

The Messiness of Children’s Voices: An Affect Theory Perspective

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to explore children’s experiences and expressions of movement and physical education (PE). In particular, how children’s movement take form and vary in a school context. The study design is qualitative and the participants are children in fifth degree (10-years- olds). The data material consists of drawings, written texts, interviews and observations conducted over a school year. Theoretically, the article employs an affect theory perspective, a perspective where children’s voices are understood as contextual, “messy” and unpredictable. The analytical strategy was to select and use examples from two of the children in the material; Anna and Jon. The findings indicate that individual and collective aspects of children’s expressions and experiences, in this context, are intertwined and children’s expressions and experiences create patterns as well as variations and ambivalences over time. The article contributes insight into how children affect each other and become affected in multiple and varying ways in different situations and how their voices emerge and vary in interactions between themselves, other children, adults, such as teachers and researchers, and other elements in the environments and situations they encounter. The implication might be that PE teachers become aware of how emotions, imagination, norms and instructions, draw in children, and that children at the same time are always active and retain their uniqueness in encounters with others and otherness.

Keywords

focus groups, observational research, oral histories, methods in qualitative inquiry, ethnography

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The point of departure is knowledge about the social construction of childhood and children’s everyday lives in varying cultural settings and perspectives where children’s voices are understood as contextual and “messy” (Eldén, 2012; James, 2007; Komulainen, 2007; Matthews, 2007; Spyrou, 2011).

Using affect theory perspective, the article shows how individual and collective aspects of children’s expressions and experiences in and about movement and Physical Education (PE) are intertwined and how children’s expressions and experiences create patterns as well as variations and ambivalences over time. The article contributes insight into how children become affected in multiple and varying ways in different situations and how their voices emerge and vary in interactions between themselves, other children, adults, such as teachers and researchers, and other elements in the environments and situations they encounter.

Introduction and Background

The concept “children’s voices” resonates with “the new sociology of childhood” (Spyrou, 2011) and the United

Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (Einarsdottir, 2007; James, 2007; Lane et al., 2019). Within the field of childhood studies, researchers aim to gain a better understanding of childhood and stabilizing power differentials between children and adults (Spyrou, 2011). The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes children’s right to be heard when exploring “what is going on in their lives” (James, 2007, p. 261) and in matters affecting them (Einarsdottir, 2007; Lane et al., 2019). Both the new sociology of childhood and the Convention on the Rights of the Child imply an understanding of children as competent social actors (James, 2007),

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capable of expressing their opinions (Einarsdóttir, 2007) and being valuable contributors to the societies in which they live (Moore et al., 2008). This is to say, children “are not only affected by but also affect social structures and relationships” (Matthews, 2007, p. 323). Within the field of childhood research, the concept of children’s voices implies a shift from doing research *on* children to doing research together *with* children. This means emphasizing children’s active participation and involvement (Einarsdóttir, 2007; James, 2007).

An important contribution from research within the field of new sociology of childhood is knowledge about the social construction of childhood and children’s everyday lives in varying cultural settings (James, 2007). Researchers point to “the plurality of childhoods” (Matthews, 2007) and the multiplicity or “messiness” of children’s voices (Eldén, 2012). Matthews notes that children conduct and experience their everyday lives in varying ways within the same society and across the settings and relationships in which they are involved. Childhood is situated both culturally and socially, and in time can thus be experienced in different ways. Accordingly, James (2007) warns researchers not to “uncritically clump children together as members of a category” (p. 262). She suggests that we should rather listen to children as “individuals with their unique and different experiences, and as the collective inhabitants of that social, cultural, economic, and political space that in any society is labeled as ‘childhood’” (p. 262). Similarly, Eldén notes that children speak from changing and varying positions. She points out that sometimes children’s expressions can be contradictory. Accordingly, Matthews (2007) encourages researchers to ask: “which children and under what circumstances” (p. 327). Eldén also points to the meaning of the specific social encounters where children’s voices are constructed. Similar, Komulainen (2007) argues that “[m]eanings’ come into existence when two or more voices come into contact: there has to be a speaker and a listener, an ‘addresser’ and ‘addressee’” (p. 23).

