This is the published version of a paper published in *Sport, Education and Society*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Tolgfors, B. (2019)
Promoting integration through physical education (?)
*Sport, Education and Society*, 1-14
https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1687442

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:oru:diva-77825
Promoting integration through physical education (?)

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To cite this article: Björn Tolgfors (2019): Promoting integration through physical education (?), Sport, Education and Society, DOI: 10.1080/13573322.2019.1687442

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1687442

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Published online: 09 Nov 2019.

Article views: 90

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ABSTRACT
A common problem in contemporary western societies is segregation, which is also reflected in schools. The point of departure for this study is a political initiative in Sweden, where pupils are being transported by bus from a suburb to different schools in the city with the aim of promoting integration and improved performance results. The study focuses on the teaching practice of Physical Education (PE) at one of the schools where ‘the bus for inclusion’ stops every morning. The research question concerns how ‘the political action’ of the bussing project is ‘acted upon’ in the subject of PE. The purpose is to explore what becomes of this particular PE practice, in terms of rationalities encompassing a PE teacher’s pedagogical actions and the pupils’ ways of acting on them. The data, gathered through extensive fieldwork, including lesson observations and interviews, is analysed from a governmentality perspective [Foucault, 1978/1994. Governmentality. In Power (pp. 201–222). New York: The New Press]. The findings highlight three underlying rationalities in regards to integration, aiming at promoting intercultural encounters, collaboration and mutual respect. These rationalities, manifested through the PE teacher’s pedagogical actions, offer guidance for the pupil seen as ‘a subject seeking to construct himself or herself’ [Wieviorka 2014. A critique of integration. Identities, 21(6), 633–641, 636–637]. In case of compliance, the notion of ‘us and them’ is countered and a shared experience of belonging is achieved through teamwork and self-regulation. In case of resistance, segregation is maintained in the school community as well as in society as a whole. This study does not contribute any incontestable evidence of social inclusion through PE [cf. Bailey, 2005. Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. Educational Review, 57(1), 71–90; Dagkas, 2018. Is social inclusion through PE, sport and PA still a rhetoric? Evaluating the relationship between physical education, sport and social inclusion. Educational Review, 70(1), 67–74]. However, the findings indicate that ‘action upon action’ in a culturally heterogeneous PE practice makes a difference insofar as integration is understood as a process of subjectivation [Wieviorka 2014. A critique of integration. Identities, 21(6), 633–641]. Depending on the direction of the PE teacher’s guidance, the process might tend towards either cultural assimilation or pluralistic integration [Grimminger, 2008. Promoting intercultural competence in the continuing education of physical education teachers. Sport-Integration-Europe, 310–320].
Introduction

A common problem in contemporary western societies is segregation, which is also reflected in schools. The point of departure for this study is a political initiative to deal with segregation and poor performance results in a socially disadvantaged area in Sweden. The suburban school, accommodating pupils aged 13–15, was recently closed. The pupils, of which the vast majority have an ethnic or cultural background other than Swedish, are now transported by bus to other schools in the city. The focus is on one of the schools where ‘the bus for inclusion’ stops every morning. Although the pupils are mixed with those from other parts of the city in all subjects, this study focuses on the teaching practice of physical education (PE). In Sweden, PE is widely regarded as a subject of particular importance for integration, as it allows newly arrived pupils to participate in the school community through practical language development (Bunar, 2015). Lawson (2005, p. 138) also sees the potential of different actors within sport, exercise and physical education contributing to ‘the development of collective identities’, which facilitate social integration. However, after having evaluated the relationship between PE, sport and social inclusion, Bailey (2005, p. 71) concluded that ‘much more empirical research is necessary if the benefits of sporting participation for young people and society are to become much more than a theoretical aspiration’. Thirteen years later, Dagkas (2018, p. 67) maintained that ‘we still lack clear evidence to support the rhetoric about the ways in which sport and PE can contribute to social inclusion’. Considering the complexity of this problem, Barker and Lundvall (2016, p. 363) state that ‘there is a need to account for how pedagogies are currently enacted and how they might be reconsidered, revised, or re-enacted in contexts of cultural heterogeneity’.

Based on the ambiguous position of PE as an integration subject, the research question concerns how ‘the political action’ of the bussing project is ‘acted upon’ in the subject of PE. The purpose is to explore what becomes of the particular PE practice, in terms of rationalities encompassing a PE teacher’s pedagogical actions and the pupils’ ways of acting on them.

