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## **Narratives From YouTube: Juxtaposing Stories About Physical Education**

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# Narratives From YouTube: Juxtaposing Stories About Physical Education

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore what is performed in students' and teachers' actions in physical education practice in terms of "didactic irritations," through an analysis of YouTube clips from 285 PE lessons from 27 different countries. Didactic irritations are occurrences that Rønholdt describes as those demanding "didactic, pedagogical reflections and discussions, which in turn could lead to alternative thinking and understanding about teaching and learning." Drawing on Barad's ideas of performativity to challenge our habitual anthropocentric analytical gaze when looking at educational visual data, and using narrative construction, we also aim to give meaning to actions, relations, and experiences of the participants in the YouTube clips. To do this, we present juxtaposing narratives from teachers and students in terms of three "didactic irritations": (a) stories from a track, (b), stories from a game, and (c), stories from a bench. The stories re-present events-of-moving in the data offering insights into embodied experiences in PE practice, making students' as well as teachers' actions in PE practice understandable.

## Keywords

YouTube, observation, physical education, narrative construction

Imagine that you are 14 years of age again and standing in the gym at your old school. The physical education (PE) lesson is just about to begin. Do you feel excited, unconcerned, or worried? Some kids are running around in the gym chasing each other. Some boys are shooting hoops with a basketball. Others are sitting on a bench talking. Your PE teacher comes into the gym to start the lesson. What's going to happen today; leap-frogs over a vaulting horse, volleyball, running laps or maybe fitness training? The lesson starts with the teacher saying; "today we're going to play basketball. Four teams, blue, red, green, yellow. But before we start playing let's do a warm up. Grab a ball and start to dribble." You start bouncing the ball and the PE teacher puts some music on.

Whether you liked PE or not this school subject often evokes memories and emotions; memories of moving, joy, unity, or maybe memories of standing in lines, clumsiness, exposure, or even fear (cf. Webb, Quennerstedt, & Öhman, 2008). This paper attempts to represent some of these experiences and emotions through an analysis of video clips from PE lessons posted on the public video sharing website YouTube. With an analytical point of departure in Larsson and Quennerstedt's (2012) exploration of Judith Butler's and Karen Barad's ideas of performativity and the methodological challenges they propose, this paper makes use of narrative construction (Barone, 2007; Emihovich, 1995; Prosser, 2009; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Swidler, 2000; Zeller, 1995) to give meaning to actions, relations, and experiences of

some of the participants in the PE events in the YouTube clips. The aim of the paper is to explore and describe what is performed in students' and teachers' actions in PE practice in terms of the disturbances going on, what Rønholdt (2002) calls "didactic irritations." Didactic irritations can be seen as occurrences in PE practice that urge pedagogical reflections which in turn could lead to alternative discussions and understanding about teaching and learning in PE (Rønholdt, 2002).

Furthermore, building strongly on valuable insights from several years of scholarly debate in educational journals about the use of narrative inquiry and representation of data (Emihovich, 1995; Krøjer & Hølge-Hazelton, 2008; Prosser, 2009; Swidler, 2000; Zeller, 1995), we aim to bring the visual data alive through the use of narrative construction, in an "accessible, engaging, and evocative manner" (Carless & Sparkes, 2008, p. 191) and seek to engage the reader in scrutinizing PE practices with "renewed interest and a more questioning stance" (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 578). The paper is consequently a critical paper about PE as an educational practice, targeting taken-for-granted assumptions,

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aiming to keep the debate going about what PE is, should, and could be about.

## Theoretical Considerations

In the analysis of the data from YouTube, a poststructural materialist approach drawing mainly on Karen Barad is used as a starting point to explore what movement means in terms of events-of-moving (Larsson & Quennerstedt, 2012 cf. also Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Mazzei & McCoy, 2010). Barad (2007) builds her work on Foucault's critique of representationalism in terms of words representing an external reality, and Butler's theory of performativity to develop a "robust account of the materialization of all bodies—'human' and 'non-human'" (p. 66). In our own endeavor, Barad's (2007) work is employed as a way to extend the poststructural idea of performativity to also consider how nonhuman matter like balls or the gym itself, as well as other people's bodies and actions, can be understood as mutually agentic. Bodies are therefore not separated from the materiality of the event.

In this way, we can challenge our habitual analytical gaze when looking at educational visual data and instead recognize assemblages of material, cultural, and individual agents in exploring students-acting-in-educational-settings. Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) provide a powerful example of this with a photograph of a little girl in a sandbox and argue that the sand, in this perspective, can be understood as active, playing with the girl just as much as the girl plays with the sand. They both come into play in the visual data explored.

