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Tensions and tractions of moving together and alone in physical education

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Abstract

A wide variety of activities, instructional teaching styles and physical activity for health characterise PE practices today. However, for children, PE is about more than performing activities or being physically active for health. Children experience moving in the context of PE in varying and ambivalent ways, which indicates that qualitative aspects of movement (how to move) and the movement context (where to move and with whom) matter to them. To gain understanding of movement qualities in PE and PE as a movement context, this article explores what happens with and between children when they move in PE and how children's movements and interactions relate to the context in which they move. The analysis starts with observational material from four primary schools in western Norway and an affect theoretical perspective is used. Through an in-depth analysis of 10–11-year-old children playing a game of sheep and wolverines, the article demonstrates how multiple actions and multiple dimensions of movement emerge simultaneously and how children's own movements and the activity emerge and develop through reciprocal interactions. The activity framework forms how children move or are expected to move, while children's actual movements make the activity what it is. Playing together co-exists and alternates with playing alone and playing in multiple ways. The flux of the game involves both an opportunity for something different to the present moment to become and for the accumulation of permanent patterns. The findings indicate a need to further discuss and explore the balances and imbalances between the individuals and the collective and the individuals, descriptions, rules and instructions in the context of PE.

Keywords

physical education, primary school, children's movement, qualitative methods, affect theoretical perspective

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Introduction and background

Research has indicated that instructional teaching styles and doing a wide variety of activities characterise physical education (PE) practices (Annerstedt, 2008; Kirk, 2010; Moen, Westlie, Bjørke & Brattli, 2018). In addition, teachers emphasise that children should *be physically active* and *have fun* (Nyberg & Larsson, 2014; Aasland, Walseth & Engelsrud, 2016; Ward & Griggs, 2018). Instructional teaching styles are effective for managing large groups of children (Ward & Griggs, 2018), while the emphasis on physical activity relates to concerns about children's health. Fun is considered a way to engage children and to inspire them towards active lifestyles (Nyberg & Larsson, 2014; Aasland et al., 2016; Ward & Griggs, 2018).

On the other hand, PE is an educational subject (Directorate for Education and Training, 2015), and several researchers are concerned that the emphasis on physical activity and fun sacrifices other important aims and objectives. Parker et al. (2017) have pointed out that PE provides few opportunities for autonomy, choice and creativity. Accordingly, Bjorbækmo and Engelsrud (2011), Næss et al. (2013) and Borgen and Engelsrud (2015) have called for more opportunities to experience and explore one's own movement capacities in PE. Experiencing and exploring one's own movement capacities is also important in learning to move, which is consistent with the aims and objectives of PE according to Nyberg and Larson (2014).

Questions about learning, experiencing and exploring emphasise the moving subject: the child who moves and engages in movement in a certain context (Larsson & Quennerstedt, 2012). In accordance with an understanding of children as moving subjects, a growing number of researchers are interested in children's own perspectives about and experiences of moving in PE.

Research with children shows a variation in and ambivalence of experiences. Most young children enjoy PE as a school subject (Dismore & Bailey, 2011; Beni, Fletcher & Ni

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Chróinin, 2018; Moen et al. 2018) and the opportunities that PE provides for running and being active. Young children also enjoy the opportunity to spend time and to do something together with their friends; they regard the subject as fun and a break from classroom education (Dismore & Bailey, 2011). Furthermore, many children enjoy when their motor competence is challenged or when they are involved in personally relevant learning in PE (Beni et al., 2018). On the other hand, there are also many children who find the content meaningless (Standal, 2016; Parker, MacPhail, O’Sullivan, Ni Chróinin & McEvoy, 2017; Beni et al., 2018). Children desire for more varying content (Dismore & Bailey, 2011) and teaching styles (Moen et al., 2018). In addition, several children experience discomfort related to the social aspects of subjects such as feelings of isolation and exclusion (Beni et al., 2018). Beni, Ni Chróinin and Fletcher (2019) have noted that children’s experiences of meaning and lack of meaning and children’s likes and dislikes are related to particular moments. Children may like PE and find it meaningful most of the time, though not all of their experiences are positive.