In order to relate this case study to a wider social context, the following background on integration will first zoom out at the macro level and then zoom in at the micro level.

Zooming out on society

Due to migratory movements, many advanced liberal democracies of today are characterised by cultural heterogeneity. In the European Union (EU), the free movement between the member countries has in recent years been accompanied by a flow of refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa. As a result, various issues of integration have been raised.

In Sweden, the national integration policy rests on the welfare state tradition and the assumption ‘that all citizens have equal and universal access to certain fundamental rights’ (Borevi, 2014, p. 708). Paradoxically enough, Kamali (2006) has shown that the ambition to promote social cohesion for all has actually resulted in an exclusive policy for immigrants, which has contributed to disintegration in society. Consequently, segregation has positioned people with low socio-economic status, including many immigrants and refugees, in the outskirts of larger cities. The Swedish police’s national operational unit (2015) has identified some vulnerable areas, where the challenges of social exclusion are acute. The police calls for cooperation between different authorities in order to solve the problems that come with marginalisation and stigmatisation. Social workers and religious communities are common collaborators. In the city where the current study was conducted, some sports clubs have also incorporated this social responsibility into their policies. For instance, they collaborate with teacher education at the local university, whose students help young club members with their homework. This collaboration indicates that school performances are regarded as essential for social inclusion. According to Thorjussen and Sisjord (2018, p. 694), ‘education is often emphasised as one of the main arenas for social integration’. The Swedish curriculum also clarifies that school has two assignments: The development of knowledge and democracy. The latter includes student
participation and respect for others (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). However, not all schools can provide the same opportunities for learning and socialisation.

In the Swedish context, Bunar (2005) describes the tug of war between two educational policies. On the one hand, the free choice school policy promotes freedom of choice, competition and integration by encouraging pupils to leave their segregated schools. This policy allows pupils and their parents to choose any school they like if they are not satisfied with the one they were assigned according to the principle of proximity. On the other hand, a competing integration policy effectively prevents pupils from using their freedom of choice by investing in local schools. Bunar (2015) concludes that the unintended consequence has been even poorer performance results amongst those who have been left behind – geographically and academically.

In light of this background, the ‘bussing project’ was introduced as a remedial measure in the city where the current study was carried out. ‘Bussing projects’ have been tried before. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s African-American and Hispanic students in different parts of the U.S.A were bussed to ‘white areas’ with the aim of equalising educational opportunity (Carlson, 1972). However, such interventions have not avoided criticism. In today’s neo-liberal society, Brown (2013, p. 693) argues that ‘a market competition […] restricts the role of state intervention, severely limiting its capacity to reform educational opportunities aimed at weakening the relationship between origins and educational attainment’. Consequently, Brown (2013) concludes, what some achieve, all cannot.

**Zooming in on PE**

Benn, Dagkas, and Jawad (2011) highlight the importance of taking the historical, national and educational policy context into account in the debate on how to approach ‘the ethnic others’ in school PE. For instance, Muslim girls may experience a greater tension in school PE in some countries, because of different approaches to ethnical minorities and equity:

In many European countries, PE lessons take place in co-educational settings which may force some Muslim students to wear the hijab or others to drop out. In addition, a mixed-sex environment may reduce the possibilities of girls to perform at their best, unaffected by the ‘male gaze’ (Benn & Pfister, 2013, p. 568).

Whereas co-education and discouragement of cultures that treat men and women differently is the norm in for instance Denmark, single-sex solutions and other adaptions to religious beliefs and cultural traditions are common in England (Benn & Pfister, 2013). Dagkas, Benn, and Jawad (2011) have identified some aspects of ‘good practice’ in England, including flexibility regarding dress codes, shared decision-making and situation-specific policies for supporting inclusion of Muslim girls in PE. For instance, swimming is often organised in gender-segregated groups. In Norway, Walseth (2015, p. 304) has found that objections to gender-mixed swimming classes are mainly due to ‘the girls’ gendered religious identities and embodied faith’. Consequently, swimming often requires some kind of cultural adaption in Nordic countries too, due to the intersectionality of aspects such as gender, ethnicity and religion.