In relation to using visual data in educational research, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) argue that in Barad's theory, the material and the discursive are intra-twined, and mutually entangled in a process of iterative intra-activity. This implies a rehabilitation of material aspects in post-structurally inspired educational studies reaching "beyond the subject/object binary divide" (p. 527). Applied to human movement, Larsson and Quennerstedt (2012) further state that in this perspective we can explore repetitive acts and movements of children's bodies as well as re-iterative intra-activity between human and nonhuman agents, and consequently not separate children's bodies from the materiality of the event of moving.

In this way, it is not only the materialization of one's own body in terms of embodied experiences, bodily functions or muscular tonus that is at centre stage but also the materiality of other bodies and the material aspects of the event, like for example the locality, equipment, a tackle or touching. (Larsson and Quennerstedt, 2012, p. 289)

To understand what movement means, thus, involves exploring who is moving, how they are moving, as well as in what situation the moving takes place, and consequently

explore events where people are walking, dancing, feeling, talking, or throwing (Larsson & Quennerstedt, 2012). This involves taking into account students' talk, embodied actions, relations, and coactions as well as the larger material arrangement of the event in terms of artifacts and locality.

We have also been guided by our theoretical framework in constructing the stories to give prominence to individual, social, cultural, as well as material aspects of the events in our analysis. In this way we have tried to go beyond the habitual anthropocentric analytical gaze in exploring educational visual data.

## Methodological Considerations

### Using Visual Data

Laura Azzarito (2010) makes a case for using visual methodologies in Physical Culture Studies to learn more about young people's experiences of the body and the body-in-culture. Building on Azzarito's arguments, we would claim that using data from YouTube, as a certain kind of visual data, is one way to get close to social practices and everyday situations of young people. The use of visual video data also, as Öhman and Quennerstedt (2011) state, makes it possible to explore ongoing practices in terms of movement-in-context. This includes investigating people's actions when put into use and the meaning different spoken or embodied actions obtain in that certain situation. It also involves the context—both the social context in terms of relations and communication—and what Barad (2007) calls attention to as the agency of the materiality of the event.

In this way, the use of visual data resonates well with what Barad (2007) suggests, and the insights elucidated by Larsson and Quennerstedt (2012) in using a poststructural materialist approach in explorations of human movement.

### YouTube as Data

In this paper, video clips from the public video sharing website YouTube are used to explore experiences and relations in and of movement in the educational practice of PE. The clips can be regarded as participatory generated visual data that can enrich our understanding of *movement-in-context*, in this case, an educational context.

YouTube is the largest user-generated video sharing website, where different video content is presented on the Internet constituting what Burgess and Green (2009) call a cocreated site of participatory culture. Drawing on Burgess and Green, Quennerstedt (2013a) further argues that YouTube can be understood as a disordered public video archive of (in this case) ongoing PE practices generated by students and teachers.<sup>1</sup>

The selection of clips used in this study is based on a search of YouTube in 2009 by the first author of the paper using English and Swedish search terms,<sup>2</sup> using the terms

**Table 1.** Selection of Video Clips in the Analysis.

Country	Number of clips	Teacher posted clips	Student posted clips	Length of clips	Total time, ca:
Sweden	82	6	76	0.21–9.00	2 hr 30 min
UK	69	7	62	0.31–8.35	2 hr 20 min
USA	58	25	33	0.43–10.00	3 hr 00 min
Other countries <sup>i</sup>	76	28	48	0.28–10.01	4 hr 00 min

<sup>i</sup>The category “other countries” includes clips from; Philippines ( $n = 15$ ), Singapore ( $n = 15$ ), China ( $n = 9$ ), Australia ( $n = 5$ ), Canada ( $n = 4$ ), Spain ( $n = 3$ ), Germany ( $n = 3$ ), New Zealand ( $n = 3$ ), Japan ( $n = 3$ ), the Czech Republic ( $n = 2$ ), Hungary ( $n = 2$ ), Indonesia ( $n = 2$ ), South Korea ( $n = 2$ ), Albania ( $n = 1$ ), Estonia ( $n = 1$ ), Ireland ( $n = 1$ ), Malta ( $n = 1$ ), Guam ( $n = 1$ ), Poland ( $n = 1$ ), United Arab Emirates ( $n = 1$ ), Malaysia ( $n = 1$ ), Sri Lanka ( $n = 1$ ), Taiwan ( $n = 1$ ), Vietnam ( $n = 1$ ).

