowed shoes so I think that we should be allowed to wear a jacket. I mean we [girls] are allowed to have a scarf on, but boys aren’t allowed to wear baseball caps.
**Sam:** How often do they tell pupils off [about their dress]?
**Linnea:** All the time.
**Erika:** Before the start of each lesson.
**Linnea:** [Imitates a teacher] “Take your jackets off. This rule you’ve heard a thousand times before”.
**Erika:** At least three times.
**Sam:** Do you think it would be better if they didn’t tell you off as much? Would there be more time for teaching?
**Kevin:** Sometimes they can go on about it for 10 minutes. [E agrees]
**Erika:** Now during winter it’s really cold in the classroom and I freeze if I sit still too long.

One reason why the pupils want to wear their jackets in class is because it is cold in class, a fact that was reflected in some of the interviews with mainly female pupils at SSFC1. Kevin thought that the rule was old and thought that the school didn’t want to change it. The pupils bring up the case that outdoor clothing ought to be allowed in class because it does not cause any interruption.

In other focus group at the Swedish High School the pupils argue in a slightly different vain.

**Sam:** What do you think of the school’s dress code?
**Hanna:** I think, like, that you should be allowed to wear a jacket if you want or even a hat, maybe not gloves because then it’s harder to write, but the other things maybe are a part of the outfit that you chose to wear that day. Maybe you thought a lot about which jacket to have on, but then you have to take it off [Hanna had a leather jacket on that day].
**Lovisa:** But it’s quite cold in school, they don’t put the heating on much, so you should be allowed to wear a jacket, but a hat …

**Hanna:** Maybe not in the canteen, but you maybe have a hat on, not because it’s cold in the classroom, but because it fits in with the rest of what you’re wearing that day.

In this conversation Hanna, who is clearly very conscious of how she dresses, defends the right to wear what you like to school because it seems important for her to put across her personality in the style of clothes she wears. Lovisa again comments on the fact that it is cold in school and therefore justifies the wearing of a jacket.

Hanna later goes on to justify the wearing of jackets in class with another argument.

**Hanna:** You don’t learn less just because you wear a jacket or a hat. If you’re sitting there freezing then you can’t concentrate as well so then it would be better to wear a jacket.

Hanna’s opinion is that a pupils’ learning could even be *improved* by wearing a jacket if they were so cold that they couldn’t concentrate. She also brings up the argument that you don’t learn less just because of what you wear, a discourse which was brought up by both teachers and pupils who I interviewed.

This issue of having jackets on in class was also a contentious one when I talked to some of the teachers at SSFC1. When walking around the school it was clear that it was mainly boys who liked to wear their jackets, at least when in the corridors. I interviewed two boys on the Construction programme in order to get their opinions, however these two students did not have jackets on indoors at that time which maybe does not make them typical of other students in the Construction programme.

**Sam:** What do you think about those who have their jacket on in class? Does it irritate you?

**Martin:** It is a bit irritating.

**Fredrik:** Mmm. The teacher usually tells us to take them off. For example today during a lesson, a pupil had a woolly hat and jacket on and he was told to take them both off. I don’t know if it irritates me that much, a little maybe. When you move around it makes some noise.

Contrary to Hanna’s opinion, Fredrik thinks that jackets do make a noise and therefore disturb others who are trying to work. However this was not seen as a major irritation.
Not all pupils were in favour of removing the rule about not wearing outdoor clothing in school. Here is an excerpt from the interview with two female pupils on the Media programme at SSFC1.

**Sam:** What do you think about the school’s dress code
**Ebba:** I’ve got into the habit that you’re not allowed jackets on in class, or hats, or gloves or scarf. I just seems like you’re on your way out of the room again [F agrees] and then maybe you stress the teacher [F agrees.]
**Fanny:** I mean, it looks comfier, more proper [without outdoor clothes on.] I mean, we’re indoors … it’s not particularly cold.
**Ebba:** The rules have been like ever since we were small.

**Sam:** The other pupils complain that it’s really cold in the classrooms.
**Ebba:** Some of the rooms are really cold.
**Sam:** But you put up with it, why?
**Ebba:** You get used to it. When you start working…
**Fanny:** I mean, you have to think about what you wear under your jacket so that you don’t just go round in a top when it’s cold so you only have yourself to blame.

These pupils did not see the issue of jackets in class as being a problem and Fanny even commented that it is to some extent the pupil’s personal responsibility to make sure that they are properly dressed before coming to school if they know it’s going to be cold in school, an opinion reflected by some of the teachers/head teachers that I spoke to.

But do all schools have the same attitude towards pupils dress? In this town which had three local council-run Sixth Form Colleges, I got the sense that things were different at the other schools (I had done my work experience in SSFC1, but had rarely set foot in the other two schools). I decided to go and interview pupils in both of the other schools to see what it was really like. In general In SSFC2 and SSFC3 the dress code issue did not seem as big a problem as in SSFC1. When at SSFC2, a common response from the pupils when I posed the question “Does your school have a dress code?” was “Do we have a dress code?” implying that the rules were very relaxed at these schools. Instead some SSFC2 pupils stated that teachers were more concerned with the level of music allowed on personal stereos or having food in class.

Whilst at SSFC3, one of the male pupils of the Social Science and Sports programme had an almost aggressive attitude to the wearing of beanie hats in class.