In general, PE research from an intersectional perspective aims at revealing social injustice and inequity in the teaching practice (see for example Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas, & Fisette, 2017; Dagkas, 2016; Lleixà & Nieva, 2018; Thorjussen & Sisjord, 2018). In order to revitalise the social justice agenda, Azzarito et al. (2017, p. 215) suggest a shift in focus from equality to difference, in that ‘the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism and ableism needs to be placed at the centre of critical analysis that can reject, deconstruct, and dismiss patterns of oppression and exclusion’. In contrast, Sánchez-Hernández, Martos-García, Soler, and Flintoff (2018) focus on how such challenges can be handled in PE. They show how cooperative learning and critical reflection can be used to ‘create an inclusive learning environment, a safe space talk about sexism, and help students question and move beyond traditional notions of gendered embodiment’ (p. 812). Similarly, this study focuses on an attempt to promote social inclusion for all instead of identifying particular victims of discrimination in PE practice.
Dowling and Flinto (2018) point to the risk of reproducing stereotypes in school PE, regarding gender, ethnicity and religion, rather than challenging them. Even though PE teachers might say that they treat everybody the same, Flinto and Dowling (2019) have shown how a ‘white’ discourse is reproduced through the incontestable choice of subject content. Physical activities are not valued neutral. Whereas some pupils are used to certain games and sports in the PE practice, others have less or even no experience of these taken-for-granted activities at all. Taking Norway as an example, Walseth (2008, p. 13) has found that it is rare that young people with immigrant background participate in traditional Norwegian winter sports, such as cross-country skiing, alpine skiing, snowboarding, or in sports, such as swimming and gymnastics involving body exposure. This is particularly the case for young women with immigrant background from Muslim countries.

This tendency may also have an impact on social networking between immigrants and non-immigrants in school PE. Drawing on Putnam, Walseth (2008) explains that ‘bonding’ within cultural groups might contrain ‘bridging’ between them. Moreover, Barker et al. (2014, p. 199) note that ‘young people experience the effects of migration backgrounds in diverse ways’. Consequently, ‘teachers are still struggling to find ways to implement culturally responsive pedagogy into their physical education classes to meet the needs of diverse learners’ (Columna, Foley, & Lytle, 2010, p. 309). Thus, some scholars advocate the need for physical education teacher education (PETE) students to develop their intercultural sensitivity in their preparation for future encounters with pupils from different cultures (Anttila, Siljamäki, & Rowe, 2018; Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant, & Harrison, 2004; Grimminger, 2008, 2011; Grimminger-Seidensticker & Möhwald, 2017).

By situating cultural diversity in movement, Leseth and Engelsrud (2019, p. 477) claim that people’s attitudes towards each other become visible:

Movement with others involves tensions, frictions and negotiations, as well as creating affects through relationships and experiences among people. Situating cultural diversity in movement offers opportunities for developing an understanding of how we can accommodate, respect and benefit from cultural diversity throughout society.

The quote shows that intercultural encounters are a potential resource for the development of intercultural competence. However, solely providing the opportunity for intercultural encounters in school may not be enough to promote integration. According to Perry and Southwell (2011), there is a risk that the pupils limit their interactions to fellow pupils from the same cultural background.

To sum up, PE teachers obviously face many challenges when trying to deal with the needs of culturally heterogeneous classes (see also Barker, 2019). In the current case, the PE teacher’s efforts to promote integration and the pupils’ responses to such initiatives are understood in terms of governing processes, which motivates the theoretical framework of governmentality (Foucault, 1978/1994).

**Theory**

According to Haahr and Walters (2005, p. 7), a governmentality perspective has much to offer in studies of European integration. At the macro level, the approach involves questions such as:

How is Europe being governed here – as a space of markets, a cultural domain, or perhaps a civilization? What kind of rule is being proposed for Europe – are its subjects to be encouraged to exercise freedoms and responsibilities, like citizens? Or are they to be harnessed, like resources? Under what circumstances do we find different mentalities of government combining in complex patterns?

However, the governmentality perspective can also be applied at the micro level. According to Walters (2012, p. 69):

Foucault’s exploration of governmentality is [...] highly contextualized. This is one of its strengths. In keeping with his methodological practice of the microphysics of power, the analysis of governmentality builds outwards from localities. It starts with events, encounters, and inventions in particular places, under particular circumstances, investigating government in terms of empirical singularities.

Thus, the Foucauldian power concept is not limited to a top-down relationship between the state (or the EU) and the people. Power rather refers to ‘a mode of actions upon the action of others’ in a
network of power relations (Foucault, 1982/1994, p. 341). The governmentality perspective raises questions about the rationalities behind different governing processes, their aims and consequences (Foucault, 1978/1994). These are possible to identify in a discursive practice, in regularities of what is said and done. Within a local community, some actions are encouraged and others discouraged, which implies a ‘conduct of conduct’ (Foucault, 1982/1994, p. 341). In other words, to govern is to structure ‘the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault, 1982/1994, p. 341).