Research on children’s experiences has indicated that for children, PE is about more than doing activities or being physically active for their health. In accordance with perspectives emphasising the moving subject, children’s experiences reveal that the qualitative aspects of movement (how to move) and the movement context (where to move and with whom) matter to them. To understand movement qualities in PE and PE as a movement context and social practice that children experience in such varying and ambivalent ways, we explore how children’s movement emerges and develops in the typical PE curriculum. We start with an in-depth analysis of one lesson that we have chosen from observations of 53 PE lessons from four schools. In the chosen lesson, children play a game called sheep and wolverines, which we introduce later. We ask the following questions:

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1. What happens with and between the children when they play the game sheep and wolverines in PE?
2. How does the way children move and interact relate to the game sheep and wolverines and to the context of PE?

We consider the chosen lesson and the game sheep and wolverines as an expression of how PE is practiced and what happens when children move in PE. We use the insight gained from the analysis to illuminate and discuss the overall topic of children's movement in PE. To grasp the complexity that occurs when children move in PE, we have adopted an affect theoretical perspective.

Theoretical framework

In an affect theoretical perspective, children's movements are positioned within situations and environments in relation to other people, objects and features. Furthermore, children's movements involve both active and passive elements that are intertwined. We build on the work of the 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza (2011) as well as the introduction to affect theories written by Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010). The central concepts are *affects*, *to affect* and *to be affected*.

According to Seigworth and Gregg (2010), affects emerge in the spaces between bodies and circulate between bodies. Affects occur when bodies encounter one another and are thus a central aspect of human relationships and interactions. Affects form in atmospheres and sensations and work through bodily intensities and resonances. Affects are powerful and may attract bodies to each other or repel them. Spinoza (2011) has further stressed that affects do not work linearly or causally; they are unpredictable, and they continuously emerge and change (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Furthermore, a body can experience affects in many ways

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simultaneously, and the same body can affect different bodies in different ways (Spinoza, 2011). Hence, Seigworth and Gregg have suggested that bodies and the world are always about to 'become'; there is always a possibility that something new or different will emerge. This suggestion is consistent with Spinoza's assertion that human bodies are 'continuously regenerated' (p. 76) and can take many different forms or modes, as he has called it.

Spinoza (2011) has argued that while bodies are mutable and undergo constant reformation, they are simultaneously individuals with their own unique 'natures'. What constitutes one's 'own nature' is a philosophical question that Spinoza has related to questions such as 'What is good?' and 'What constitutes freedom and happiness?' He has reasoned that a body never fully knows the reasons for its own affects or the affects of another body but only the acts and ideas that emerge when being affected. A body is always partly passive, and each encounter between bodies involves an element of potential confusion and misinterpretation. Passivity emerges from relying on internal forces, such as impulses, emotions and imagination, and external forces, such as abstract rules, norms and regulations. In comparison, being active means that a body acts according to its own nature and the needs of the situation. A body always brings something unique of itself to each encounter with other bodies, and the elements of confusion and misinterpretation combine with elements of what Spinoza has called 'adequate understanding'. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) have further related the distinction between passivity and activity to bodies becoming either disempowered or empowered in encounters with other bodies. Feldman (in Spinoza, 2011) has used the concepts of *to act* versus *to be acted upon* or being an *agent* versus a *reagent*. Spinoza has emphasised that the question is never whether a body is active or passive but whether it is more or less active in a specific moment.

Spinoza (2011) and Seigworth and Gregg (2010) have further stressed that bodies are related to many other bodies, including human and non-human ones as well as material and non-

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material ones, at each moment. For Spinoza (2011), Seigworth and Gregg (2010), the world is a field of affective forces where individuals are intertwined with one another as well as the wholeness they create together with the other bodies and the world. Each body has the capacity to both affect and be affected by another. The concepts of the individual and the collective (Spindler, 2009) or the individual and otherness (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010) are understood in relation to one another. Bodies extend to other bodies; they are deeply connected and thereby ‘in something else’ and ‘conceived through something else’ (Spinoza, 2011, p. 32). The form or mode a body takes at each moment involves both an aspect of one’s own nature and the nature of the affecting body or bodies. Accordingly, Seigworth and Gregg have suggested that when it is affected, ‘a body is as much outside itself as in itself’ (p. 72).

