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(Re)Telling lived experiences in different tales: a potential pathway in working towards an inclusive PE

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Existing research reveals that there are large discrepancies between the rhetoric of inclusive practice and what actually takes place in physical education (PE) lessons. PE appears to be a conservative subject, where little has changed over the years, despite increased diversity in schools and new modes of movement in society at large. In this article, I will argue that there is a need for ‘different’ ways of knowing, to gain knowledge about the complexity of creating an inclusive PE. My critical interpretive PhD project will serve as a starting point for arguing how narratives can be well suited to help illuminate individual experiences located within broader social and cultural structures. By engaging in self-biographical story sharing from my position as a neophyte researcher, I will highlight some of the theoretical and methodological tensions that I have encountered in my narrative inquiry of embodied experience. Narratives provide insight into the multiple realities of inclusion and/or exclusion, disability and PE. Emancipatory educational storysharing may have the potential to revisit and challenge well-worn, taken for granted realities about these phenomena and facilitate professional self-reflection. For illustrative purposes, I will share some narratives from young disabled people’s experiences in PE lessons, in different narrative forms: an ethnographic fiction and a poetic transcription. In addition to contributing cognitive ways of knowing, narratives recognize the role emotions play in how we come to understand our world. Different ways of retelling stories, if well done, may evoke feelings and create new understandings of inclusion, disability and PE. Narrative ways of knowing could therefore contribute to bringing us further in working towards more inclusive education and create, at least, modest change.

Keywords: *Narrative; Critical-interpretive research; Physical education; Inclusion; Disability*

Emotional rollercoaster

Personally troubled

by children’s stories

sitting watching

excluded from their peers

Being defined

as

the problem,

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feeling like
an inconvenience.

Celebrating difference,
inclusion, equity, social justice.

Education for all!

Merely a cliché?

So unfair, I'm angry
frustrated

Is there anything

I
can do?

Inspired by
Dowling, Sparkes
writing stories
from PE.

Can narrative
make
a difference?

Lend to
restorying lives?

Do I dare?

Is it possible?

Am I good enough at writing, reading?

Being creative?

I'm a bit scared,
is this a research pathway
for me?

I'll give it a try!
Activating narratives
through in-depth interviews.

With children,
parents and
some PE teachers.
Co-production.

Writing, reading, thinking,
re-telling stories.

Through
my
researcher's pen.
Poems, fiction
or realist tales?

Power.
Ethics.
I have to be
'true',
to their
stories and
lives.

Exiting,
Inspiring,
but
they still ask
the question
is it
True?

Multiple
realities,
new understandings.
PE,
disability,
inclusion.
What is it all about?

Hopefully
it evokes feelings
and
critical thinking.
It may
lead to change
and make a difference.

Inclusive
education
Is
everybody's
business.
A moral
obligation!

Narrative Inquiry
enable differently positioned,
embodied 'voices'
to be
'heard'
and felt

within PE.

We need
therefore research
celebrating
new ways
of knowing
in our
Postmodern world.

Introduction

My 'story', illustrated by the 'poem' above, stresses the need for new understandings and change in schooling, if we are to create an inclusive education for all. Such a recognition led me to adopt a narrative approach (Riessman, 2008) based upon a critical stance in my PhD project. My journey into the field of narrative inquiry and narrative ways of knowing started with myself being personally troubled (Wright Mills, 1959) by many students' stories of exclusion and inequitable practice in PE lessons. These stories from everyday life evoked strong feelings and moved me emotionally and cognitively to ask why students' still tell stories of exclusion and inequitable practice in PE and how things might become re-storied. The research project has thus been a process of transforming these personal concerns into public issues: the result of my sociological/educational imagination as a practitioner and a researcher (Wright Mills, 1959). The study aimed to explore the experiences of disabled students and I was particularly interested in illuminating the lived spaces between policy about inclusion, and practices of adapted and in/exclusive PE. In this article, I will argue that (re)telling lived experiences via a range of writing strategies represents a potential pathway in working towards a more inclusive PE. I discuss briefly the perceived strengths of adopting a narrative approach and provide some glimpses from my journey in conducting a narrative inquiry, focusing upon some theoretical and methodological tensions that I have encountered.