PE, PE lesson, PE class, P.E. class, phys ed, and their Swedish equivalents, *idrott och hälsa*, *idrott skola*, *idrottslektion*, *gympa*. The basic idea of the selection process was to attain as varied a sample as possible of video clips of ongoing PE practices without generalizing the claims of the study. The searches gave over 8,000 hits in total and the 200 first clips of each search term were viewed. In this first step, 1,800 clips were identified, so a further selection of clips for in-depth analysis was necessary. Important here was that the clips must show ongoing PE-practices possible to analyze, so commercials for schools, funny videos of PE, clips showing events before or after the PE class, clips of poor visual quality and clips shorter than 20 s were excluded.

The steps used to secure the credibility of the sample and ensuring that the remaining clips were actually of school PE included (a) viewing the description of the clip and the comments posted in relation to the clip, (b) reviewing the context of the clip on the “user channel” where the clip was posted, (c) determining if a teacher was present and/or teaching in the clip, (d) assess the reasonability of the activity going on in the clip in relation to previous research within the field, and finally (e) to discuss some of the clips with research colleagues within the field to make sure that the clip was of actual ongoing PE practice. For example, one of the clips showed two girls running and talking. So by (a) viewing the description of the clip saying “this is us during PE-class today running the 5 km,” (b) looking at the user channel where the student had several clips from school posted, (c) assuming teacher presence previous to clip through being mentioned by the girls several times including mentioning of issues of grading in PE, and (d) accepting that running the 5 km is a reasonable activity in PE according to previous research, we could for good reason argue that this was a clip of school PE. In uncertain cases the clip was omitted from the sample.

In the final sample, clips from 285 PE lessons ranging from 21 s to 10 min with an average length of 2 to 3 min from 27 different countries was used (see Table 1).

In the previous studies, the data set of clips was used to explore students’ diverse ways of participating and learning in PE practice (Quennerstedt 2013a, 2013b). These studies together with the viewing of descriptions, context, and comments in relation to each clip revealed that most of the

student posted clips in the sample were what Lange (2008) would term my-typical-day-in-school clips, diary entries depicting what is going on in young people’s lives.

In this paper, the research used a three-stage analysis process; first, the clips were explored in their entirety by the first author of the paper and “field notes” for all clips were created where the analytical gaze presented in the paper guided how the notes were written. In the field notes, spoken language, embodied actions, and coactions, artifacts used and the institutional and material context were described. The second step conducted by the first author involved analyzing the whole data set and identifying what Rønholt (2002) calls didactic irritations:

A didactic irritation is at first experienced as my felt irritation or disturbance about a situation during my observations, as noted in my field notes. However, to be termed a “didactic” irritation it needed to be shown to have an important influence on the teaching or learning process, as demonstrated through a close analysis of the video. I consider didactic irritations to be general and dynamic phenomena, which from my perspective provide knowledge about processes that demand didactic, pedagogical reflections and discussions, which in turn could lead to alternative thinking and understanding about teaching and learning. Thus didactic irritations incorporate possibilities for change for the teacher and the students. (pp. 26-27)

A similar approach has been used in narrative inquiry by Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Murray Orr (2009), where they focused on tensions as a strategy to identify moments or events in their data. In this paper, Rønholt’s concept of didactic irritations has been used in discussions between the three authors of the paper to identify, from our point of view as researchers, PE Teacher Educators and former PE-teachers, clips and situations in teachers’ and students’ stories posted on YouTube that stand out and say something about noteworthy experiences in PE practice. In this process, the clips used for this study and the coding of the clips into the didactic irritations presented in the results section were made through a discussion between the authors, where we followed Rønholt’s (2002) advice to look for disturbances in the clips potentially having a significant influence on the teaching or learning process.



The final stage involved an in-depth analysis of these didactic irritations, focusing on exploring and describing what is performed in students' and teachers' actions in PE practice. In this step, the didactic irritations were categorized into coherent themes through an open discussion between all three authors reflecting our research question. In this part, we have tried to include the insights our theoretical starting point suggests in that our analytical "gaze" was directed toward students' movement-in-context in PE practices including the larger material arrangement of the event.

The authors of the paper have viewed, discussed, and re-viewed the visual data used in the study several times in different constellations, but with the first author always present, and the narratives have been constructed by drawing on data from across different YouTube clips; they are therefore representations of an assemblage of events, people, actions, and relations emerging from the analysis of the visual data (cf. Clandinin et al., 2009).