These perspectives allow us to explore how children respond in the various situations they encounter in PE, how they interact with multiple persons and elements when they move, and how situations and children’s relationships to one another, the activity, the teacher and other elements of PE change and vary. Regarding our research questions, the perspective implies questions about how children’s movement and interactions emerge and what form they take in situations and environments. Another question is how children and different elements of PE affect one another and contribute to the course of processes in which children’s movements and interactions emerge. The emphasis on the bodily aspects of human relations and interactions raises questions about tractions and tensions compared to experiences, feelings and thoughts, which have enjoyed a central place in many of the prior studies on children’s PE experiences.

Design and methods

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In this article, we utilised observational material from the first author's doctoral dissertation project, which aimed to explore 10- to 11-year-old (5th grade) children's movements in PE, physically active educational lessons and physically active breaks in the classroom (Ingulfsvann, 2018). The observations are from the 2014–2015 school year when we visited four schools in western Norway six times each between August and June.¹ The material involves 76 units of observations including 53 PE lessons. In this article, we chose to analyse one PE lesson in-depth. The lesson we chose involves a tag and role game, sheep and wolverines. Vivid and versatile field notes, the memories we have from this lesson and the game structure, which encourages interactions between children, make the lesson suitable for analysing the variations and multitude of relationships and situations that emerge when a group of children moves together in PE.

The four schools varied in geographical location (different parts of the county; rural and urban), school and class size (15 to over 20 children per grade) and the teacher's education (formal or no formal education in PE) and teaching experience (1 to over 15 years). The lesson we analysed in-depth occurred in a school in a rural area. The class consisted of 23 children, and the teacher was a recent graduate.

In total, 98 children and their parents or guardians provided written informed consent to participate in the study. Since the first author's doctoral dissertation involved interviews in addition to observations, we did not have the resources to work closely with all the children. We chose 32 of them (7–9 children per school) for in-depth observations (and interviews). Our aim was to include a heterogenic group; we based the selection on a drawing and writing task, observation of one PE lesson, group interviews with the children and an interview with

¹ All four schools took part in ASK (Active, Smarter Kids) school intervention study; two in the intervention group and two in the control group. For more information about the ASK study and the intervention, see Resaland et al. (2015; 2016) and xxxxx, (2018).

the children's teachers. The selection process is described in detail elsewhere (Ingulfsvann, 2018). We emphasised including children who expressed variation in movement preferences, interests, gender and engagement in PE. In addition, we were aware that regardless of these criteria, the children entered the research process with their own unique experiences, thoughts, ideas, desires and hopes. The examples later in this article address four children in particular: Petter, Thea, Sander and Hanne. To ensure anonymity, the names are pseudonyms. When choosing to focus on these children, we considered the above selection criteria with an emphasis on variation of movement and interactions. Choosing examples from a small group of participants is consistent with our emphasis on in-depth analysis.

We chose the observations due to our emphasis on the bodily dimensions of expression and interactions. Accordingly, Clark (2005) has stated that observations allow a researcher to interpret the participants' actions in context. Fangen (2004), in turn, has noted that the participants' interactions are less influenced by observation than by interviews and surveys. During the observations, we adopted the role of partially participant observers. We were together with the children in their PE lessons but did not participate in their activities. The first author sometimes talked with some of the children before, during or after the lesson. A typical instance occurred when children approached her and asked a question at the beginning of a lesson. The material from the observations consists of the field notes that the first author wrote either the day of an observation or the day after and the embodied experiences and memories from that observation.