Creating an inclusive education valuing difference, equity and social justice has become increasingly difficult in the current neoliberal climate in schooling and society at all (Slee, 2011). Existing research reveals that there are large discrepancies between the rhetoric of inclusive practice and what actually takes place in physical education (PE) lessons (Barton, 2009; Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012). The way PE is constructed and reproduced seems to limit the possibilities for creating an inclusive environment. The hegemonic discourses (sport, competition, health and multi-activity; Kirk, 2010; Tinning, 2010) of the socially constructed PE reproduce certain values ('performance codes' and 'body-perfection codes'; Evans & Davies, 2004), and as a consequence, a certain type of ability, specific skills and certain types of bodies are valued and favoured, while others are marginalized and excluded (Fitzgerald, 2005). As a result, young people with a disability are excluded, from or have limited learning experiences in PE; often their experiences are overlooked or not 'heard'.

Despite a growing interest in using a narrative approach in research, across a range of subject disciplines, it has to date remained a relatively little used research approach in the field of PE (Dowling, Fitzgerald, & Flintoff, 2012). The field of PE has instead been historically dominated by certain ‘ways of knowing’, that is, the biological and natural sciences (Dowling, 2012). I agree with Dowling (2012) who argues that a narrative approach ‘no longer can be marginalized within the field when we live in a society permeated by narrative’ (p. 37).

For several reasons, narrative ways of knowing could contribute to bringing us further in working towards more inclusive education. A strength of narrative inquiry is that ‘it is a form of discourse that is known and used in everyday interaction, the story is an obvious way for social actors, in talking to strangers (e.g. the researcher) to retell key experiences and events’ (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 56). A narrative approach can enable many differently positioned, embodied ‘voices’ to be heard and felt within PE (Dowling, Garrett, Lisahunter, & Wrench, 2013; Smith & Sparkes, 2008) and thus create space for alternative storylines (‘counterstories’) to emerge about inclusion, PE and disability. Narrative inquiry, embracing new forms of representation, aims to gain embodied emotional and cognitive involvement with topic. Narratives can thus function as pedagogical tools to enrich our awareness, understanding and conversations regarding practices and discourses in PE. Narrative ways of knowing might eventually contribute to re-storying education and include those who are on the margins.

Creating change through narrative ways of knowing?

According to Dowling (2012), there are multiple ways of discerning narrative inquiry, due to its multidisciplinary nature and its range of epistemological foundations (p. 42). Given my overall goal of contributing to critical reflection and at least a modest change in schooling (Tinning, 2002), my narrative inquiry is based on a view consistent with the critical-interpretive paradigm (Sparkes, 1992). In this perspective, ‘narratives are (...) inextricably subjective and relational, and they are imbued with power; no one is simply free to choose a story, and subjective tales form PE lessons are inevitably intertwined with macro societal relations’ (Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 2). Similarly, Sparkes (1992, p. 39) argues that critical researchers

... emphasize that the results of any negotiations over meanings by individuals or group takes place, and are determined within power relations that are related to such issues as social class, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, disability, etc. That is, social reality is not constructed in a free and voluntary process since negotiations are shaped by particular organizational relations, structures and conditions.

In order to understand and illuminate disabled children’s subjective experiences from contemporary PE, it has therefore been necessary to explore how and why PE is constructed in certain ways, and especially the implications for children’s identity, participation and learning in PE. Following Sparkes (1992, p. 40) I am particularly interested in

... how specific forms of knowledge, ways of knowing, and certain values are privileged and legitimized, that is, given meaning and authority relative to others. The central emphasis is upon human consciousness and the ways in which it is shaped and limited by existing social arrangement in such a way as to serve the interest of some groups in our society at the expense of others.

According to Plummer (2001), 'narrative may be seen as a most basic way humans have of apprehending the world ... Narrative structures enable us to speak, and the multitude of fragmenting experiences that constitute our lives come to be patterned into some seeming sense of order' (p. 185). A narrative approach can also provide a critical way of examining cultural conventions and social norms regarding PE, inclusion and disability (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), since 'the stories young people tell structure and illuminate not only their own experiences and self- identities, but they also reveal insights about the socio-cultural locations they inhabit' (Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 2).