**Sam:** Does the teacher never tell you off for wearing hats in class?
**Ludvig:** I think that … When I see someone in class with a beanie hat on I just want to … just throttle him ‘cos it’s the worst thing I know is when someone’s wearing a hat on indoors.
Elias: Some of the teachers are a bit old-fashioned.

At SSFC3 a number of pupils mentioned that symbolic clothing was banned i.e. clothing that displays a political or religious message. Here is an extract from a one-to-one interview with a well-spoken boy who studied Social Sciences. His opinion was clear.

**Sam:** Are they are any rules regarding dress at this school?

**Alex:** None other than you’re not allowed to have racist symbols on or stuff. But I’m not sure to what extent it applies. I mean I have a necklace with the Hammer of Thor\(^1\) [He pulls out his necklace to show me.]

**Sam:** You’re not sure if you can wear it or not?

**Alex:** Nah. Some schools are like … Oh my god! He’s racist. But I’m not completely Swedish so that would be strange if they were to call me racist … At my previous school, one boy was about to be SSFCpended because he had a pentagram on some of his clothes. I think you should be allowed to wear symbols of different kinds.

**Sam:** Was it the teachers who reacted to the pentagram?

**Alex:** It was because one Christian kid had gone to the head because he was offended by it. I mean, you should be allowed to wear such symbols. And I think you should be allowed to wear the Swedish flag. It was also a bit like that at my previous school. If you wore a shirt with the Swedish flag, they thought you were racist or something. I don’t think that school should ban stuff like that because you should be allowed to wear whatever symbols that you like.

Alex had a clear opinion about wearing both religious and political symbols although he didn't give an in depth justification as to why he thought so. His opinion was implicitly that freedom of speech overrides the fact that other pupils might interpret this as being offensive although he didn’t state this explicitly.

In another focus group with three pupils from the (Social Science) International Programme at SSFC3, the issue of symbolic clothing also came up, however here the pupils had mixed opinions.

**Sam:** What dress codes are there at SSFC3?

**Ina [female]:** We don’t have any.

**Anton [male]:** Yes we do. You are not allowed to put out a political or racist message or put across your point of view [through clothing].

**Sara [female]:** But if you’re a member of a political party, are you not allowed to wear the party logo?

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\(^1\) At one time that Hammer of Thor was a symbol of Swedish nationalism
Anton: Yeah, you’re allowed the MUF [Swedish young conservatives] logo, but you’re not allowed to go around in a t-shirt that says People’s Front (folkfronten) because they are a neo-Nazi party who discriminate [against immigrants].

Ina: The Swedish national flag is not allowed either.

They go on to comment about unwritten dress codes and other symbolic clothing.

Sara: If you look at the unwritten or unseen rules then there aren’t too many of them. You get quite a lot of looks, like if you’re too scantily dressed [the others agree]. For short skirts without tights on … or stuff.

Ina: But it’s a moral issue, it’s doesn’t really have so much to do with school.

Sara: Here [In school] is such a big forum or how can I put it. There are so many people here that see you and maybe some dress themselves too daringly according to most people’s rulebook.

Anton: I was shocked yesterday when I say a girl in the canteen wearing a hooded top with loads of hash leaves on it with the words “Legalize it” on it. I reacted strongly because I don’t think you should be allowed to go round with a top like that … But [gets interrupted]

Sara: I dunno. I think that people should be allowed to say what they think [through their clothes]. I mean she wants to legalize hash, it’s not like that it’s harming anyone directly...

Anton: I don’t mean that she can't wear it, it’s just that I get a picture in my head of what that person is like, how they behave and it’s not something that attracts me in the slightest.

This conversation is interesting and reveals a number of things. Firstly Anton’s opinion is that all political and symbolic clothing is banned, however upon discussion with Sara they work out that you can wear some political symbols, for example badges pertaining to the mainstream political parties, however displaying racist or neo-Nazi messages would not be acceptable. We also find out that there are unwritten dress codes at this school as well as the ones that the school has written down which are implemented by the pupils themselves i.e. You can't wear short shirts without tights on. Anton’s opinion is that clothes that purvey a message regarding drug use should be banned but Sara thinks this should be allowed so long as it doesn’t hurt others directly.

It was interesting that it was only at this school, SSFC3, which mainly has students studying the social science subjects, the issue symbolic clothing was brought up. More research would be needed to assess whether this issue was almost important at schools that offered the other programmes of study.

As regards uniforms and dress codes, one of the aims of having a dress code or uniform is to improve pupils’ behaviour (Brunsma, 2004; Gereluk 2008 p. 4) and in this case the correct
behaviour is seen as following the schools dress code or wearing the uniform correctly. From observations and interviews with teachers, it is not uncommon for teachers to correct pupils’ dress by telling them off in the classroom, but it was less common for kids to get sent home to change their clothes. I was interested in the pupils’ opinions of the teachers’ actions in attempting to correct pupils dress in the classroom setting. One hypothesis would be that if a teacher spends too much time on correcting dress then time may be lost from actual teaching and also may disrupt other pupils in class. Although this is hard to test scientifically, it would be interesting to see what pupils thought teachers should do instead.

Most pupils I interviewed in the Swedish schools did not think it was a big deal, however there were a number of pupils who commented on teachers’ actions. In one focus group at SSFC1 a number of girls thought it annoying that teachers told pupils off all the time.

Sam: Was it irritating when the teacher pupils off all the time [for not obeying the dress code]? Would it not have been better with less strict rules at High School so that the teacher would have had more time for teaching?