### **Narrative Construction**

To represent visual data in academic writing is not an easy task, where typical categorizations do not always seem to capture the emotion, experience, events, happenings, embodied relations, and materiality of events from in this case the clips of PE practices from YouTube.

Hence, to overcome some of the challenges of moving from visual data via field notes to academic text, this paper uses narrative construction (Barone, 2007; Emihovich, 1995; Krøjer & Hølge-Hazelton, 2008; Prosser, 2009; Smith & Sparkes, 2009; Swidler, 2000; Zeller, 1995). Narrative analysis has been suggested as one means that writers might better engage, interest and really *move* readers, for example, through the use of stories (Dowling, 2012; Prosser, 2009; Richardson & Adams St Pierre, 2005). Some time ago, Sparkes (2002) mapped out a variety of different ways in which research in PE and sport might be differently constructed and written to offer a challenge to the hegemony of the so-called "gold standard" of the realist, or scientific, tale. Although arguably still far from established in PE and sport studies, there is now a range of work that has used methods such as poetic representations, auto-ethnography, and fictional ethnography (e.g. Douglas & Carless, 2009; Dowling Naess, 2001; Dowling, Fitzgerald, & Flintoff, 2012; Jones, 2009; Lunsford Mears, 2008; Prosser, 2009; Smith & Sparkes, 2004). In choosing to write and present their research in these different ways, the authors seek a different kind of response from the reader to that created by the realist or scientific tale. Facts, events, identities, and experiences are rearranged into stories that set out to evoke an emotional as well as an intellectual response, and are judged accordingly.

However, importantly, as Dowling (2012, p.43) notes, "we are not simply free to choose 'our story,' but the way we script our lives is most often a reflection of the sociocultural locations we inhabit." Stories, then, say

something not only about us as individuals but equally something about the context in which we live and work; micro stories about individual lives are therefore also stories about macro societal relations. [. . .] Tales from the locker room or the playing field are inextricably linked to local, national and global narratives.

The YouTube clips thus represent students' and teachers' stories about themselves and their PE from the scripts available to them; they therefore tell us something more than the individual stories written here.

In this study, we use an amalgamation of several clips to "re-create" narratives of PE practice trying to give meaning to actions, relations, and experiences of the participants, including what Barad (2007) would argue to be the material participants, of the events (Dowling et al., 2012; Oliver, 1998). Just as qualitative researchers must draw out and argue for the significance of key themes from a vast array of data to make their case, our task has been to do the same from the YouTube clips. In this case, we draw out their significance through narrative stories, each with a storyline or "plot" that links a series of events and people (Dowling, 2012). As well as a plot, Dowling (2012) also argues for the significance of the setting in a story, the physical and spatial settings give stories their context and make them meaningful. In our stories, the material particularities of the PE settings, whether the countryside, a too-small gym, or the arrangements for containing the "non-active" participants (the bench) as well as the cell-phones used to film the clip, are all important to the ways in which PE is experienced. In developing our stories, we therefore "seek to construct informing re-presentations that provoke exploration of the purposes and meanings of educational practice and research" (Atkinson, 2009, p. 92).

However, how can a reader judge these stories in terms of academic writing, as re-presentations of high-quality research? (Atkinson, 2009; Carless & Sparkes, 2008; Coulter & Smith, 2009). These are important questions often directed as critique toward narrative inquiry and narrative construction (Kim & Macintyre Latta, 2009). Barone (2007) gives us some insights to this reservation. He argues that the aim of narrative inquiry "is not to seek certainty about correct perspectives on educational phenomena but to raise significant questions about prevailing policy and practice that enrich ongoing conversation" (Barone, 2007, p. 466). In this paper, we aim to do this through juxtaposing narratives about didactic irritations.

### **Juxtaposing Narratives**

Juxtaposing narratives from teachers and students are presented in terms of three "didactic irritations" (Rønholdt, 2002): (a) stories from a track, (b), stories from a game, and (c), stories from a bench. The juxtaposing narratives are used as a way to present the data as two versions of the same event, versions that both can be quite reasonable. The

juxtaposition of the stories then adds to the results in that they together become less reasonable, and the complexities and inconsistencies of PE-practice become visible. The stories accordingly re-present events-of-moving in the data offering insights into experiences in PE practice, and attempting to do justice to the analysis of experiences, embodied actions and the materiality of the event.

Of course, these stories are specific stories from PE, told in terms of didactic irritations. In PE, and in the data set as a whole, a lot of things flow on smoothly and many, maybe most, students enjoy PE, learn a lot in PE and flourish in PE (cf. Pühse & Gerber, 2005). However, in this paper it is not the general picture of PE in focus. Instead, the disturbances about what is explored in the YouTube clips are in focus. Stories already told by students via their posted clips are consequently foregrounded as didactic irritations.