Due to the 'conservative force' of PE (Evans, 2004), a key question is whether it is possible to challenge the dominant 'truths' of the subject. As a critical researcher, I believe 'in the importance of changing individual and group consciousness in creating social change' (Griffin, 1990, cited by Sparkes, 1992, p. 41). Since 'narratives draw on taken-for-granted discourses and values circulating in a particular culture' (Riessman, 2008, p. 3), they can help us to illuminate the dominant discourses in the field of PE and make them more visible (Kirk, 1992; Tinning, 1990). Narratives can, for example, contribute to trouble the dominant storyline of 'normality' and the deficit thinking of disability (Barton, 2009). I am, however, fully aware that one of the challenges of working in narrative inquiry is that changing thought does not necessarily make changes possible in practice (Oliver & Kirk, 2014). To create an inclusive education and breaking the reproductive cycle of exclusionary practices in PE requires 'a transformative change at all levels in the system: with respect to the curriculum, the nature of learning and teaching styles, assessment, practitioners' attitudes and the view of stakeholders' (Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 3).

Making space for marginalised, silenced 'voices' in PE

Nevertheless, I believe that one way to challenge the dominant discourses in PE is to focus upon marginalised, silenced 'voices' in PE. In this case children and young people with a disability. The need to explore PE experiences from the perceptive of disability was highlighted over 20 years ago by Barton (1993, p. 52) who argued that

... merely adopting a curriculum for able-bodied people without some critical dialogue is unacceptable. The voice of disabled people needs to be heard and seriously examined. This is absolutely essential in the teaching of physical education.

Barton's call has unfortunately not resulted in a lot of research celebrating the voices of young disabled people. I agree with Fitzgerald (2005), who claims that it can be only detrimental to the PE profession if we 'continue to work in ways that are informed by assumptions rather than actual insights from the young people' (Fitzgerald, 2005,

p. 44). Fortunately, in recent years there has been an increasing interest to accentuate and illuminate pupil's 'voices', because it is considered as essential in the effort to develop an inclusive environment in PE (Fitzgerald, 2005; Fitzgerald, Jobling, & Kirk, 2003; Fitzgerald & Stride, 2012; Goodwin, 2009; Goodwin & Watkinson, 2000; Smith, 2009). Likewise, Berg Svendby and Dowling (2012, p. 4) note that:

Notwithstanding the epistemological challenges of 'voice' (Richardson, 2000), we support therefore those who believe it is important to provide opportunities for these young disabled people 'voices' to be 'articulated' and 'heard' (Slee, 2000), because their experiences are vital for professionals and for understanding the field ...

In the field of narrative inquiry, 'it is only recently that narrative researchers have turned more attention to the experience of students within PE' (Dowling et al., 2013, p. 7). In my research, narratives about young disabled people's experiences in PE lessons were activated (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) via the use of in-depth interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with 10 children/young people with a disability between the age of 10 and 19 years old, 16 parents/guardians (6 sets of parents and 4 mothers) and 6 PE teachers. Each participant or pair of parents/guardians was interviewed twice, and the interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours. The interviews were conducted during a period of 1½ years, from October 2009 to February 2011. For further readings, see Berg Svendby (2013) and Berg Svendby and Dowling (2012).

From a critical-interpretive position, I acknowledge, like Tanggaard (2009, p. 1498) that the research interview is

... a dialogical context for the production of social life and personal narratives ... interviews are inevitable, dialogical social events based on repertoires of socially and culturally embedded and constantly changing words and discourses. ... the interview is ... a setting in which dissenting opinion, diverse discourses, and personal narratives are produced through the social dialogical context of the interview.

Narrative interviewing is therefore seen as a 'multivoice scenario' (Tanggaard, 2009), involving the construction and reconstruction of knowledge (Mason, 2002). Meaning and understanding of PE, inclusion and disability are, thus, created in a 'co-production' (Bochner & Ellis, 1996; Riessman, 2008) involving both the researcher and the research participants. I have been 'acutely aware of the power in interview relations (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) and strove to create a caring, safe interview interaction' (Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 5). Despite my recognition of the interview as a 'co-production', it was nevertheless me as a researcher who mainly asked the questions, ensured progress and structured the conversation. I agree with Eder & Fingerson (2002) who argue the need for being sensitive to the power imbalance between myself as an adult researcher, and the young participants in my study. To reduce my position of power and to create 'space' for 'co-production', I clearly conveyed to the children that I was genuinely interested in hearing about and learn from their experiences. The children and adolescent received a notebook in which they could write about the experiences they had between the interviews and they could bring this up at the beginning of the next interview. I also encouraged the

children to comment and ask questions throughout the interviews. By doing this, I gave the participants opportunities to introduce their own topics and concerns into the discussion. I aimed to follow the children's pathway and this required that I emphasized flexibility. Although I had certain topics and questions in mind to start, I tried to let the interview develop by allowing opportunities for new topics and questions to emerge based on what we shared during the interview. In addition, I endeavoured asking open-ended questions which made it more possible for the participants 'to bring in the topics and modes of discourse that are familiar to them' (Eder & Fingerson, 2002, p. 184). In particular, I was conscious about my use of language, since specific terms are important to create a 'sharedness of meanings' (Fontana & Frey, 2005). For example, I did not use the term 'inclusion' when interviewing the children, because this is an uncommon discourse (for children) in the Norwegian context. Instead, we talked about 'participation', a discourse that is well known and used by the young people themselves.