More recent research conducted from a governmentality perspective often deals with issues of political control of self-regulating citizens in advanced liberal democracies. The control is maintained by and through different authorities, which implies ‘government at a distance’ (Dean, 2010; Miller & Rose, 2008; Walters, 2012). In this research project, school is seen as an authority with certain guiding principles, based on the political initiative to promote integration and improved performance results. The focus on ‘action upon action’ in the network of power relations between a PE teacher and a culturally heterogeneous class of pupils facilitates:

[...] localized empirical accounts of actual governing practices, which seek to regulate the conduct of specifically targeted populations. In doing so, it brings into focus the micro-practices of local initiatives and the behavior of local actors (McKee, 2009, p. 478).

Similarly, Öhman (2010) and Tolgfors and Öhman (2016) have studied governing processes in PE practices by applying the governmentality perspective on this particular context. A methodological stance is that pupils’ actions in line with or against the teacher’s guidance correspond to compliance or resistance: ‘Compliance is the key – acceptance or rejection the only options’ (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 92). According to Ball (2019, p. 4), the notion of resistance can be understood as ‘counter-conducts’ within ‘local fixations of power in specific sites’. Whereas compliance means acceptance to be governed in a specific way, resistance implies various strategies of non-compliance, struggles and refusals to be governed in a particular direction. This methodological approach is also supported by McKee (2009, p. 479):

By focusing on strategies from below which aim to resist governmental ambitions, this emphasizes that subjects are reflexive, and can accommodate, adapt, contest, or resist top-down endeavours to govern them if they so wish.

In general, the consequences of a governmentality study involve the constitution of subjectivities in different contexts (Foucault, 1978/1994; Foucault, 1982/1994). This corresponds with the contemporary sociological view on integration as a process of subjectivation. Some sociologists base their work on ‘the idea of a subject seeking to construct himself or herself’ (Wieviorka, 2014, pp. 636–637). Regarding integration, ‘processes of subjectivation’ are studied and ‘what has to be analysed tends to be action’ (Wieviorka, 2014, p. 636).

Thus, there is no linear relationship between a particular governing technique aiming at promoting integration and its consequences. Other norms, values and structures in the neo-liberal society, such as individual freedom and human rights versus discrimination and socio-economic competition, always matter (cf. Dean, 2007).

To sum up, based on a ‘political action’ with the aim of promoting integration and improved performance results, this governmentality study focuses on ‘action upon action’ in a culturally heterogeneous PE practice. Thus, it connects ‘government at a distance’ with ‘the microphysics of power’. The analysis is facilitated by some tools borrowed from the Foucauldian toolbox (as suggested in Macey, 1993), of which ‘rationalities’, ‘action upon action’, ‘conduct of conduct’, ‘compliance’ and ‘resistance’ are of particular importance. Finally, the possible consequences of the governing processes are discussed in relation to previous research.

Method

The fieldwork, including participatory lesson observations and interviews, focused on a PE teacher and a heterogeneous class of pupils. The PE teacher, a forty-year-old white male, had previously
worked at the suburban school. The cultural heterogeneity of the new school is not only characterised by a mixture of pupils from the city centre and those from the suburb, but also includes pupils from other municipalities and smaller rural villages. In addition, about thirty newly arrived pupils attend a language introduction course at the school. They are also included in different PE classes whenever they arrive, which poses another challenge for the PE teacher, who has sole responsibility for their integration through PE. The purposive sampling strategy (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 156) was to ask the PE teacher which of his classes he would recommend for the study, based on a broad spectrum of cultural identities, regarding ethnicity, religion, language, beliefs, gender, lifestyle and social class. The teacher recommended a class in school year seven, with pupils aged 13.

Informed consent was obtained from the teacher, the pupils and their parents (The Swedish Research Council, 2017). The documents in Swedish were also translated into other languages, such as Arabic, Pashtu and Somali, in order to make sure that every parent was informed about the purpose of the project and their child’s right to withdraw from the study at any time. Every parent consented to their child taking part in the study.