Anita: I don’t think that I thought about it at all at the time, but how many times did we have to stop the lesson, you know, [imitates a teacher] “Take off your hat”, “no but I don’t want to”, “now take off your hat”, “Don’t want to”. It got to be annoying [another girl agrees] but we didn’t think about it much back then.

Karin: But now [at Sixth Form College] it would be really irritating if the teacher was to come and, you know, tell two different people to take off their hats. I would be really irritated by it now.

Lollo: No-one took off their hats when the teacher told them, but instead it just turned into a big debate.

This small conversation gives us a glimpse into what it was like for these girls during their years at their Swedish High school. These three girls all went to the same school where it seems that wearing a hat during the lesson was something that teachers tried readily to discipline. However it seems that, at least for some teachers, this was a battle that the teacher was always going to lose something that reminds me of Paul Willis’ (Willis, 1977) lads in Hammertown and in this case the question is whether those pupils turned into rebels rather than ‘docile bodies’ as in the language of Foucault.

In one of the other High Schools, SSFC3, we see what these pupils thought of teacher control.

Sam: Thinking back to High School, did teachers correct your dress more then compared to now if we think about the no-hat or jacket rules?
Sara: Yeah. Back then it was like, no woolly hats in class…
Ina: Yeah, we had this one good teacher in High School. She said “So long as get on with your work, do your homework and everything, then you can have your hats on in class.”
Sara: Sometimes the teachers would go on about it. It doesn’t really matter though. What difference does a piece of clothing make, really?
Anton: It does make a difference actually. Now at Sixth Form College, kids are much more mature generally speaking. I remember that it was common for pupils to steal each others hats and throw them around.

Anton then went on later to tell a story about he was once told off in High School for wearing a beanie hat in class which another boy had taken from him and thrown round the classroom. The hat-thrower had not been disciplined as hard as Anton, which Anton thought was unjust. The teacher told Anton that if he hadn’t have worn a hat in class then the situation would never have arisen which is the reason why Anton doesn’t think that hats should be worn in class.

In the above conversation Ina thought that her former teacher, who had a relaxed opinion on the wearing of beanie hats in class, was a good teacher. It could also have been that the teacher was good in other ways, but one thing is clear, the teacher made out their ground rules clearly in class so that all pupils were aware of what was acceptable and that the issue of wearing a hat in class was not a major one so long as pupils did their school work. This attitude that pupils can wear what they want in class as long as they don’t disturb others was also repeated by a number of teachers who I spoke to, showing that this was not a singular occurrence.

Another argument for introducing stricter uniforms is the claim that it would reduce bullying. As Gerelek suggests it would be almost impossible to conduct a study which empirically proves this (Gerelek 2008, p. 13). However I posed the question directly to the Swedish pupils "Do you think that bullying would be reduced by introducing a uniform?"

I will recount some of the pupils’ answers question but I must first introduce two terms to the reader: EMO and fjortis. When talking about pupils' clothing styles with pupils in the Swedish High School, it came clear that a common label to call those who looked different was either EMO (pron. e-mow) or fjortis (pron. fyour-tiss). EMO is the name given to a particular style of music and according to the pupils is someone who is seen as being: depressed, likely to commit self-harm and not having many friends. A fjortis (used mainly towards females) on the other hand
can be compared to the UK ‘bimbo’ or even ‘chav’. Both EMO and fjortis are styles which challenge the norm in Swedish school which is implicitly that you should dress appropriately and not try to draw too much attention to yourself, which both EMO and fjortis invariably do. As in the Swain study (Swain, 2002) calling other pupils names is a way of creating a social hierarchy within a group. In the Swain study, however, boys called other boys "gay" or "boff" as a way of marking their status as the dominant/hegemonic group. In the same way one say that Swedish pupils who call others negative names such as fjortis and EMO are marking themselves as the dominant/hegemonic group.

I will present some excerpts from the interviews in the following passages. This first one is from the Swedish Middle School.

**Sam:** One argument for having uniforms is that they would reduce bullying. What do you think about that? Would one still get called EMO or fjortis even if one wore a uniform?

**Alice:** Yeah but, it's to do with how you behave as well [someone else interrupts with: and what make-up you have on]

**Lovisa:** You can tell what someone's like even if they have different clothes on. Clothes is just what's on the outside.

These pupils hint that bullying because of what you wear might change, however these pupils think that you would get bullied anyway because of the make-up your wear or even just the way that you behave. It seems that these pupils think that bullying would take place even if uniforms were in place, something which was reflected in the results in the Scottish Study in the previous section.

In the Swedish Sixth Form Colleges some pupils thought that bullying due to clothing would be reduced more at High School compared to Sixth Form College. Here is a short extract from a conversation with two girls from SSFC1 studying Natural Sciences.

**Sam:** Would bullying be reduced if one introduced uniform?

**Amelia:** I don't think so, not at Sixth Form College at least, maybe lower down the school system perhaps when you're, y'know, really into labels and you've got to have the good labels. But now you dress however you choose and there's no bullying because of what other people wear. Sometimes you might see someone who's wearing sometime a bit strange or not that pretty, but it's not something that you say out loud.

**Doris:** But I know this private boarding School in Stockholm, Sigtuna, which has uniforms one day a week and my friends think it's okay. They kind-of think that
it's nice just having to get out of bed and jump into it [the uniform]. But then they also think it's cool to have your own style and buy your own clothes the other days of the week. They think it's a good balance.