The first author oversaw the fieldwork and the subsequent analysis, and all three authors regularly discussed the process including the planning, procedures, practice, experiences and possible interpretations. The research project was approved by The Regional Committee for Medical Research Ethics (REK; 2014). In addition to the written informed consent, we verbally informed the children about the research project and emphasised that we would not

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use their real names and that participation was voluntary. Moreover, we verbally confirmed the consent from the 32 children we included in the in-depth interviews and observations on several occasions throughout the year. When the children did not want to participate in some part of the research project, we respected their wishes. These occasions concerned other parts of the project than the observations we used in this article.²

Analysis

Our choice to approach the research questions by analysing one PE lesson and activity in-depth was inspired by Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) approach 'thinking with theory' (p. 14). According to these researchers, identifying a starting point in a specific 'chunk' of data (p. 424) enables intense analysis and provides an opportunity to review the objective of the analysis across various theories and concepts. For us, it was important to be able to consider the multitude of affects and ways of affecting and becoming affected that may emerge when children move together. The lesson we chose is unique, while the findings provide insight that may also be used to understand other PE lessons.

Following Jackson and Mazzei's ideas, we repeatedly read and considered the lesson in relation to the other lessons, our research questions, the affect theoretical perspective and the context of PE. In accordance with Jackson and Mazzei (2012), we were initially critical of adopting a thematic analysis, which provides limited opportunities for multi-layered analysis and critical interpretations of the complexities of the social life according to these researchers. However, we followed Braun and Clark's (2006) and Thagaard's (2013) recommendations for searching for repeating patterns, exceptions, nuances and paradoxes in the material and

² see Ingulfsvann, 2018

structured our findings into themes. From Jackson and Mazzei, we adopted the aim of prompting the multiplicity, ambiguity and incoherence of movement and interactions.

Furthermore, we adopted Fangen's (2004) three levels of interpretation. These levels involve bringing forward both closeness to (first level) and distance (second and third levels) from the empirical material. The elements that create closeness were comprised of sequences that appeared in the field notes, embodied experiences and memories. They illustrate the themes on a descriptive level and reveal what occurred. To create distance from the material, we used concepts from the affect theoretical perspective as well as vocabulary inspired by this perspective. We chose the specific sequences from the material, while keeping the theories in mind, and presented an interpretation of each sequence where we applied elements from the theories. The other level of analysis that creates distance from the material is taking a critical perspective on the findings and discussing them in relation to prior research on PE and children's experiences of the subject.

The context and game we analysed

The game 'sheep and wolverines' is a movement game that children play in PE as a warmup or sometimes as a primary activity. In our example, the game was the primary activity. The game involves both roles and tag; the children play roles of sheep and wolverines and chase or run away from one another. As wolverines, the children are supposed to walk on two feet while they chase and try to turn over the children who play the sheep. The sheep are supposed to walk on all fours. When a wolverine succeeds in catching and falling on the back of a sheep, that sheep becomes a wolverine. In our example, the teacher picked the game from an activity booklet. The first time the children played the game, the teacher instructed them on how to play it, including how to play the roles of sheep and wolverines as they were described

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in the activity booklet. In addition, the teacher decided when the children played the game, for how long and who started as wolverines. In our analysis, we considered the game an example of many different activities the children did during the school year, including movement games such as sheep and wolverines, ball games, fitness activities, gymnastics, athletics, swimming and skiing. The central elements are that the children do an activity with established descriptions or rules, that the teacher has chosen and instructed the activity and that the children move in a group setting.

Findings

We have organised our findings into five themes: 1. becoming part of the game, 2. playing the game in one's own way, 3. being drawn to other participants and playing together, 4. being drawn in different directions and playing alone and 5. the flux of the game.

Becoming part of the game

One dimension of the children's movement in sheep and wolverines is becoming part of the game. One example of this dimension is an overview of what happened immediately after the teacher initiated the game:

The playing area fills with movement and interactions. Some of the children move on two feet and the rest on all fours. The children on two feet chase after those who move on all fours. When they catch one, they start pushing and pulling on the child's shoulders or hips. The children on all fours move away, struggling against those who move on two feet and attempt to roll them over.

The children moved like sheep and wolverines as these roles were described in the activity booklet and as the teacher had instructed them. The children's movements and interactions assumed a certain mode or form (Spinoza, 2011); they walked on two feet or all fours, and they chased and ran away from one another. The idea of moving in these ways came to the children through the instructions and descriptions for the game, in comparison to emerging from their own desires or creativity. Their movements emerged in an encounter with the game sheep and wolverines, and the form the movements took was characteristic of this game. The game extended into the children's movements, and the children extended into the game (Spinoza, 2011). They were partly 'outside' themselves and 'in' something else (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). They were 'in' the game or part of the game, and the game was part of their movements. The children not only moved, but they moved in a particular way, which was playing the game sheep and wolverines.