The fieldwork involved observing one or two PE lessons per week throughout the autumn term in 2018. A total of eighteen lessons, including an outdoor activity day, were observed. In accordance with the recommendations of Cohen et al. (2011), field notes were taken during the lesson observations, focussing on ‘action upon action’ of relevance for the aim of promoting integration through PE. These ‘thick descriptions’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 466) included speech acts, non-verbal communication and contextual data. The teacher and the pupils were also asked relevant questions during the PE lessons, or in connection with them. Key sentences from these conversations were recorded in the field notes as quotes.

The participatory observations were complemented by two semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014) with the PE teacher, at the beginning and at the end of the research project. The first interview, which was based on an interview guide, focused on his first impressions of the heterogeneous group, which cultural identities he had identified, how the pupils treated each other in the new class composition, his greatest challenges as a teacher and his ideas about how to promote integration and improved performance results. The second interview was conducted in order to follow up on the same issues. The second interview also focused on the consequences of different pedagogical actions and how the teacher would like to proceed in the future. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014), with the exception of small talk of minor importance.

**Analysis procedure**

When analysing integration from a governmentality perspective, *action* is of central importance (Foucault, 1978/1994; Wieviorka, 2014). Thus, the following theory-based analytical questions were posed to the empirical material, in order to achieve the purpose of the study:

1. What underlying *rationalities* can be identified in the discursive practice, i.e. ‘what is said and done’ in the PE practice, including the interviews?
2. How are these rationalities manifested through the PE teacher’s *pedagogical actions* aiming at promoting integration through PE?
3. How do the pupils *act* upon the *pedagogical actions* – What characterises the pupils’ actions when they act in line with (compliance) or against (resistance) the teacher’s guidance?

Several readings of the data facilitated the identification and labelling of three underlying rationalities in regards to integration, encompassing a pattern of ‘action upon action’ in the PE practice.
Findings

The underlying rationalities serve as headings in the following presentation of results. Each category includes descriptions of the PE teacher’s pedagogical actions and the pupils’ ways of acting on them through compliance or resistance, enhanced by excerpts from the interviews and lesson observations.

Promoting intercultural encounters

The PE teacher believed that the multicultural group of pupils would help to improve both integration and performance results.

PE teacher I think it feels terrific with the classes in year seven! There is a great mix of pupils from all over the place. That makes me happy! If you compare with the ones in year nine, who are bussed here together with all of their previous classmates. They still go to school in a homogeneous group of immigrants without any interaction with pupils from other parts of the city (interview 1).

For the bussing project to be worthwhile, all the teachers at the new school must be working together for the same end.

PE teacher We want to create a nice school spirit - a ‘we-spirit’ - and everyone shall feel that they are part of this ‘we’ (interview 1).

The ambition to create a ‘we-spirit’ involved the idea of giving everybody access to the common school community and a chance of getting to know each other.

PE teacher It has to have a positive effect! Because now one can have a friend in the countryside outside town, who one would never have met otherwise. And that’s where I believe all integration begins; that we meet and start hanging with each other. That we see a person behind the suburban kid. […] When the pupils are supposed to go to upper secondary school, they are already used to taking the bus. They will also already be used to a class where the students come from all over the place (interview 1).

The quotation highlights the PE teacher’s belief in bridging cultural boundaries. The practical nature of PE allowed pupils with different cultural backgrounds to do things together, which should benefit integration at the micro level.

PE teacher It is so much quicker to create a ‘we-spirit’ when doing something together. Here, the pupils meet and contribute with their various experiences. The fact that they have different approaches to the subject of PE should be good! (interview 1)

Thus, the first underlying rationality embedded in the discursive practice was to promote intercultural encounters between the pupils.

Compliance

The following episode refers to a PE lesson outdoors in the city park:

The teacher gathered the pupils around him and asked them to form a line based on their dates of birth. This required the pupils to converse with each other. Their common problem solving ended up in an embodied timeline from January to December. The teacher then divided the pupils into groups of three on the basis of their positions in the timeline. The first group happened to consist of a girl from the suburb, originating in the Middle East, a newly arrived Scottish boy with an African heritage, and a girl from the Swedish countryside. The learning task was to help each other find a number of controls marked on a detailed map of the park. The pupils were expected to discuss appropriate routes and give each other peer feedback on how to match the map according to the terrain. Due to the language barrier they used a great deal of body language when pointing at their maps and giving each other directions as to where to go in the park (lesson 3).