The first girl thinks that bullying might be reduced at lower school where she means it was more common to be interested in designer label clothes. The second girl brings up the case of Sigtuna boarding school in Stockholm, one of Sweden's few fee-taking boarding schools, where pupils are happy to wear a uniform one day a week and highlights that it saves time in the morning having a uniform because you don't have to think about what you have to wear. However, according to Doris, pupils at Sigtuna like having the freedom to choose what they wear on the other days of the week.

Two more girls, also from SSFC1 but on the Media programme share their experiences.

**Sam:** If we were to go one step further, what would be good about having uniform?

**Fanny:** It's depends really. Cos if you were to have uniform then it's not really your personality you show ... you want to show who you are ... you can really tell a lot about what someone's like from what they're wearing and what style they have.

**Ebba:** And then you've got the positive aspect of uniform ... there will also be those who can't follow the fashions 'cos they've not got enough money and some get bullied because they don't have the clothes that are in fashion [F agrees] and then it would be better with ... [gets interrupted]

**Fanny:** You look down on those kind of people, like, most people do it anyway so in that way it would be good to have uniform because everyone would look the same.

**Sam:** Can you tell me a little more about that. It's interesting that you say that there are those who get bullied because they don't wear the right clothes. Have you experienced that here or was it mainly at your High Schools?

**Ebba:** It's all from experience, like, it's the way you look at others [F agrees]. But it's mainly people’s prejudices.

**Sam:** Does it happen now at Sixth Form College or was it mainly at High school?

**Fanny:** It was mainly High school [E agrees] come to think of it.

**Ebba:** I haven't noticed anything at this school. You can be whoever you want to be [F agrees]

**Sam:** Is it different at SSFC3?

**Ebba:** I have the feeling that at SSFC3 there are a lot of groups [F agrees], that you get strange looks if you come in comfy clothes [like jogging bottoms]. That's the feeling I get anyway.

**Fanny:** Me too.
Again these girls could see the positive and negatives of having uniforms. These girls agree that uniform would help in reducing bullying because pupils don't have enough money to follow the fashions however they see wearing a uniform as encroaching on the freedom to express their personality through their clothing. These girls have opinions about another school in town, SSFC3. They think that it is more likely that pupils set there own dress codes there and that you get looks for not wearing the 'right’ clothes.

A more blunt reaction towards uniforms was given by a boy at SSFC1 on the Mechanics programme. His reaction is that there would be resistance to such a rule, much like the one of Willis' lads.

Sam: If we think about uniform, do you think that it would decrease bullying?
Tobias: No I don't think so. I would just cause a lot of anger amongst pupils who want to have their own clothes and would therefore be forced to wear uniform. I can only think that it would be negative.

In another conversation with four girls at SSFC1 on the Natural Science programme, we find out how pupils were picked on because of their clothes.

Sam: Have you heard that people have been picked on because of the clothes they wear? I was talking with the kids from High school about designer label clothes. What do you do to those who didn't have any label?
Marie: At my old school it wasn't so much about labels, but it was more those who went around in black make-up and black clothes and, y'know, platform shoes. It was mainly those ones who got bullied.
Sam: How did they get bullied?
Marie: You maybe gave them a funny look. They didn't get the same welcome as others.
Lollo: Well I can say ... it wasn't that they got bullied but .... those who had the trousers pulled up over there belly-button.
Anita: During High School it was the fashion [for girls] to wear low cut jeans so those who wore high cut jeans looked funny 'cos it looks like they had a really flat bum ... or boys who had too tight trousers. They weren't so modern then, and you thought about it back then.
Karin: Back then you only thought about what was in fashion, not about any particular style. If it was in fashion, you had to wear it.
Anita: Yeah. It was like I don't think I really suited what I wore back then, but you wore it anyway. But I think that I've grown up.
Lollo: Now it's more acceptable to wear what you want to.
These girls did not mention that bullying was rife at Sixth Form College, something reflected in the other interviews; however it was not uncommon for kids to get bullied at High School for looking different or not keeping up with the fashion. It seems however that these girls think that they have matured and do not have to wear designer clothes just because everyone else does, instead they rather follow their style. A feature noted in this and other conversations is that when bullying due to clothes occurs it is more often indirect bullying i.e. getting strange looks, or talking behind the back, also a fact reflected in the Scottish study.

With a group of pupils on the (Social Science) Sports Programme at SSFC3 we got into a discussion about bullying.

**Sam:** If we think about bullying due to clothes, is it mainly indirect bullying?
**Elias:** I haven't noticed anything at this school. Maybe I've got tunnel vision
**Isabelle:** Well there's those who sit in the canteen all on their own. They don't belong to a group.
**Elias:** Girls are better at doing that [bullying] that guys. In the canteen they sit and say "Look at was she's wearing!". I know that here at SSFC3 that everyone looks at everyone, that's just the way it is.
**Linda:** Some people just don't have a life, they just sit there and ... they want to be in fashion and have the latest stuff but at same time they criticise others and try to get everyone to be the same.
**Ludvig:** And then if there was to be a girl who has dressed up to look good then they say "Look at what she's wearing. She looks like a right mmm mm..." [The two girls present agree] They're just jealous.
**Elias:** It's just a sign of insecurity if you have to put other people's clothes down [the others agree]
**Linda:** It's like, they don't have anything better to do.