We remind the reader that the first person, the I in the following stories, represents several I's from the analysis of the data (cf. Clandinin et al., 2009), and within each didactic irritation, voices from teachers and students are present to juxtapose teacher and student narratives.

### *Stories From a Track*

For the second time that day, Chris appreciated the fact that his job allowed him to work outside. Especially on a lovely autumn day like this—bright sunshine, blue sky, crisp air. Fantastic! He took a big breath, the cold air almost hurting as it sucked down into his lungs. The sensation reminded him of the weekend and of his pleasure (and pain, lets face it) in completing the 10-km run. And he had done a good time too! He had been pleased his dodgy ankle had held up well, with only a little swelling later that evening. He had felt stronger too, the work in the gym over the last month seemingly paying off at last. Although there had been times on the run when he felt he could not keep going at the pace he had set himself, he had pushed through it, knowing he would feel great at the end. He always did. No gain without pain! But he decided not to run the whole of the 5 km he had planned for his PE class today—he would give his ankle a rest. He would see them off at the start and then cut across to the halfway point. He did this sometimes when he did not feel like running all the way with them. They were ok with that—most of them did not take advantage. In fact one or two of the boys in this group, and Angela, were good runners and had real potential. They were not his concern right now though, it was the ones that would run until they were out of sight of him, and then, who knows what they would do! But there was not really anything he could do unless he did keep them in sight all the time. Even then some of them just did not seem to care—whatever activity he did—they did not join in, they would mess about, joking, not taking anything seriously. Why was that? Why could they not see that exercise was good for them, now but also in the future, for their health and

well-being? It is their own future that they are messing with, Chris thought, as he started the lesson. He felt responsible for them; it was his job to motivate them, educate them, after all.

\*

Carole bent her head to the ground where the previous night's frost had hardened the lumps and bumps on the forest track into sharp knife-like ruts, and pretended to eat the ants crawling in single file across the path. Joanne laughed "you've mad, you really are!" Carole's response was to turn on her back, shouting, "look, I'm an ant having a heart attack!" waving her arms and legs frantically in the air. Tina and Joanne giggled as they filmed the whole thing on their cell-phones, strolling slowly by. "Come on," Tina urged, "or he will only go off on one if we've late! You know we're supposed to be being assessed today. We'd all come last if we're not back before the time." Although Tina did not like running, she also did not like it when she got told off by Mr. Bold. "Well, what do you mean, I've got my uniform on, I've got my trainers for a change, and I am running, ain't I?" Carole responded. She set off down the track, overexaggerating the running style they had been introduced to at the beginning of the class, looking directly into the camera lens of the cell-phone. "Look, what do you think he will give me for running like this? Isn't this how it's supposed to be done? Come on you lot, it's your fault we're going to be late." Turning to laugh at the others now behind her, Carole disappeared from sight around a corner of the track, striding out in what was really quite a passable running style.

### *Stories From a Game*

This group is always so noisy! Even before I get to the gym, I can hear it is them from halfway down the corridor. I will need to be firm today. They were a bit out of order last week—but then it is not my fault, 35 in this gym is ridiculous. It is too small. But most of them seemed to like the basketball. Ten minutes of this warm up game of dodge ball should calm them down a bit. They are always like this when they come from Maths! Ten minutes, that is all, then I will move on. Oh no, what is Lucy doing over in the corner? Has she actually thrown a ball yet? There is not much dodging going on with her today then! And Tony! Well, they have found a good place to hide anyway as usual. Which teams am I going to put them in today? Someone will complain, whatever I do. It is a problem, but I can not do drills forever. At some stage, you have to play a game. That is when it is a bit of a nightmare. They are really frightened of the ball and it is difficult to teach games when you have kids that can not catch a ball! "Whoa, watch it, Mark, no marks for my head thank you very much! That's not the aim of the game!" Annette stepped back toward the edge of the gym where she

was less exposed to the flying balls, and watched her class engage in the warm up.