Furthermore, when many children moved in accordance with the same descriptions and instructions, they created a group of sheep, a group of wolverines and a group playing the game sheep and wolverines. The children related simultaneously to the game and to one another (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011). They played the game together and became a collective (Spindler, 2009). Playing the game together with others drew the children towards a common direction, and the descriptions and instructions were not only visible in the children's ways of moving but also in their relationships and interactions with one another. The game framed what happened with and between the children. Choosing to move on two feet or all fours and either chasing and rolling others over or running away and struggling against them suggested to others that the child had engaged in the game and adopted a certain role within it. Adopting the role of a sheep signalled to other players that the child accepted being chased, while adopting the role of a wolverine meant the child was allowed to chase

others. Through assuming the roles of sheep and wolverines, the children engaged in a social practice together with others.

Similar to moving in accordance with the descriptions and instructions, moving together with others involved an element of being partly ‘outside’ oneself and ‘in’ something else (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Being one of the sheep or wolverines as well as being part of a group playing a game together was a matter of participating in something larger than and different from oneself. In both respects – following the descriptions and instructions and playing together with others – being part of a game involved a need for compromising one’s own nature, desires and ideas (Spinoza, 2011). Both sheep and wolverines are common animals in Norway and were known to children, either from everyday life or books and TV. Hence, many of the children had an idea of what these animals look like and how they move in nature. However, to follow the descriptions and instructions as well as to be identified as either a sheep or wolverine within the game, it was necessary to play these roles how others expected them to be played.

Nevertheless, becoming part of the game and compromising one’s own nature, desires and ideas was only one dimension of what happened with and between the children when they moved during the game. The children also brought something of themselves into the game.

Playing the game in one’s own way

Another dimension of the children’s movement in sheep and wolverines is that they each played the game in their own ways and thus created the game as they engaged in it. One example of this dimension is how one of the girls, Thea, behaved:

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In the middle of the playing area, Thea walks around on all fours. She bleats like a sheep and moves towards the teacher. When she reaches the teacher, she prods him on the leg with her shoulder, turns around and starts to move away from him.

Thea played the role of a sheep in her own way, which involved both elements from the descriptions of the game, the teacher's instructions and her own modifications. In accordance with the descriptions and instructions, she moved on all fours, but her choice to prod the teacher playing a wolverine represents a modification that she brought to the game. Thus, Thea not only became part of the game, but she contributed to its creation, making it unique. When playing a game, children are not only affected but also affect the game (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011). As the game became part of the children's movements, the children's movements became part of the game, and the game gained elements of otherness: something other than its own nature. The game took on a certain mode or form that we observed as the children playing it in their own ways in a particular situation and environment.

Petter, like Thea, had his own way of playing the game:

As Thea pokes the teacher, Petter runs across the playing field. As he speeds up, his feet barely touch the ground, and his heels almost touch his backside. He turns his head to the right and left as he runs, then he stops briefly by a sheep and pushes a couple of times before he runs off again.

Running on two feet associated Petter with the wolverines in the game. On the other hand, he devoted little time and effort to rolling sheep over, though this was the other primary component of playing a wolverine. Like Thea, Petter exhibited his own way of behaving in the game. He followed the rules by making contact with other children, but the frequency and manner of the contact were his own and resulted in a unique interaction. As Spinoza (2011) has written, '[a]ll the ways in which a body is affected by another body follow from the nature of the affected body together with the nature of the body affecting it' (p. 73). Both the way Petter moved and the way Petter formed the game emerged from the composition of his and the game's unique natures and the affects that emerged from the encounter between them when they extended towards one another. The differences between Thea's and Petter's ways of moving highlight the uniqueness of the encounters between individual children and the game they play together. The way each child moved and thus the way she or he formed the activity differed. Many events occurred simultaneously, and the activity became multifaceted and something that existed only in the moment the children played it.