Unlike the other Sixth Form Colleges it seems from this conversation that there is some bullying due to clothing going on at SSFC3 in that some girls gossip openly about others girls' clothes. This group that I interviewed, however, is not the group that does the bullying, instead they make negative comments about those who do bully others and think that it is a sign of insecurity of those who do the bullying and think that they do it because they have nothing better to do.

I also talked to another pupil, Robin, at SSFC3 in a one-to-one interview. Robin had been to High School which not many of the others had been to. His account of bullying due to clothing at High School is frightening.
Sam: Have you ever heard that someone has been picked on because of what they wear to school?
Robin: Yeah, maybe not so much at Sixth Form College, but at High School. Then it was more common to get bullied because of the style of clothes. At Sixth Form College there is bullying, but not so open, more talking behind their backs. You might say "how can they wear those clothes?"

Sam: How would people bully others back then [at High School]?
Robin: If you saw someone then ... how should I put it ... it was quite accepted back then. You would hear "fucking EMO", "fucking punk", "shit how ugly". You'd hear that quite often. Making fun of people cos of what they wore. In the end it turned in to bullying just because of the clothes they wore.

Sam: Would having a uniform make bullying go away or be less of a problem?
Robin: It would be less of a problem, at least at High School because you're not as mature then and you have a greater tendency to pick on others so it that sense bullying would be less if you make everyone look the same. But then the question is whether you would be happy in those clothes because your personal freedom would be less and you want to be able to have your personal freedoms.

Robin gives a vivid account of bullying at High School where it was common that pupils would get called names because of what they wore and therefore he thinks that bullying because of what you wear, at least at High School, would be less of a problem.

The pupils at SSFC3 also discussed the issue of uniform and bullying. In this case Ina thinks that bullying would not change if uniform was introduced.

Sam: Do you think that bullying would be changed if you introduced uniform?
Ina: I think that you'd just transfer all the stuff [bullying] on to other things, y'know. [Sara agrees]. It's hard to get rid of bullying completely.
Sara: I don't think that school uniform would help. I think that kids would just complain to the school and there would be a conflict.
Anton: If you think back to primary school then you would have to change uniform at least six times and then we can start talking about people not being able to afford clothes for school. I mean they say that at our school it costs a lot to take part in the activities [they have a mock UN assembly where they have to dress up in a smart suit/dress], but, I mean, it doesn't cost much to go to a second hand shop and buy a suit, or borrow your granddad's old one, but to introduce uniform, that would mean buying twelve school uniforms during your school years which can hurt very many people.
Sara: But we have had it like this for such a long time that it would be a big thing, but for those who have had it all the time I don't think they think about it.
Ina: If we had uniform and a pupil refuses to wear it, then it would be the pupil against the school and I think it would affect your grades.
Sara: What can you do to all those pupils who don't come to school in uniform? Shall we throw them out? It seems really stupid that you could be thrown out of school for not wearing the uniform.
Anton: In Sweden, we have quite a weak judicial system. We don't have very strong punishments. How would you deal with it? I don't think even a third of all those who went to this school wear it if they were to introduce a compulsory uniform. What would they do? Throw them all in prison?!
Ina: It would be discriminatory towards those who can't afford it.
Sara: It's just about clothes. I haven't done anything wrong so they couldn't punish me.
Ina: And all this about bullying, it would just be taken out on something else 'cos there's always going to be those that you like more and those you like less. It's hard to remove bullying completely but you can try to get people to accept you for who you are.

This long passage shows us a lot about what these young Swedes think about bullying and uniform in general. For one thing they think that introducing uniform might have an adverse affect in that poorer families might not be able to afford uniform, something that indeed is reality in the UK where the government has introduced guidelines regarding the cost of school uniforms (DfES, 2007, Guidance to Schools on School Uniform Related Policies). Ina is quite sure that bullying would still take place even if uniforms were in place and thinks that it's more about trying to get people to accept you for who you are instead of introducing uniform policy. This is an interesting viewpoint and one which not many of the other pupils have brought up. Ina shows a very mature attitude towards others' clothing.

Although it was not a major part of this study it is also interesting to see how pupils on the different programmes/schools saw themselves and saw pupils on other programmes or at other schools. Ambjörnsson (2003) studied two classes of girls attending a Swedish Sixth Form. Both classes were at the same school and in the same year of school. Ambjörnsson analysed their view of themselves and of the girls in the other classes and was able to define a normative feminism within these groups. According to Ambjörnsson girls in the S programme (Social Science) were more proper than girls in the BF programme (BF = Barn och Fritids = Child Care), and both dressed and acted more properly according to themselves and girls in the BF programme. The S girls were the normal ones according to both other pupils in the school and teachers.
One argument could be that by introducing uniform you would get rid of class differences. According to Bourdieu class differences are not only manifested in economic differences but in stratification due to: style, taste, social relations, physical body movements, who you hang out with, how you dress and what music you listen to (Ambjörnsson, 2003, pp 35-36)

In this study there was a clear view of pupils at both SSFC1 and SSFC2 that pupils at SSFC3 had more pressure on them to dress better than they themselves did. But pupils at SSFC3 did not think that this was necessarily the case, however there was some bad feeling between the different programmes within SSFC3. He is an extract from a group discussion with four pupils on the (Social Science) Sports programme at SSFC3.

