

Reviewer's report

Title: Gendered dimensions of obesity in childhood and adolescence

Version: 1 **Date:** 24 June 2007

Reviewer: Frelut Laure Marie-Laure

Reviewer's report:

General comments

This paper aims at understanding if obesity differs between boys and girls, whether for biological or for social and psychological reasons. A review of reviews from the literature is presented. However, such a procedure although a broader search is presented by the authors as a seemingly impossible task, leads to major bias and unlikely answers.

Most studies reported were performed in developed North American and European wealthy countries, in which differences between sexes, in terms of lifestyle are changing at a high rate and tend to disappear. It would be of interest to bring in information issued from South Mediterranean countries, Middle East, China or South America to improve the conclusions which so far do not seem to reflect the mere reality.

Other issues need to be considered in a different way:

- A long chapter about definition of obesity is largely out of the scope of this paper. A misprint "body mass" instead of "body mass index" (sentence with ref 14) leads to understand that children lose weight while growing.
- Little is reported about the quantitative aspects of either decrease in time spent in vigorous activities, nor to ages at which changes occur, differently in boys and girls, nor on other quantifiable aspect such as muscle mass, energy expenditure, etc. Many aspects are simply quoted but without giving quantitative notions nor stressing the relative importance they may have.
- Difference in energy requirement would be interesting to remind as well in order to put the problem into perspective
- The chapter on adiposity is presented after considerations on SES while it may precede the discussion on BMI.
- No information is given about the way obese adolescents may search for help or diet.

Altogether, this interesting paper needs further work and a change in search strategy. By remaining very general, it brings disappointing sets of information while the discussion lacks consistency.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have

responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.