Being drawn towards one another and playing together

One dimension of the children's multiple ways of playing sheep and wolverines was being drawn towards one another and playing together. One of many examples of this dimension was Thea's encounter with her teacher and three classmates:

After Thea prods her teacher, he turns towards her and grips her shoulder. Thea then turns around, stretches her arms out and tries to move away from the teacher.

The teacher quickly grips her shoulder and holds her back. He starts pushing

Thea's shoulder, and two of her classmates join in. Soon, a third child approaches and starts pushing Thea over.

This sequence is a continuation of the earlier action in which Thea walked on all fours and bleated like a sheep. Together, these elements demonstrate how she participated in the game and assumed the role of a sheep. Fulfilling the other aspect of this role – running away from the wolverines and struggling against being rolled over – required that someone in the role of a wolverine noticed and tried to catch her. By prodding the teacher, who was playing the role of a wolverine, Thea increased the probability of this happening. The teacher responded to her action by turning around and gripping her. Thea and the teacher responded to each other's movements, making it possible for each of them to play further. Their movements also created an opportunity for other children to join in their enactment of the game. By the time the sequence ended, four children and the teacher were all engaged in one another's movements. They were drawn towards one another, and their movements emerged from their connectedness to the activity, to one another and to the situation as it evolved (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). The children and their teacher played not only in accordance with the descriptions and rules of sheep and wolverines but in accordance with one another's movements. They created the game together as they played it. In other sequences, we identified instances of distance and divergence among the children or between the children and the game.

Being drawn in different directions and playing alone

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Another dimension of the multiple ways of engaging in activities is being drawn in different directions and playing on one's own. Hanne's encounter with a group of children provides an example:

Hanne stands close to a group of wolverines with her arms hanging down and looks past the group. After a while, one of the wolverines asks her to help. Hanne does not move. The wolverine asks again, and Hanne walks to the sheep and puts one hand on his shoulder. She makes no effort to push or pull the sheep.

In this sequence, another child asked Hanne to join the game; however, she hesitated to engage in the activity with the other children. She eventually moved closer to the other children, which indicated that she heard the invitation. She was also about to engage in movement together with the other children. In this moment, there was a reciprocal traction between the children (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). However, the traction was faint; Hanne's lack of effort when she pushed the sheep indicates the distance between her and the other children. They continued pushing and pulling while Hanne remained standing quietly. The other children played together and shared an effort while Hanne played alone in the presence of others. Two different actions occurred, and the game simultaneously developed in two different directions or on two different levels. One of the directions followed the descriptions of the game, while the other one differed from them.

Another example of how the game can develop in different directions involves Sander's play:

Sander stands on all fours behind a tree on the outer edge of the playing area. He faces the centre and bleats like a sheep.

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Walking on all fours and bleating like a sheep suggested that Sander was participating in the game and had assumed the role of a sheep. The way he played this role was an invitation for wolverines to chase him and try to roll him over. Sander created an opportunity for others to engage in the game and move jointly with him; however, no one responded to his gesture. Sander stood apart, and there was no identifiable interaction between him and the other children. As in the incidence with Hanne, there was a distance and little or no traction between the children. The difference is that in Sander's case, the distance was observable both in the way he was positioned in relation to the other children and in the lack of visible interactions, while in Hanne's case, we observed the distance in her lack of effort to engage in a shared act. Another difference is that Hanne hesitated to play upon an invitation, while Sander received no response from the other children. These comparisons affirm a point from the earlier incident with Thea: playing together is a matter of reciprocal engagement in one another's movements. Reciprocity involves both creating opportunities with one another to engage and playing along when an opportunity to engage emerges. When one or both aspects were absent, the activity diverged into two or more directions. Playing together, playing alone and activities developing in divergent ways co-existed. In addition, these three dimensions of the children's movement were intertwined with becoming part of a game and creating a game as one plays it.