**Sam:** How do the other pupils dress, the ones that go the other programmes?
**Elias:** The students on the (Social Science) International programme are a bit more snobbish.
**Ludvig:** They think that they are better than us.
**Elias:** Us sports students are seen as the dumb ones at this school.
**Ludvig:** We're the ones who are all muscles but no brain.
**Sam:** But is that really how it is?
**Elias:** No way
**Ludvig:** It's not at all true. But those on the International course they get good grades and they're the ones who want to get a good education. It seems like it's become a tradition here — They wear nice clothes. I don't think that they would ever come to school in clothes like I'm wearing now, tracksuit bottoms and top.

These two boys, who are on the Sports programme talk negatively about the students of the International course because they think that sports students are stupid. They also think that they wear nicer clothes and could never come to school in casual, sports clothes.

However upon interviewing a group of three students - Ina, Anton and Sara - from the (Social science) International programme a somewhat different view appears.

**Sam:** The picture I get from some other students is that your programme is a bit posher? Is that true?
**Ina:** I'm not, but maybe others are
**Sara:** I think that it's more an individual thing. I don't think that it has to do with which programme you follow. It's not like I think, oh god, now I've started on the International programme I've got to wear posh clothes.
**Anton:** I mean, pupils have got it into their heads that we are always perfect and that we get the best grades, but we just see ourselves as one in the crowd. It's not because we're on this programme that we can't wear jogging bottoms. [the others agree]
**Ina:** We're in year 3 now, but it was a completely different dress code in year 1. Back then everyone put more effort into their dress, I mean you can see it in the new first years now. There's also a difference in those who've come from the country into the city.

Later on in the conversation we touch on the idea of not being allowed to wear jogging bottoms, however Ina thinks that it's okay to do so, for practical reasons because she sometimes has sports in the afternoon so she comes in jogging bottoms in order not to have to bring too many changes of clothes to school.

Later on we come to the subject of the differences between schools.

**Sam:** The rumours about the differences between schools, what's you view on it?

**Sara:** I think it's all about prejudice. I mean SSFC3 is meant to be *fjortis* school and I can agree with them to some extent and I see some signs of this here. SSFC1 is more like, they've got more mechanics and construction programmes there [grunts a bit like a builder does] but they've also got natural science programmes and media people.

**..**

**Sara:** They're quite raw in some way. They seem more competitive than we are. We are the dumb ones who are all airy-fairy.

**..**

**Ina:** I think that the prejudices exist, but it's not how it is in reality. [Sara agrees] I mean you can come to this school in jogging bottoms, there's no-one who says you can't do that. You can wear jogging bottoms at those other two schools too, I know people who go to those schools who wear those clothes and we have those on Sports programme here who go round in jogging bottoms. But I know those who go mechanics programme at SSFC1

**Sara:** And at SSFC2 there are those on the Aesthetics course

**Ina:** And they've got Catering programme as well as Natural Science programme. And they think that we go around like snobs, a bit like that. But it's not like that in reality.

**Anton:** I think that, if you look at the numbers, our school there's more theoretical programmes and SSFC1 is more a practical school which can be seen in the style of clothes students wear. I think that pupils who go to SSFC1 are much more self-conscious. If you were to do a study of how many hours pupils spend in front of the mirror and how conscious you are about your clothes style then the figures would be shocking. It's just that we don't have the same type of people at each school.

**Ina:** I disagree.

**Sara:** I'm not sure.

**Ina:** I think that there are a lot of prejudices but that it's not like that in reality.

**Sara:** I think that it was probably more difference in the past. SSFC3 was much more theoretical and it's still the case that the practical programmes are mostly at
SSFC1 and SSFC2 but it's more mixed now. I don't think that there's a big difference any more. Maybe between some programmes.

**Anton**: If you were to line up 10 pupils from the different schools, you would never be able to tell them apart from what clothes they were wearing.

**Sara**: As long as you didn't take the extreme cases.

In this discussion you have Anton who thinks that pupils at his school do spend more time on how they look, whereas Ina thinks more that this is due to prejudices. Sara is sitting on the fence somewhat and thinks that it has probably changed over time.

In summary there seems to be a difference with the issue of clothing at Swedish High Schools compared to Sixth Form Colleges. In High Schools a common complaint from pupils is that they are not allowed to wear jackets in class due to the cold classrooms and one pupil even thinks that not being able to wear a jacket in class could lead to worse results. One pupil thinks that a good teacher is one who cares whether pupils get on with their work instead of telling pupils off for not wearing the correct dress in class. Other pupils who obeyed the rules at High School think that it was annoying that the teacher told off pupils so much during class time and that this was a battle that the teacher was going to lose. Those pupils who challenged the system were always going to challenge the system if you compare with Willis' lads.

Regarding uniforms, some pupils thought that introducing a uniform would reduce bullying, but that this effect would be greater at High School. However a number of pupils think that bullying will not go away, but that instead it would be targeted at other attributes. One pupil advocated understanding that we are all different and should be accepted for who we are. It was more common for pupils to think that uniforms would make pupils feel more equal to their peers, but again this effect would be greater at High School level where pupils are more aware of what others are wearing as regards designer labels etc. However some pupils argue that introducing uniforms will only increase the financial burden on the poorest families.