\*

The ball whizzed past his head and slammed hard onto the wall, rebounding and rolling back into the middle of the hall. Tony shuddered, clasping his arms a little tighter around his chest, turning to one side. Let this end soon! He thought. He shuffled slowly toward the corner of the gym, raising his eyebrows at Lucy in a shared, silent, condemnation of the game. She too was trying to move unseen toward the safe space, pushing her new glasses back firmly up her nose. “Great eh,” Lucy whispered. “Just stay here and hopefully no one will notice us!” “Truly great!” Tony replied. “Look at this, Ricky did it. He threw it from three feet away,” pointing to a large, red weald, spreading down his calf, just below the back of his knee. “Dodge ball,” he continued, “There’s not much of a chance of dodging from that distant when someone like Ricky is out to get you.” They watched from their relatively secure corner at the game. Ricky and two other boys shout “Let’s have boys against girls! Get the girls!” Suddenly, the noise level is deafening,—four girls screaming as three boys pelt balls at their legs, one after another. Ricky, Mark, and Roger are dominating the action as usual. Lucy was not sure whether the girls’ screams were real or not—whether they were, in fact, actually enjoying the attention and being the centre of attention? Either way, the gym had been turned into a battle field! Glancing round, she notices Sima and Jessica in a game of their own against Tania and Anna at the other end of the hall. Most of the balls miss their targets, but they do not seem to mind, they laugh and pick up the balls for another go. “Don’t throw at people’s heads, or we will have to stop the game,” Mrs. Thomas shouts, although it is not evident that anyone is listening. A ball rolls toward Tony, and without thinking, he picks it up. He realized in an instant that he is now fair game—a target. Before he can throw, two balls smack him firmly on the ankle, jolting his hands apart so that his ball plops harmlessly onto the floor to be snapped up by a passing attacker. He is now unarmed, vulnerable. “Ok, that’s enough of a warm-up, stop now, and collect all the balls. Stop now, the warm ups over! Come and sit over here whilst I count you off into teams for basketball.” Mrs. Thomas, finishes the game. Tony lets out his breath; he is saved. This time, Lucy begins to move tentatively from her corner, wary of stray balls. Eventually, Mrs. Thomas is obeyed and the whole class huddles together on the floor around the centre line. Roger is the last one to sit down, pushing his hair from his eyes, panting “That was great, Miss!”

### *Stories From the Bench*

“Come on, come on,” Tim snarled at the computer, as the egg timer on the screen rotated for what seemed like the

thousandth time. The PE department is always short-changed when it comes to computers, he thought to himself. How long was it now that he had been on the waiting list for a laptop? The bell for the first lesson was due to ring in 5 min (at least it would if the maintenance department had fixed the thing) and he had to pick up his group; all he wanted was to check his team’s position in the league after their win on Saturday. He had scored two goals—his first this season—and was eager to see his name appear on the results page. He looked at his watch again; it was taking too long, he would have to come back and check it later.

A sharp twinge in his left calf as he stood made him wince momentarily. Thankfully there was no one else in the office to see that, he thought, and particularly that 1st-year teacher, Steve, who wound him up by calling him “Old timer.” Still, there could be no doubt that he was not as young as he used to be. Saturday’s football matches had recently started to take their toll on his body by the time Monday morning came around.

With a small groan he pulled on his sweater and thought about his timetable for the day. Today’s highlight, weather permitting, was athletics. In his younger days as a medal-winning high-jumper, he felt proud that his demonstration of the Fosbury Flop was technically perfect, but now even he had to admit that it tended more toward the flop than the Fosbury! But first, self-defense with Year 7.

Pushing open the door, the sight of four students sitting and chatting on the bench at the side of the gym, oblivious to him, stopped Tim in his tracks. Their school clothes marked them out as nonparticipants. His good mood began to deflate as he moved toward them, wondering how to handle them, thinking hard. Of course they can not join in without their PE uniform; they need to change if they are going to be active. They can not run around in the clothes they wear all day, it is not safe, or hygienic for that matter! The same old thoughts went round Tim’s head again. Why is it that some kids just do not seem to be interested, whatever he did, however good his lesson was. Why can I not seem to connect with them at all? Why can they not appreciate what is on offer? When actually, he thought, they are the ones that need to be active! Can they not see it is important for their health at least? Some of their bad habits—they will come back and haunt them! The smokers, the overweight ones—and then there is some of the girls, of course. Tim looks again at the bench, and thinks how much, each lesson, it is a reminder. A reminder of the distance between him and them. Active and nonactive. His thoughts return to the football game on Saturday and the bench that is also there, this time at the side of the pitch. But the bench at football is not like this bench. If I am on that bench for 10 min, I am ready to go, fidgeting, he thinks, can not wait to get the go ahead and get on the field and play. We all are. Sitting on that bench is the worse thing, but how different to today’s bench. It seems to be where some of these kids *want* to be, *choose* to be, and whatever I do, I can not seem to change that! Sometimes I tell myself I do not care, I



ignore them and concentrate on the others who want to take part. It is sometimes too much like hard work, and I can not do everything, can not change them all. But it still feels like a failure—that kind of bench being there.