Flux of the game

The multiple dimensions of the children's movements contributed to making the game sheep and wolverines a multifaceted and labile context. The multitude of movers, movements and interactions enabled a number of situations to emerge. Along with the changing situations and

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circumstances, the relationships between the children, the activity, the teacher and the other elements of the environment were in constant flux; these elements also underwent variations and changes. Under the previous theme of *being drawn in different directions and playing alone*, we demonstrated how Hanne was momentarily about to engage in felling a sheep with other children in contrast to standing alone for most of the time. Another example of how a child's engagement changed during the game is an encounter between Sander and Daniel:

Daniel notices Sander and moves towards him. The two boys do not talk or touch each other, but for a moment, they stay by the tree together.

This sequence is a continuation of the earlier incident with Sander. The encounter between Daniel and Sander did not develop into them playing the game together, but for a while, it changed the situation for Sander. Instead of playing alone, he stood with another child. No words were exchanged between the boys, but they were briefly attracted towards each other and shared a moment. The encounter reveals that what happened at one moment did not define what happens next. Accordingly, Seigworth and Gregg (2010) have emphasised that affects emerge and disappear, and bodies and the world are always about to become – to take a new form or mode. Situations changed and so did the ways the children moved and interacted. However, despite such variations and a possibility of something becoming different, habits and practices often remain constant. Affects and sensations can also accumulate, which may contribute to the creation of permanent patterns (Watkins, 2010). The above sequence continued with Sander walking away and out of the playing area where he hid behind a snow pile while Daniel returned to the game that the other children continued to play. Sander again played alone. The flux of the game enables variations of acts and expressions, though it does not necessarily bring lasting changes. What happened with and

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between the children and the way the game developed were a matter of a continuous interplay of multiple elements. As Hurley (in Deleuze, 1988) has suggested, 'the environment is not just a reservoir of information whose circuits await mapping but also a field of forces whose actions await experiencing' (p. ii). The children (and teachers) participated in and created the game ongoing.

Discussion of the findings

We consider our findings to be an example of a continuous, reciprocal interplay between an activity, the established descriptions or rules for the activity, the teacher's instructions, the norms and social expectations, being part of a social collectivity and the children's own desires, ideas and movements. The activity framework formed how the children moved or were expected to move, while the children's *actual* movements made the activity what it was. Furthermore, we demonstrated that each child moved (or chose not to move) in a unique way. Consequently, many actions and interactions occurred simultaneously, and the activity developed in multiple directions. We illustrated two aspects: how the children were sometimes drawn towards one another and play together and how they were sometimes drawn in different directions and played on their own. The children's movements and interactions, as well as the environment and situations, continuously changed. The flux of the game involved both an opportunity for something different to occur and the accumulation of permanent patterns.

The multiple dimensions of movement, which we further consider an expression of PE and what happens between children and the activity framework in PE, correspond to the

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ambivalences and variations of children's experiences in prior studies (Dismore & Bailey, 2011; Standal, 2016; Parker et al., 2017; Beni et al., 2018; Moen et al. 2018; Beni et al. 2019). In accordance with Beni et al. (2018, 2019), who have emphasised the importance of the social aspects of PE, our findings indicate that what occurs between the children is a central element of moving in this context. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that moving together requires a capacity to relate to others and to handle the tensions that arise from becoming part of something larger. The central elements of this challenge include maintaining one's individuality in encounters with something else or something different from oneself and creating something together with others. One challenge for the participants is to create opportunities for others to move while simultaneously seizing opportunities and engaging in movements with others.

The findings show that moving as part of a group and engaging in activities with others is a multi-dimensional and continuous process and that numerous affects, sensations and bodily sensations emerge when children move together (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011). This process may be exciting, inspiring or educational as well as frightening, unpleasant or suppressing. For some children, playing together and engaging in movement with others is easy and uplifting, while others require guidance and support. Questions for PE teachers and further research are ways to acknowledge and approach these tensions and tractions of moving in a group setting, ways to embrace both the individuals and the collective and ways to encourage empowering relationships between children within the activity framework in PE (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). One aspect is to further explore how the tensions and tractions become expressed in variations of PE activities across schools and situations.