**Voluntary Uniform?**

In both schools, the Pupils' Union (*elevkåren*) or class representatives organised the sale of tracksuits tops and bottoms either with the name of the school or the name of the class printed on them in order to represent their school at sporting events. At SSFC1 it was not uncommon for
pupils to wear either the tracksuit bottoms or the sweatshirt to school. This is interesting since this could be seen as a kind of uniform, but one that is not compulsory and one which the pupils themselves have chosen and has nothing to do with the school telling them what to wear.
Discussion

Having presented these results I shall now discuss the future role of uniforms in schools. In this discussion I will try to draw on theory as well as my own experience from schools in the UK and Sweden.

*Uniforms as the great leveller*

When we talk about equality in our western society, one of the main debates is about minimising the gap between the rich and the poor, a gap which is much wider in the UK compared to Sweden\(^2\). The UK became more egalitarian after the Second World War, for example women were allowed to take a larger role in society in general. Also it became increasingly affordable for families to consume luxury items previously reserved for the richer classes. Still the UK remains a strong class-based society, one where wealthier families can pay for a good education where informal bonds are made which in the future can get you better jobs or important business deals. In state schools, it is not uncommon, as I have mentioned previously, to separate pupils due to their academic ability which can lead to an increasing feeling of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and can act to increase the class divide.

In Sweden, contrary to the UK, the Social Democrat movement has grown out of the strong trade union movement which flourished as more people moved from the countryside into the towns to work in factories. The trade unions are relatively strong and they sign collective agreements with employers whereby they negotiate wage deals and other benefits which give the employee stronger status. Employers that do not sign up to collective agreements with trade unions are shunned. The belief in the Swedish welfare state meant that schooling was made free for all early in the 1900s. In schools today, it is very uncommon for school children to be taught in different ________________

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2 According to the United Nations Development programme, Sweden has an equality index (GINI) of 25 whereas the United Kingdom has an equality index of 36. According to the GINI index absolute equality between the rich and the poor has a value of 0 whereas absolute inequality has as value of 100
sets according to ability (until Sixth Form College where the programme of study divides up pupils according to ability) and there has been an outspoken political movement for more pupils from non-academic backgrounds to attend university courses. There is also a folkloric law called *Jantelagen* (Tall Poppies Syndrome) which states that you should never try to be better than the next man or woman. All this has helped to create a more equal society compared to the UK.

However since the 1980s a much stronger market-based economy has arisen which can be seen in the rise of commercial television, deregulation of a number of areas in society and therefore an increase in the number of state-funded independent schools brought about by a reform in the early nineties. All this has helped to increase the role of the individual in society and to weaken the power of the trade unions. It is now more common in Sweden to see your fellow pupil/neighbour/company as a competitor rather than a member of the same team.

In conclusion one can say that the UK is a less equal society than Sweden. This begs the question, despite the fact that uniforms in school are more or less the standard, why is the UK not a more equal society than it is today? If we turn to Sweden, whose social democrat past has created a more equal society than in the UK, would uniform help to create an even more equal society than we have today? I believe the answer to this is no. I also believe that since Sweden is more equal than most societies young Swedes like to be able to express their differences between their peers through their clothes, and an attempt to change this could meet widespread unrest amongst school children.

*Are we producing ‘Docile bodies’ or Rebels?*

Will schools in the future produce a majority of ‘docile bodies’ as Foucault puts it, or a bunch or rebels, who reject the idea of school and therefore society and end up not being able to contribute productively to the society which we have created? If we look to the results of the surveys, interviews and from personal experience, even when uniforms and dress codes are introduced young people will always act to rebel against or challenge the rules of the institution trying to enforce these rules.
What can be done about this? Either the school can accept that there will always be a certain amount of variation and hold a pragmatic stance or schools can actively discipline and punish pupils. The first outcome can lead to, as Swain has shown, bullying whereby pupils make fun of others who do not have the ‘right’ clothes. This can be dealt with if the school is aware of the issue. I suggested that the teacher/school and take up the subject with pupils in class and deal with the bullies and the victims swiftly. It is also likely that there are social reasons as to why those who bully others do as they do and here greater collaboration is needed between schools, parents, pupils and other relevant organisations such as social services. However if schools choose the alternative route, i.e. punishing behaviour (lightly or severely) that deviates from the school’s dress code or uniform, this may in the end lead to an increase in anti-school feeling amongst those who do not follow the rules, i.e. those from less well-educated backgrounds, who are often those who tend to get told off the most. This discrimination against the lower-classes could lead to these children disliking school even more than they already do and therefore performing worse in school which could lead to increasing inequality instead of the opposite, which was the point of uniforms in the first place. Why do we want to increase pro-school attitudes? According to Brunsma it is precisely these attitudes that improve academic achievement amongst pupils (Brunsma, 2004).

I did not touch on the subject so much in my study, but there is also the question of pupil democracy involved in the school uniform issue. I am sure that school children in the UK are, in general, asked about the uniform they would like to wear to school. But when it comes down to it the governors’ decision is weighted more in favour of the parents who are in the end the ones who buy the clothes. In Sweden it seems from my interviews that already by grade 8 (15 years old) children have a greater say in what they wear to school because it was very common for the parents to pass almost all of the child benefit (roughly 1000 SEK or ~ £100 a month) directly to the child which empowers the child to decide which clothes they themselves want to buy. I believe if children go to school in the clothes which they choose themselves, they will perform better, something which could be the subject for further study. If one is to introduce a uniform policy, in my opinion, this must come from the pupils themselves and not from teachers, administrators or parents.
Conclusion

This short study has highlighted a number of different aspects regarding uniforms and dress codes both in the UK and Sweden.