The girls reported that they felt a bit awkward when they had to express themselves in English and the boy admitted that he would have preferred cooperating with other boys. Still, this initial
intercultural encounter was a small step towards getting to know each other. Throughout the rest of the term, the PE teacher provided plenty of opportunities for the pupils to interact in random groups (lesson 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14 and 16). This pattern of pedagogical actions can be seen as a governing technique, structuring ‘the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault, 1982/1994, p. 341). Most of the pupils acted as if they accepted being paired or grouped with anybody. Thus, the mixing of pupils with different cultural backgrounds gave prerequisites for social cohesion in the culturally heterogeneous class.

**Resistance**

Whenever the teacher was inconsistent in his ambition to divide the cultural sub-groups, a contradictory social pattern appeared. For instance, the field notes regarding a warm-up skipping exercise revealed that:

All the suburban girls and a boy from the same area grouped together, the other boys gathered in another group and a third constellation consisted of the rest of the girls in the class (lesson 11).

A girl, who had recently moved to the city from a rural village, explained her interpretation of these groupings to me.

**Girl**

We choose the ones we trust.

**Researcher**

Trust? What do you mean by that?

**Girl**

You are drawn to those who won’t laugh at you if you make a mistake.

**Researcher**

Aha, is that a big problem in PE?

**Girl**

Perhaps not, but we all prefer to be with the ones we have most in common with.

This conversation indicates that intercultural encounters did not always occur in the PE practice, unless they were promoted by the PE teacher. The pupils’ resistance was characterised by bonding at the expense of bridging.

**Promoting collaboration**

The use of ball games was based on the assumption that they required teamwork, which was regarded as another important aspect of integration. When gathering the pupils for the introduction of a ball game theme, the PE teacher’s first choice of learning activity was Ultimate Frisbee, because:

There is no referee! Or, rather, there are 14 referees, since all players in both teams are supposed to make sure that the rules are followed. And rule number one is fair play! (Lesson 9)

What made Ultimate Frisbee such a good learning activity in school PE, according to the PE teacher, was that no pupils played the game outside school. Thus, the pupils’ initial level was likely to be the same, which gave everyone the chance to play on equal terms.

The ambition to equalise the pupils’ learning opportunities was also evident in the adaptation of other ballgames, such as floorball. The PE teacher’s pedagogical action involved replacing the regular plastic ball with a beanbag or a sock. The teacher explained that the learning intention was not for the pupils to develop their skills in floorball, but rather their interpersonal and collaborative skills:

What really matters is that we do this together, as a team (lesson 16).

For the same reason, many games and physical activities with or without balls required cooperation in different group constellations. For instance, an obstacle course was not only used for individual physical training, but rather as a team-building event. Together the teammates were supposed to gather as many beanbags as possible, while performing various movements in the gymnastic apparatus.
PE teacher They have to be able to cooperate with everybody. That’s what is required in most occupations and in society in general, so they need to get used to it in school (interview 1).

Thus, the second underlying rationality embedded in the discursive practice was to promote collaboration.

**Compliance**

By the end of the first term of the bussing project, most pupils interacted unhindered with each other. Collaboration with peers of a different origin than their own seemed to be undramatic for them.

After a couple of lessons of gymnastics, the pupils were free to choose any workstation they liked in order to practice whatever they needed or wanted. At first, most of the boys gathered by the springboard and the vault while most of the girls chose the balance beam, still-rings and bars. However, it did not take long until the gender-segregated groupings were dissolved. Soon, there was a mix of boys and girls at the different workstations. Regardless of cultural identities, many of the pupils helped each other in the apparatus (lesson 14).

After the lesson, the PE teacher applauded and praised their performances:

I am so happy when I see all of you active, cooperating all the time! (lesson 14)

According to the PE teacher’s feedback, the collaboration among the pupils was higher valued than their gymnastic performances. The same aspect was highlighted in the ballgame theme. In the evaluation of a floorball lesson, the PE teacher asked the pupils what they enjoyed playing with most – the ball, the beanbag or the sock. The majority of the pupils seemed to prefer the sock. The PE teacher concluded:

When using a sock, everybody is smiling! When using the ordinary ball, everybody takes it too seriously (lesson 16).

This instance of ‘action upon action’ showed that most of the pupils appreciated the social, collaborative aspect of the game.

**Resistance**

However, some of the pupils remained locked into the logic of competition incorporated in sport. Ultimate Frisbee and floorball with a sock still involved the idea of scoring more goals than the opponents. Consequently, one of the teams started to celebrate their superiority more and more (lesson 11). Their loud exclamations became quite intimidating to the other pupils. When they protested, there was an exchange of foul language.