Another central aspect of the findings is the need to compromise one's own desires, interests and ideas regarding the established descriptions or rules and the teacher's instructions. This topic relates to questions about the teacher's authority and the children's (lack of) opportunities for choices and involvement in decision-making processes. Moen et al. (2018) have recently reported that teachers make most of the decisions in PE, and instructional teaching styles predominate, while children would prefer a more varied teaching practice. Consistent with this finding, Parker et al. (2018) have noted that children have little control in PE, and Dismore and Bailey (2011) have reported that a lack of choice in PE is a common complaint among children. Furthermore, Beni et al. (2018) have asserted that choice promotes personally relevant learning, which, according to them, can contribute to meaningful experiences in PE. Our findings contribute to this discussion by providing insight into how moving according to predefined patterns and as one is instructed creates a contrast with moving according to one's own nature, desires and ideas. We associate the contrast with Spinoza's (2011) distinction of passions and actions, which Shirley (in Spinoza, 2011) has further compared with being a reagent versus an agent. From this perspective, descriptions and rules are an expression of authority, and the teacher's instructions represent an assertion of power. The above studies on children's experiences reveal that following an authority with no or few opportunities for choice and creativity undermines children's enjoyment of PE. Moreover, from an educational perspective, blindly following a predefined pattern or an authority opposes the ideal of fostering competence in learning, exploring and creating, which were all declared in the white paper NOU 2015:8 (2015) as qualities that children and youth should develop to ensure that they can flourish in later life and which are also central aims in the PE curriculum in Norway (Directorate for Education and Training, 2015).

However, our findings also indicate that moving according to the rules or descriptions of an activity is not only a matter of authority and passion but also a component of playing together with others, which is another central element of PE. In the Norwegian curriculum, social learning, such as developing feelings for others through group play and establishing friendships, is defined as one of the areas of focus for the subject (Annerstedt, 2008; Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). In addition, research with children has revealed that the social aspects are a source of enjoyment and meaningful experiences for many (Dismore & Bailey, 2011; Beni et al. 2018; Beni et al. 2019). Descriptions and rules may contribute to the interactions between children through creating a framework for playing together. They encourage a shared purpose, such as playing sheep and wolverines. Furthermore, they provide guidelines for how to work towards a shared purpose and how to handle different situations that may emerge during an activity. In these respects, descriptions and rules are a common agreement and may further encourage the emergence and maintenance of a collective. Thus, following descriptions and rules can also be a choice made to accept and engage in the shared purpose in contrast to simply doing as expected or as told.

In the findings, we further related the descriptions and rules of an activity to the teacher's instructions. However, the teacher's instructions and instructional teaching style involve other aspects, such as structuring the lesson and organising the group. The findings from Beni et al.'s (2018) study have indicated that the organisational and structural aspects of a teacher's instructions can contribute to the creation of a learning environment where children can experience inclusion and find movement meaningful. In this regard, the teacher's instructions are not necessarily only an expression of power or control but may also contribute to the emergence and maintenance of a collective – similar to the descriptions and rules of an activity. As Spinoza (2011) has argued, bodies are always partly passive and partly active –

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not one or the other. Descriptions, rules and instructions do not have to unambiguously pacify children; the questions for PE teachers and further research consist of how the descriptions, rules and instructions are conveyed and practiced and how the children respond when they encounter descriptions, rules and instructions in various situations. Another question is when is there a conflict or reciprocal interplay between the rules, the descriptions, the instructions and the children's own natures, desires, understandings and ideas, or when is there a balance or imbalance between the passivating force and the children's own agency, growth and development.

Conclusion

The central contribution of this article is the insight into the affective and relational aspects of children's movement in PE, as illuminated in one game: sheep and wolverines. Using examples from this game, we have demonstrated how children's own movements and activities emerge and develop through reciprocal interactions. The chosen examples illustrate how children must compromise their own desires and ideas regarding descriptions, rules, instructions and the collective, while children's own movements and interactions contribute to making the game they play in PE unique, diverse and changing. True group play and engagement in movement with others occurs when children create opportunities for other children to move and seize upon opportunities that emerge. Engagement in movement with others co-exists and alternates with playing alone and playing in multiple ways. The findings indicate a need to further discuss and explore the balances and imbalances between the individuals and the collective and between the individuals, descriptions, rules and instructions in the context of PE.

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