Regarding whether uniforms improved academic results by comparing GCSE pass rates in the UK we were unable to find conclusive evidence to suggest that schools which had school uniform policies performed significantly better than other schools. In order to be sure of this claim however a more in-depth study needs to be conducted taking into account of all schools in England, something which is beyond the scope of this study.

Regarding Scottish High School pupils’ perceptions of their uniforms, pupils from lower-educated backgrounds were more likely to perceive that they were told off by teachers about not wearing the correct dress. It was therefore more likely for these pupils from lower-educated backgrounds to want teachers to correct their dress less than pupils from higher-educated backgrounds. When asked whether pupils felt more equal compared to their peers, those from lower-educated background were more likely to answer that uniforms did not help to level out class difference compared to pupils from better educated backgrounds. Regarding bullying, even though uniforms existed at the school studied, pupils stated that indirect bullying still took place due to pupils' dress and that bullying due to other factors such as physical appearance also occurred. There were a significant number of pupils from lower-educated backgrounds who did not like anything about the uniform whereas pupils from higher-educated backgrounds liked the fact that there was some freedom in what you could wear to school (pupils could choose between two styles of uniform and a number of colours).

Regarding the results from interviews with teachers and administrators in one Swedish town, most teachers took a fairly relaxed attitude towards pupils’ dress although teachers were strict on the policy of not wearing hats or jackets in class. The issue of female pupils dressing overtly sexually was seen as the biggest problem amongst teachers and this was dealt with on an individual level.
High school pupils’ opinions of their dress code varied. Some hated the school's rule rule that they were not allowed to wear outdoor clothes, whereas for others it was not seen as a big deal. A number of pupils thought that what you wore in class does not affect their learning outcomes. Very few pupils thought that introducing a uniform would be a good idea.

Students at Sixth Form College had a more mature attitude towards their dress compared with their experiences from High School where they agreed that rules were a lot stricter regarding not being allowed to wear outdoor clothes in class. Pupils coming from rural schools often stated that dress codes were less rigidly enforced at their rural schools compared to the High School children from the town. Sixth Form College Students did not think that the issue of dress codes was a major issue in Sixth Form College however this did vary slightly between the three Sixth Forms studies. Of the three Sixth Form Colleges in the town, one was seen as having a more formal informal dress code than the other two schools however one pupil thought that this was mainly due to prejudice, for example it was okay for pupils at the supposedly snobbish school SSFC3 to wear tracksuits to school although some pupils thought that this was frowned upon a little. The large majority of Sixth Form College students thought that introducing school uniform would be a bad idea and that bullying would not go away since pupils can always pick on other attributes, not just clothing. However there were a couple of pupils that thought that introducing uniform would be a good way to reduce peer-pressure to buy the right clothes but that this would have a better effect in High School.
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Appendix

Scottish Study: Interview Questions

Survey about School Dress Code

This survey is a part of my research project for my Swedish teaching diploma. I appreciate you taking the time to fill out this survey. Your answers will be of course kept confidential.

Any questions should be posed to me by email, sam.edgecombe@gmail.com

What is your sex?  Male □ Female □
How old are you (in years)?
My mum has been to (tick all relevant)
  primary school □ secondary school □ sixth form/college □ university □ Other □
My dad has been to (tick all relevant)
  primary school □ secondary school □ sixth form/college □ university □ Other □
Are either of your parents/guardians born outside of the UK?  Yes, both □ Yes, one but not both □ neither □ Don’t know
Do you receive free school lunches?  Yes □ No □ don't know □
Does you school have a uniform/dress code?
  Yes. We have a strict school uniform/dress code □
  Yes, but we have some freedom □
  No. We have a relaxed dress code □
Have you been told how you can change your school uniform/dress code?  No □ Yes □ Don’t know □
What is best about the school uniform/dress codes and why?
What is worst about the school uniform/dress codes and why?
If you wear school uniform, does it make you feel more or less equal to others in your class than outside of school?
  Yes, I feel much more like an equal □
  Yes, I feel a little more like an equal □
  No, it makes little difference □
  No, it much very little difference □
  Other:
If your school has a uniform, how do you customize it?
  I wear trainers instead of proper shoes □
  I wear my tie differently □
  I wear a shorter skirt □
  I wear a hat/baseball cap □
How often does the teacher tell you/others off for not wearing the right clothes to school/class?
- more than once each lesson □
- once each lesson □
- once a day □
- one a week □
- hardly ever □

Do you think that teachers should tell pupils off more or less about the dress code?
- More □
- Less □
- It's okay as it is □

Why did you answer the way you did to the previous question?

Is it common to bully others for what they wear to school?
- Yes, very common □
- Yes, sometimes □
- No, not common □
- No, never □

How do pupils bully other pupils because of what they wear? (tick all relevant)
- Physical bullying □
- Name-calling □
- Whispering □
- Laughing behind their back □
- Pointing □
- Other: __________

Do pupils get bullied for reasons other than what they wear to school? Tick all relevant
- For what they look like □
- For being intelligent □
- For not being intelligent □
- For being shy/quiet □
- Other: __________

How much do you/your parents spend on your school clothes per term?

How much do you/your parents spend on other clothes (other than school clothes) per term?

How much do you/your parents spend on your other clothes (other than school clothes) per term?

Do you/your parents receive financial help to buy school clothes?
- Yes □
- No □
- Don't know □

Please leave any other comments about your uniform here:
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