My choice of using in-depth interviews and interviewing the participants twice was beneficial for creating trust, to ask follow-up questions and to explore and clarify contradictions. Since I aimed to create space for alternative storylines to emerge about the phenomena, when faced with oppressive stories (Dowling & Flintoff, 2011), it was crucial to conduct more than one interview with the participants. Multiple interviews provided opportunities to present my interpretation of their lives and allowed the participants to respond directly to my interpretations of their narratives of embodied experiences. Alternative storylines emerged also by asking them about their experiences from different contexts. For example, from different PE lessons, other activities in school and what they did in leisure time. I also asked them about their experiences from the past and present, and thoughts about future. I was also particularly aware of the nonverbal features of the interaction in the interviews and I often asked questions based on nonverbal communication (body movements and postures, length of silence, variations in volume, pitch and quality of voice and so on, see e.g. Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 713). Particularly, I experienced that emotions (such as anger, frustration, grief, sadness, tenderness, joy, enthusiasm and pride) were expressed through body language and tone of voice. I activated alternative storylines by conveying my interpretation of our (both me as researcher and the participants') nonverbal communication throughout the interviews, and I posed questions to explore new meanings of the phenomena studied.

The aim of co-production in research with children is important, but indeed a demanding task in practice. The participants responded, of course, differently to my strategies and efforts to counter power imbalances and co-production. Just a few used the opportunity to write about their experiences in a notebook, which may be due to their busy schedules and that they felt that there was no need of using written form to be able to recall their experiences in the interviews. I felt that the most successful part of the interviews was that I managed to create an atmosphere where participants felt free to ask questions, give comments and 'correct' my interpretations of their stories during the interviews. In addition, several of the participants said that they were particularly delighted that someone was interested in *their* experiences.

All too often they experience being reduced to a statistical category. Some of the older participants also told me that they were able to gain new insights about themselves during the course of the interviews, and they thanked me for the opportunity to think and talk in a structured way about themselves and their school issues.

As stated before, I am a neophyte researcher, but I do have long work experience in talking with children (more than 25 years), both as a teacher and as a supervisor in the healthcare system. I consider this as an advantage, particularly for being familiar with the discourse used by the participants and for the capacity to follow the children's pathways and being flexible in the interviews. My experiences with children and youth have also made me particularly aware of the challenge of 'getting correct answers'. Children may seek to provide answers they feel are expected of them rather than stating what they actually think or feel. When I felt that this was the case, I talked with the participants about the importance of getting their views of the phenomena and I experienced that this actually created different tales.

To fulfil the aim of co-production and create space for alternative stories, I believe in hindsight that it might have been more appropriate to adopt other or additional methods in gaining knowledge about the children's experiences in PE. For example, by using photographs, drawings or other communication tools (Fitzgerald et al., 2003). Living in a postmodern society embracing 'new' social media requires that we also dare to adopt methodological approaches that are more familiar to children and young people themselves. For example, using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, although this creates other ethical dilemmas and challenges in research. From my critical-interpretive position, I see it as a weakness of my study that I have not involved the participants in the whole research process, which includes the 'steps' from identification of a research problem to convey findings. A student-centred (Fitzgerald et al., 2003) or an activist approach (Oliver & Kirk, 2014) might have contributed to bring out different storylines from the field of PE and enhanced the 'co-production' throughout the research process.

Producing knowledge through creative analytical practices

I agree with Riessman (2008) that we as researchers play a major part in constituting the narrative data, by our interviewing and transcription practices, as well as through the process of analysis of the narratives produced. Reflexivity, in the sense of 'a much greater social and self-awareness/consciousness of the whole intellectual/research process' (Plummer, 2001, p. 208) has, therefore, been important. To pursue reflexivity and contribute to the 'intellectual puzzle' (Mason, 2002) of analysing data, I have used a research diary throughout the entire research process. The diary was important not only to become familiar with the data but also for 'fighting familiarity' (Delamont, 2002). I recorded notes in my diary particularly through the period of interviews and transcriptions phase. Since I acknowledge transcription as an interpretive practice (Riessman, 2008), all the interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself.