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He is never really angry with us, but you can see that we get to him, Tania thinks. Not bringing our uniform and not joining in, that is his worse nightmare! He is not a bad teacher, but what is all the stress about—he needs to chill out a bit. It is amazing—all you have to do to get out of the lesson is forget your uniform. If only it was that easy in Maths—forget your pencil or ruler and sit at the back and do what you like—I wish! I do not always do it; sometimes it is ok, and then I will join in. But mostly it is too much effort, like what is the point of it? And why do you need to get changed for self defense anyway? It is not like any of them are getting up a sweat!

Ok, let us see, who would be good for a laugh? “Hey, Alex and Chu, say hello to YouTube, do you like my new phone, This is Tania and I’m recording, so smile please! This is our PE lesson and this is Anna and Joe showing us how to defend themselves.” Oh no, he is walking over! “Ah, Mr. Caldwell, would you like to say anything to the camera?” I am amazed, he does not seem bothered, he is just smiled and walked away! I got away with that, amazing! I thought the phone would go at least, but he is not said a thing. Sometimes it is like we are invisible. The bench does not count. He does not care what we do. It is crap. It is his job, he ought to care! He should listen and find out what we want to do, not bang on about why we should do this, why we should do that. It is for your health, it is for your heart, whatever. Where is the fun in that! Who cares if your heart packs up when you are old? It is better sitting here having fun instead. Doing some filming which will be great on YouTube. What is the problem?

## Discussion

In this paper, visual data of PE practices from the public video sharing website YouTube has been explored, and by using a robust theoretical framework it has been possible to investigate the simultaneousness of individual, social, cultural, and material aspects of the event. The focus of the analysis, and accordingly the narrative constructions, has been to explore what is performed within the identified didactic irritations.

In the *stories from a track*, we argue that physical activity and fitness training is performed even though the girls in the story, in many ways, resist the physical activity of running and instead engage themselves in talking, filming, and “fooling around” while slowly moving around the track in the forest. Still, they continually relate to the expectations, purposes, and assessment of the PE lesson. We would argue that if the purpose of the lesson is to get physical exercise, the lesson is

not going according to what the teacher planned. However, if the purpose is that these girls are supposed to learn about physical training it might just work since they are relating their actions toward the physical training they are resisting. They seem to know that it is important to exercise and also why. They just do not do it at the moment.

In the *stories from the game* it is a certain gender order in terms of hegemonic masculinity that is performed in students’ and teachers’ actions, movements and the institutional and material arrangement of the activity. In the teacher story, this is noticeable in the way a game of dodge ball is organized and also the purpose of choosing dodge ball in the first place. It is all about getting the lesson to work as smoothly as possible with a large group, and also the strong expectations of games and competition from the (male) students. In relation to the students, it was obvious in the YouTube data we explored how hegemonic masculinity is performed in movements understood as, Brown and Evans (2004) argues, competitive, heterosexual, hierarchical, and positional and thus that masculine values, relations, and utterances like “let’s get the girls” become reasonable. In this equation both the ball, as either a “great toy” (for some of the boys) or “a lethal projectile” (for the girls and some of the boys), and the materiality of the locality becomes central (cf. Quennerstedt, Almqvist, & Öhman, 2011).

The *stories from a bench* are about the physically active and sweaty students being performed. The teachers and the students seem to accept this idea in the explored data. On this basis, teachers are excluding students from education and at the same time the students exclude themselves by not bringing the correct uniform. The materiality of a correct uniform, that is clothes for physical activity, becomes the performed norm, even though there are many activities in the data where few students seem physically active enough to actually become sweaty. The exclusion occurs nevertheless. In this way, the bench becomes the material sign of nonparticipation and also a sign of a seemingly legitimate exclusion from educational situations.

In this study, we have also, through juxtaposing the stories, shown how the stories from a teacher and a student perspective seem quite reasonable. They show the compromises that teachers and their students make to allow the lesson to take place. It is the juxtaposition that makes them disturbing in terms of a didactic irritation. The didactic irritations presented here, thus, highlight hidden aspects of PE practice, in particular the gap between PE teachers’ aspirations and everyday practice, and that of many of their young charges. They highlight the emotional, demanding nature of teachers’ work in their often unsuccessful struggles to make connections with young people, while at the same time coming to terms with aging and in an embodied material sense their changing physical capacities (cf. Webb & Quennerstedt, 2010). They also reveal young people’s agency in engaging in lessons on their terms, challenging and refuting the central tenets of professional PE practice, and yet at the same time,

the ways in which they accept the inevitable, the lesson will go on, and the challenge is how they negotiate a position within that.