PE teacher So far, there has not been any collective socialisation regarding foul language. But I am convinced that we won’t have the same problem in the ninth year, when the pupils have understood what is acceptable to say here (interview 2).

The quote shows a tendency of non-compliance in regards to the desirable discursive order. Even if the collaboration worked within the respective teams, the atmosphere was fierce between them. However, the PE teacher expected that the pupils’ behaviour would eventually become normalised, which was also the end in view in the third rationality of relevance to integration.

**Promoting mutual respect**

At the suburban school, there had been serious disciplinary challenges, which meant that the teachers had been quite busy handling acute conflicts.

PE teacher Then we only had time to ‘put out fires’. So, I really think the bussing will be helpful in that it gives us teachers an opportunity to lift more pupils, when they are scattered at different schools (interview 1).
In the new educational setting, the PE teacher had higher expectations of being able to influence how the pupils behaved towards each other. Hence, a constant fostering – here understood as a ‘conduct of conduct’ – was integrated into the teaching practice.

PE teacher Once we used twenty minutes of the lesson to discuss racism in the class, which must be prioritised before everything else. We have to create a culture where we are nice to each other. The pupils’ use of foul language often leads to prolonged conflicts. When someone talks a little too much, the conflict often affects the next lesson and disturbs their concentration in that subject (interview 2).

According to the PE teacher, a nice learning environment in PE would also benefit the pupils’ concentration and performances in other school subjects. Thus, the third underlying rationality was to promote mutual respect.

Compliance
Through a frequently used governing technique, the PE teacher encouraged the pupils to reflect on and take responsibility for their own actions. Often this pedagogical action occurred when the class gathered to end the lesson.

PE teacher If everyone takes responsibility for themselves, without blaming others, everything will be just fine. Think about; ‘what could I have done differently today?’ And next time, I expect everything to work much better! (Lesson 8)

The PE teacher’s guidance highlighted the requirement of self-regulating skills in PE practice:

Some of you need to think about how you affect the group and how to behave in a PE lesson! (lesson 12)

Even though the PE teacher addressed the whole class, the individual subject was supposed to adapt to the norm of mutual respect through self-regulation. One of the suburban girls who had cracked this code explained that the social climate at her old school had been a lot tougher compared to the new one. At the suburban school, everybody stood up for themselves as carriers of a discourse based on pride:

If anybody said something to you, you had to respond in the same manner (lesson 4).

At the culturally heterogeneous school, however, she found the social climate more peaceful. Thus, the norm to treat everyone with respect was most evident when broken.

Resistance
A social pattern was that some of the suburban pupils still tended to throw verbal punches at each other (lessons 7, 9, 12, 13 and 16), such as:

You bloody immigrant!

Shut up! You’re an immigrant too! (Lesson 12)

It seemed to be acceptable to call another person an immigrant if you were one yourself. The use of that word as an invective signalled that some pupils from the vulnerable area did not yet feel fully included in the school community. They still gave the impression of struggling with stigmatising responses to the phenomenon of immigration.

There were also signs of ‘ableism’ and ‘bodyism’, directed at a particular boy who seemed to be positioned at the bottom of the ranking list. Note that he was of Swedish origin, somewhat overweight and not the sporty type.

The pupils were standing in a line, based on their heights. As always, the PE teacher randomly divided them into pairs who were supposed to perform a learning task together. When a suburban boy noticed that he was to work together with the particular boy, he protested wildly. However, the PE teacher was busy speaking to someone else, so the suburban boy changed both strategy and position. He grabbed the arm of one of his friends and
moved away from the line. In the hubbub, the teacher missed the disrespectful act of exclusion, which I as an observer was able to see. Well aware of his low social status, the rejected boy sighed; ‘forever alone’ (lesson 5).

The excerpt shows an example of counter-conduct when a pupil refuses to work together with a peer of low social status. Obviously, the challenge of promoting mutual respect remained after the first term of the bussing project. Still, some of its possible consequences can be discussed.

**Discussion**

This governmentality study has connected a ‘political action’ with the aim of promoting integration and improved performance results with ‘action upon action’ in a culturally heterogeneous PE practice – i.e. ‘government at a distance’ with ‘microphysics of power’. The purpose was to explore what became of this particular PE practice, in terms of rationalities encompassing the PE teacher’s pedagogical actions and the pupils’ ways of acting on them.