According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), 'one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies.

Such approaches also enable us to think beyond our data to the ways in which accounts and stories are socially and culturally managed and constructed' (p. 80). In other words, 'stories don't fall from the sky' (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). Following such a recognition, the interviews were analysed by the means of a 'dialogic/performative analysis' (Riessman, 2008). This type of analysis involved 'examining the content of the tales within the contexts in which they have been produced (e.g. whom did the narrator address, when did they act as they did, and for what purposes, and how do contexts beyond the field setting impinge upon the story? (Riessman, 2008)' (Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 6). In addition, the data were also analysed thematically (e.g. what is said, what themes can be identified?), which is probably the most common method of narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). Following Richardson (2000), I see writing as a method of inquiry. I have actively adopted writing as a method of analysing texts, to create various representations of narratives and to get a comprehensive understanding of children's experiences with an inclusive and/or exclusionary PE (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Richardson, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I recognise, like Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), that (...) writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery' (p. 967). Analytic ideas are therefore developed and tried out in the process of writing and representing (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and the production of knowledge can thus be considered as a creative analytical practice (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), which I will elaborate further below.

Re-telling lived experience in different tales

In keeping with today's postmodern thinking, a narrative approach creates possibilities of re-telling stories in different ways; realist tales, confessional tales, autoethnographies, ethnodramas, poetic representations and fictional tales (Dowling, 2012; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes et al., 2003). My choice of adopting a narrative approach and thus embracing new forms of representation was due to myself being personally moved by reading research influenced by the blurred genres (e.g. Dowling Næss, 1998; Sparkes, 2004). I saw different writing genres, such as 'poetic transcription' and 'ethnographic fiction', as offering a valuable means with which to understand young people's narratives. I felt that the complexity, and indeed, the seeming contradictory nature, of the lives of the young participants could get lost in a more traditional style. As PE is a conservative subject and 'teachers are overtly and covertly encouraged by prevailing cultures and circumstances to enter into a condition of collective indifference' (Slee, 2011, p. 87), it is important to find a 'pathway to trouble the taken for granted truths in PE and PETE' (Dowling et al., 2013). Educational storytelling and story sharing can be used for that purpose. Re-telling tales in a different way becomes even more important since PE as a subject has been resistant to change despite much research and knowledge in the field. Narrative inquiry has the potential to aid us in deconstructing our own values, beliefs and pedagogies (Dowling et al., 2013), and in so doing narratives can facilitate professional self-reflection (Polkinghorne, 1995). By re-telling children's embodied experiences in PE in evocative ways, the stories have the potential to create empathy in the reader and

may lead PE teachers and others to ask ‘a different set of questions’ (Slee, 2004, p. 170) regarding PE, inclusion and disability. Moreover, this could lead them to ‘re-framing the field’ (Slee, 2011, p. 153) and ‘re-visioning education’ (Slee, 2011, p. 159) to create more thoughtful pedagogical practice and inclusive schooling.

In order to bring light to the tensions I have encountered, in representing embodied experiences through different tales, and as a way of illustrating the richness that narratives can bring to representing data (Fitzgerald & Stride, 2012, p. 286), I will share two narratives from young disabled people’s experiences in PE lessons in different forms. First, I will present some glimpses from Daniel’s experiences by using an ‘ethnographic fictional’ tale (Clough, 2002; Sparkes, 2002). This will be followed by Emilie’s story about in/exclusion in PE by using ‘poetic transcription’ (Richardson, 2000; Sparkes et al., 2003)

‘It’s an insane amount of running’

Emma leaned back into the sofa and pulled the blanket over herself. With a coffee cup in one hand and a newspaper in the other, she looked forward to a little time for herself after a long day at school. Teaching is a demanding job, but she likes it. She had just barely opened the newspaper when she heard the front door slam. ‘Is that you Daniel?’ Emma called. No one answered. She could hear the sound of someone walking up the stairs.

Daniel threw his gym bag into the bathroom and glanced into the living room before he hurried into his bedroom and slammed the door. From the look on his face, Emma could tell it would be best to leave her son alone. ‘It wouldn’t surprise me if it’s his gym class again’, thought Emma. They have argued about gym for several weeks now.