Using visual data from YouTube in connection with a poststructural materialist approach (Barad, 2007; Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Larsson & Quennerstedt, 2012) has contributed to an exploration of events in PE-practice involving also the materiality of the event. This is something often lacking in the literature both in interview studies, but also often in studies using visual data (cf. Quennerstedt et al., 2011). We would from our stories argue that the settings—the outdoor environment, the overcrowded gym, the active and inactive space (the bench) in the karate lesson, illustrates the challenges of the teacher to “control” the students and the learning to make PE “work.” Within the dominant discourses of PE, (i.e., sports or health), the use of balls, as part of the materiality of the event (Barad, 2007), to throw at each other for the amusement of some and the fear of others become reasonable because it seems to work. The same goes for the materiality of wearing the correct clothing for PE, clothing reasonable for being the physically active and sweaty student. In this way, the materiality of PE will inevitably include some students and exclude others.

By using narratives derived from visual data in the paper, we have also added to the literature by being able to bring the visual data alive in academic text making experiences, interactions, and the social and material arrangements of PE meaningful.

The stories provide insight into the pedagogical relationships in PE lessons, and particularly students’ agency to resist what is on offer. At the same time, the students “play the game”—that is, they know what is expected and they resist within the physical (material) and power relations in ways that are within the confines of the PE lesson, for example, during the 5-km run, all the students can not be in view of the teachers control all the time; in the gym, there are always corners in which to hide, and there is always a legitimate space to “absent” themselves by forgetting clothes for PE—the bench.

That the stories in the paper are constructed from students’ own YouTube clips also means that these are a different way “in” to young people’s perceptions of PE. Yes, we have literature on this focusing student voice, but here we have used stories as a suitable way to illustrate the embodied experiences shown on the videos. The stories then say something about the ways in which students are trying to make sense of their own subjectivities within PE, where their sometimes fragile identities are on display. Viewing the YouTube clips and the didactic irritations we often wondered how they could preserve a sense of self that is coherent within an experience where they are made to feel inadequate.

The stories are also embodied stories that illustrate the physicality of PE; the pain, pleasure, the clothed and exposed body, the accepted forms of violence in tackles, and having

balls thrown at you in a way that realistic tale of the clips can not do. The stories then hopefully can have *an effect* on the reader, for them to relate to, or question the practices that they read about.

Our ambition with the juxtaposing narratives from students and teachers has been to evoke memories and emotions, making students’ and teachers’ actions in PE practice understandable (Oliver, 1998), and to evoke dissonance “enabling the reader to look at educational phenomena with renewed interest and a more questioning stance” (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 578). In this way, as Atkinson (2009) highlights, the stories can re-present the visual data where “. . . accounts of particular classroom events become puzzles whose value is in the questions they raise rather than in any solutions they can offer” (Atkinson, 2009, p. 93).

We also hope that the juxtaposing narratives provide spaces for multiple “voices” and sometimes silenced voices to be heard (cf. Carless & Sparkes, 2008; Prosser, 2009), and that these stories can be useful to researchers and practitioners when they scrutinize, question and re-think the practices of PE including how equipment and locality plays important parts of the educational event. In this sense, they contribute to ongoing critical discussions about the educational values of PE and how we might seek to enhance the educational experiences of *all* students involved.

### Authors’ Note

This paper is dedicated to Dr. Louisa Webb, the third author on this paper, who died after a long illness in January 2012. Louisa’s research interests centered on gender equity and leadership, innovative pedagogies, and the use of ICT in physical education. As a key member of the PESP community, a friend and research colleague, she is sadly missed.

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### Notes

1. In this paper, the ambition is not to explore individual students or individual teachers, but rather teachers’ and students’ collective actions in physical education (PE) practice. The events studied in the video clips can be regarded as a public display, on YouTube, of an already public practice, PE. In this context, ethical issues concerning matters of privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent are more related to individual students’ exposure of sensitive information than the risk of identifying individuals in an ongoing everyday public event (Burnett, Consalvo, & Ess, 2009; Ess, 2007; Frankel & Siang, 1999, NESH, 2003).
2. For a comprehensive analysis of the data and a discussion of using YouTube as empirical data including search terms,

selection of clips, quality criteria, and an ethical discussion on the use of data from YouTube, see Quennerstedt (2013a).

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