The findings highlight three underlying rationalities in regards to integration, aiming at promoting intercultural encounters, collaboration and mutual respect. These rationalities, manifested through the PE teacher’s pedagogical actions, offer guidance for the pupil seen as ‘a subject seeking to construct himself or herself’ (Wieviorka, 2014, pp. 636–637).

In case of compliance, the notion of ‘us and them’ is countered and a shared experience of belonging is achieved through teamwork and self-regulation. For instance, the PE teacher used different adapted ballgames and physical activities in randomised groups for collaborative reasons. Aspects such as foul language and racism were discussed in relation to the learning activities. Similarly, Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2018) highlight the potential of collaborative learning and critical reflection. By choosing a ballgame as subject content, the goal might not be the development of technical or tactical skills. The intended learning outcome might rather be to elicit unequal gender patterns or other stereotypical relationships in PE practice and give the pupils the opportunity to challenge them.

In case of resistance, segregation is maintained in the school community as well as in society as a whole. Some pupils resisted the PE teacher’s pedagogical actions through counter-compliance and refusals to be governed in a particular direction (Ball, 2019). For instance, mutual respect was not a norm shared by all pupils. Some examples of ‘racism’, ‘bodyism’ and ‘ableism’ (cf. Azzarito et al., 2017) were expressed both verbally and through body language. Whenever the PE teacher failed to divide the class into mixed groups, many pupils chose to team up with those they already knew well. When pupils limit their interactions to peers with the same cultural backgrounds in school, there is also little prospect of social cohesion outside its walls (Perry & Southwell, 2011). The same process of inclusion and exclusion may occur in the context of sports clubs. Walseth (2008, p. 13) has shown that ‘bonding might create out-group antagonism and contribute to the marginalisation of outsiders’. In other words, sport can be an obstacle for integration if there is a strong sense of bonding within cultural groups, but limited bridging between them.

From a social justice perspective, pupils representing ‘otherness’ are incorporated in a somewhat given movement culture in the educational context where this study was conducted. Orienteering and floorball are very common in Swedish school PE, but rare in Northern Africa and the Middle East, where most immigrants were born. Other common learning activities in Sweden are ball games, movement to music, swimming and outdoor education. These physical activities represent a ‘Nordic movement culture’, which means that pupils in a culturally heterogeneous group have unequal access to them (cf. Walseth, 2008). Thus, a ‘white discourse’ is reproduced through the taken-for-granted subject content, why some cultural identities are privileged while others are marginalised in the PE practice (Flintoff & Dowling, 2019). Moreover, Dagkas et al. (2011) argue that gender-segregated groups are sometimes motivated in school PE, in order to reach all pupils, including Muslim girls. Nevertheless, co-education is the norm in Swedish school PE. Consequently, the end in view is cultural assimilation (Grimminger, 2008), in that ‘the ethnic others’ (Benn et al., 2011) are supposed to conform to the predominant culture.
From an *intercultural perspective*, on the other hand, Grimminger-Seidensticker and Möhwald (2017, p. 446) argue that ‘schools have the educational responsibility to prepare children for peaceful living in a heterogeneous society by promoting intercultural competence’. The democratic assignment in the Swedish curriculum also relates to this responsibility (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The intended learning outcomes of PE are possible to reach in different ways – for instance through collaboration and critical reflection (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018) – and allow all pupils access to different movement cultures in the only country they have in common. The PE teacher in this study appreciated that the pupils brought different experiences into the teaching practice. Many of the learning tasks required collaboration in mixed groups, which provided plenty of opportunities for intercultural encounters. Potentially, these encounters were of importance for the pupils’ collective understanding of the subject content as well as each other. The PE teacher’s opinion that a ‘we-spirit’ is easily developed when *doing* things together can be related to Leseth and Engelsrud’s (2019, p. 477) view that ‘[s]ituating cultural diversity in movement offers opportunities for developing an understanding of how we can accommodate, respect and benefit from cultural diversity throughout society’. From this perspective, the end in view is *pluralistic integration* (Grimminger, 2008).

This study does not contribute any incontestable evidence of social inclusion through PE (cf. Bailey, 2005; Dagkas, 2018). However, the findings indicate that ‘action upon action’ in a culturally heterogeneous PE practice makes a difference insofar as integration is understood as a process of subjectivation (Wieviorka, 2014). Depending on the direction of the PE teacher’s guidance, the process might tend towards either cultural assimilation or pluralistic integration (Grimminger, 2008).

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

**Funding**

This work was supported by Örebro Universitet.

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