Shit! Shit! Shit! Daniel threw his pillow at the wall. His whole body shook. He was so sick of sitting on the damn stationary bike in the strength training room. All autumn, all they’ve done is run. Run, run, run. An insane amount of running! ‘I can’t run long distances,’ thought Daniel. He thought about all the hours he hadn’t taken part in the running, or when the alternative has been to sit on the stationary bike. ‘I don’t understand why the teacher can’t think of anything else for me to do.’ After Daniel started high school, gym has become a class he’d rather skip. He thinks back on the days’ gym class and pictures his classmates running laps around and around the soccer field. It never ends. They run 3000 meters. Time trials.

The teacher said that they will have strength training next time, and then after that they’ll have dance, basketball, volleyball, floor hockey and badminton. ‘I don’t think I even want to try to participate. I detest gym class now. I used to think it was fun. In elementary school I never had to sit on the stationary bike, we did different things. Back then at least I could be part of the class. Not like now with all this nonsense and standard requirements. Daniel sighed heavily. His thoughts were interrupted by his phone ringing. He searched his bag frantically to find the phone before it stopped ringing. ‘Hei,’ Daniel says excitedly into the phone.

‘Do you want to go for a bike ride with me?’ his buddy Jonas asked. ‘Sure do! I’ll be there in 15 minutes, I just have to eat a sandwich first,’ he answered. The negative thoughts he had about gym class disappeared in a flash as he looked

forward to riding his BMX bike and doing tricks. It's one of the most fun things he knows! (Berg Svendby, 2013, pp. 72–73).

Longing to be Me and Belonging to Them

To be like
Them.
A pointless thought,
but it hounds
me.
Struggling with the
unbearable weight
of my school bag.
Exhausted,
feeling the mattress support my
weary limbs
in a darkened room
after school.
A day when I've attended.
Missing out
again
on a party.

But I'm
Me.
Proud.
Wise for my years, or so my Mum says.
Qualities,
Others
envy.
But who
dreams of being
wise?
Don't want
to be
Different,
Lagging
behind
the Others,
storm past in the gym.

The nice physio,
says I'm
alright.
I feel

alright,
strong even,
after doing her exercises.
Fit and slim,
within an arm's reach.
Kind, too,
that physio.
Smiles,
looks at you.
Let's my friends be there,
with Me.

Of course, the
PE teacher
has 25 Others,
but just
once,
might she cast a
glance
my way?
Make me feel
I
belong,
together with my friends,
havin' fun.
Read 'em booklets about
my condition?
Stop the
hollow promises
about a plan,
just for me.
A plan that's
never
written.

Fewer
ball games,
so she needn't worry
about Me getting
injured.
More time for
dance,
aerobics,
and swimming!
She knows,

these activities can
include
Me.
On
good days.
When I'm not
tired.
To be Me
and
one of Them.
And They can
be like
Me.

(Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 9)

The narratives I have presented above, which represents Daniels and Emilie's lived experiences in the subject of PE, are produced through creative analytical practices (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I have experimented with different ways of writing in order to better glean insight into the participants' worlds. Daniel's ethnographic tale is based upon two in-depth interviews with Daniel and his mother Emma, but it also incorporates and represents important aspects of the lived experiences of the other project participants. The 'ethnographic fiction' is fictional in the sense that it is an amalgam of 'raw data' from the in-depth interviews, as well as my imagination and knowledge of the field. Following Clough (2002), 'they are stories which *could* be true, they derive from real events and feelings and conversations, but they *are* ultimately fictions: versions of the truth' (p. 9). In order 'to 'capture' and convey the complex, ambiguous, fluctuating, sometimes contradictory, multiple meanings of being a disabled student in PE' (Berg Svendby & Dowling, 2012, p. 6), I strove to construct a narrative which incorporated different aspects of Daniel's lived experiences. To achieve the latter, I constructed and staged the story around various locations (at home, PE lessons, leisure), the time (past, present and thoughts about future), the content of PE (pedagogy, activities and consequences) and emotional experiences (positive/negative, e.g. as fun, anger, frustration). It was, for example, important to convey that Daniel possessed an identity as competent performer, despite his experiences with exclusionary practices in PE, particularly in high school. The identity as competent performer was similar for most of the other project participants' experiences and reflects the importance of contexts in our attempt of understanding lives. By re-telling Daniel's lived experiences by using an ethnographic tale enabled me to convey the contradictions and range of identities in context.

Like Daniel's story, the construction of Emilie's 'poetic transcription' is not only based upon two in-depth interviews with Emilie but also contains elements which many of the other project participants experienced. With regard to this 'poem', the construction is produced in collaboration with my PhD supervisor. We have each

individually carried out the analyses of the interviews with Emilie and her mother Hanne, and then shared our emerging understandings both orally and in written form. By composing a 'poetic transcription' of interview talk, we aimed to honour the pauses, alliterations, narratives strategies and rhythms of speech common to interview (Richardson, 2000), as well as conveying the parts and the whole of the narrative from Emilie's experiences. Particularly, the aim of the poem was to convey and to enrich our understandings about the complexities of inclusive-/exclusionary practices in PE, troubling narratives of 'normality' and 'otherness' and to highlight the importance of a sense of belonging and relations with peers, teacher and other professionals. For further details, see Berg Svendby and Dowling (2012). I do believe that we have succeeded in conveying Emilie's multiplicity of experiences in a 'good' manner. The responses I have received after presenting the poem on several occasions indicates that others agree. But, more importantly, what did you feel when you read the poem? How did you interpret the poem? Did it evoke reflexive meaning? Since feelings are personal and there is no single interpretation of a poetry, the extent to which this poetic representation of Emilie's lived experiences is successful is something that only the reader can answer.

From my position as a neophyte researcher, I admit that it has been a bit frightening to enter the field of narrative research. Both due to the skills needed in re-telling evocative tales from lived experiences but also because of my powerful role as a researcher throughout the entire research process (Adams, 2008; Plummer, 2001; Riessman, 2008). As stated above, it has been important for me to bring marginalised voices to the centre stage, but it is nevertheless me/we, who ultimately have used the power of my/our researchers' pen to convey Daniel and Emilie's narratives. Postmodern writing is marked by the 'crisis of representation' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and I have therefore been very conscious of my constitutive role in crafting text when I have tried to capture the complexities, tone and feelings of the children's experiences of PE.

From my critical-interpretive position, I am accepting the researcher's subjectivity and I agree with Sparkes (1995) who stresses that 'how we choose to write has profound implications not just for how a readable text is, but also how the people it portrays are 'read' and understood' (p. 162). The latter has 'forced' me to be acutely aware of the need to explore and represent 'what works' in PE and in the everyday life of the disabled children (Alderson, 2005), not simply to focus upon the problems and challenges of being disabled. Alderson (2005, pp. 28–29) illustrates the importance of this by writing:

... if the research questions and methods concentrate on children's needs and failings, so will the reports emphasize problems and deficits. This can increase shame, stigma, prejudice and disadvantage for whole groups of children related to the project ... these children may, in some respect, be strong, resilient, knowledgeable, and resourceful.

To create representations of the children's lived experiences is therefore above all an ethical concern (Alderson, 2005). My aim has been to avoid the colonisation of the

‘Other’ (Fine, 1994) and I have endeavoured to convey the children’s narratives with ethical sensitivity, and to remain ‘true’ to their stories and life (Bochner & Ellis, 1996).

Both forms of representation (‘fictional’ and ‘poetic’ tales) aspire not only to represent interview dialogue, but also provide a dynamic framework in which disconnected data elements are linked together in an explanatory way (Polkinghorne, 1995). Another strength is that these different styles can evoke reflexive meaning and on-going interpretation, and in so doing, be accessible and meaningful to more than the writer alone (Sparkes et al., 2003). I have, for example, experienced that people have spontaneously begun to recall related stories of their own, after listening to narratives from my research. Possibilities exist thus to ‘move’ readers and listeners to collective story sharing, as a phase on the long road of challenging dominant discourses.

New ways of knowing and telling—risks and challenges

I will further address some additional risks and challenges in choosing narrative inquiry to explore and convey the disabled children’s experiences of PE. Despite the potential of narrative inquiry in creating critical reflection and change, it is not possible, of course, to promise change, nor ‘a collective emancipation’ (Gur-Ze’ev, 1998 cited in Tinning, 2002, p. 227) of the marginalized children in PE. Nevertheless, I hope that my research will lead to an ‘emotional commitment’, which may in turn lead to some modest change (Tinning, 2002, p. 236).

Certainly, creating literary styles and producing evocative narratives that are useful, effective and works are no easy task (Sparkes et al., 2003). Feelings are personal, and to which extent narratives are successful is something that can only be determined by the reader or the listener. ‘Great!’, ‘exciting!’, ‘compelling!’ These are some examples of the kind of comments I have received after I have presented ‘fictional’ and ‘poetic’ representations of the children’s experiences in PE in different settings. Within academic circles, however, I have more often received comments/questions like; ‘Interesting, but are you sure you dare?’ or the most common one; ‘Is it true?’ The latter may be due to, and can be regarded as part of an ‘academic discourse’, and ‘a truth game’, which privileges certain ‘truths’ and other forms of representation of knowledge (Tinning, 2013) than those celebrated within a critical-interpretive paradigm. Having this in mind, and being aware of the fact that the PE research community have seemed loathe to embrace the ‘narrative turn’ (Dowling, 2012), I am not surprised that I often am ‘forced’ to ‘defend’ my way of knowing and telling. I experience this as demanding, but I also feel that I have become better equipped to argue my case and to understand the rhetorical staging within all texts, not simply those inspired by postmodern thinking.

In addition, it may be seen as a risk to choose, to write and to represent stories in a manner that is not regarded as conventional in the PE research community, and in public in general. It is my experience that using ‘new’ and innovative rhetorical devices to communicate my work in conferences and in specific journals can be a

challenge. I have, for example, experienced that it has been difficult to get an article published when I have pushed new boundaries and transgressed the ‘rules of the game’ (Tinning, 2013). In the current neoliberal climate in society, narrative inquiry may also not be recognized as a knowledge base for policy makers within the field of schooling and education—it does not provide sufficiently robust ‘evidence’ (Wright, 2006). By adopting new ways of knowing, there is thus a risk of being not heard (e.g. ‘Is this science?’), not read (e.g. ‘I don’t read fiction’; Tinning, 2013) and there is a chance of not getting your work published.

The core of the above-stated challenges have their origin in the on-going epistemological and ontological debate about what it is that constitutes ‘good’ research. Similar to Dowling et al. (2013), my experiences have thus been a reminder ‘of the importance of articulating one’s chosen position within the complex landscape of qualitative inquiry and of the continual need for reflexivity in all aspects of the research process’ (p. 11). Following the tenets of my critical-interpretivist position, I expect my work to be judged according to whether the narratives seem authentic in the sense of being ‘true to life’, if the narratives coheres with previously knowledge about the topic and if they are ‘enlivening our research and practitioners conversations’ (Dowling, 2012, p. 54) about PE, inclusion and disability. Following Smith (2009 cited in Dowling, 2012), then ‘evaluating the goodness and value of a narrative is a ‘judgement call’, and its relevance and insights can only be resolved via a dialogic process’ (p. 54). In my study, I saw it therefore as appropriate to ask the following questions regarding the narratives produced: Do they persuade you to revisit your taken-for-granted values about PE, inclusion and disability? Do they develop emphatic understandings of the disabled children’s world? Do they affect you in sensory, as well as cognitive ways? Do they enable new stories to evolve, and finally, do I convince you that my work has been carried out in an ethical fashion?

To meet the challenges described herein requires above all, an openness to knowledge and ways of knowing (an ‘open intellectual attitude’) (Tinning, 2013, p. 10) within and outside the research community. Despite the risks and challenges in choosing a narrative approach, I follow Sparkes *et al.*, who write:

For us, the effort and risks involved are worth taking because when this genre does work, it provides a powerful means of understanding phenomena in new and exciting ways (Sparkes et al., 2003, p. 175).

Narratives and the potential for making a difference

Making PE more ‘inclusive’ is regarded as a complex and demanding task. Particularly due to the hegemonic discourses and the ‘conservative force’ (Evans, 2004) of the contemporary subject of PE, and because of the current neoliberal climate in schooling and society at large. However, I agree with Slee (2011), who states that ‘inclusive education should be seen to be everybody’s business ...’ (p. 172), and we do have a choice to think and act differently than we currently do. **Creating inclusive schooling is above all a moral obligation.** Following Slee (2011), we do have the possibility to re-frame our field, re-right our language, re-search for inclusion and re-vision our education

in PE. In order to make a difference and to advance the case of the non-privileged in PE (Dowling et al., 2012) we do have to break through our 'collective indifference' (Slee, 2011). By embracing the postmodernist climate and the multitude of approaches to knowing and telling, we might hear, see and feel the world in new dimensions (Richardson, 2000), and this may in turn lead, at least, to a modest change in PE. Different ways of retelling stories, if well done, may thus evoke feelings and create new understandings of inclusion and/or exclusion, disability and PE. Narrative ways of knowing could therefore contribute to bringing us further in working towards more inclusive education.

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