According to Matthews (2007), the perspectives of the new sociology of childhood require that both adults and peers with whom children experience the childhood are taken into account. When it comes to encounters and relationships between children and adults, an issue that has awakened interest among a number of childhood researchers is power differences. In a research context, key questions are how to reduce these differences and how to make it easier for children to express themselves freely and openly (Spyrou, 2011). Moreover, many childhood researchers are concerned about how adults’ norms, aims and cultures structure and influence childhood. Matthews (2007) stresses that in societies and institutions, such as school, where children live their lives, adults typically have power over children. She notes that from the perspectives of new sociology of childhood, children are affected by the “adult world” but do not simply adopt it. Matthews suggests that children rather use the cultures of adults “to create their own peer cultures” (p. 324). Accordingly, Spyrou (2011) notes that “children observe with different eyes, ask different questions” and “have different concerns” (p. 155) than

adults. Children live their lives within and in relation to the adult world while they simultaneously are active actors who create their own worlds.

Bearing these perspectives in mind, where children are understood as both individuals or active actors and collective inhabitants of societies structured by adults, and where childhood is understood as a plurality and children’s voices as messy, we explore how children’s experiences and expressions take form and vary in a school context. Using an example of movement and physical education (PE), we ask:

1. How do children express themselves in and about movement and PE as individuals, together with other children and as inhabitants of the school institution, society and culture within which they live their everyday lives?
2. How do children’s expressions in and about movement and PE take form in different situations and settings over a school year?

To explore these research questions, we use material from drawings and writings, interviews and observations with 10-year-olds. We have chosen to work with an affect theory perspective. This allows us to explore the relational aspects of human life, and to understand the active and passive elements intertwined in interactions between human beings and the world they live in.

Affect Theory Perspective

Our main theoretical inspiration is the work of the 17th century philosopher Baruch Spinoza (2011), as well as the introduction to affect theories written by Seigworth and Gregg (2010). Key concepts here are *affects*, *to affect* and *to be affected*.

According to Seigworth and Gregg (2010), *affects* emerge in spaces between bodies and appear in sensations and bodily intensities and resonances. Affects “pass body to body” and “circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 53). They have the capacity to draw bodies (human and non-human) toward one another, as well as to pull bodies away from each other. Affects create movement and exist “in the very passages or variations between these intensities” (p. 53). This means that affects neither “work” in a linear nor causal way (Spinoza, 2011), but are unpredictable (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Hence, Seigworth and Gregg suggest that human life and the world are complex fields of affective forces that undergo constant change. Both individuals and the world are always about to “become.” Similarly, Hurley (in Deleuze, 1988) notices that “[T]he environment is not just a reservoir of information whose circuits await mapping, but also a field of forces whose actions await experiencing” (p. ii). From such a perspective, knowing and experiencing are a matter of interacting and taking part with and in others and the world.

Spinoza (2011) points out that all bodies consist of a number of smaller bodies and thus can affect and be affected by other

bodies in different ways. Hence, bodies can take on many different forms or modes, as Spinoza calls them. He adds that being affected or taking on a particular mode implies being “in something else” or being “conceived through something else” (p. 32). He argues that through its affects, a body extends to other bodies, and is in this sense deeply connected. Elaborating on the concept, *being extended*, Seigworth and Gregg suggest that in affects, “a body is as much outside itself as in itself” (p. 72). A body retains its individuality while simultaneously an external force shapes its form. This perspective holds that when affected, a body also affects the other body (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011). The relationships and interactions between bodies are reciprocal. Thus, the concepts of individual and collective (Spindler, 2009) or individual and otherness (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010) can only be understood in relation to one another.

Furthermore, Spinoza (2011) argues that being affected can either increase or diminish a body’s capacity to act. He calls the former state being *active* and the latter being *passive*. Feldman (in Spinoza, 2011) makes a distinction between *to act* and *to be acted upon* or being an *agent* versus a *reagent*. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) suggest that in some relationships and contexts bodies become either empowered or disempowered. When acting, a body acts according to its “own nature” and the needs of the situation. In comparison, when being acted upon or acting as a reagent, a body relies on its own passions such as impulses, emotions, imagination, or on external forces such as abstract rules, norms and regulations (Spinoza, 2011).

What constitutes one’s “own nature” is a philosophical question that Spinoza relates further to questions such as “what is good?” and, what constitutes “freedom” and “happiness”? He reasons 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. For Spinoza, the ultimate goal of human life is to learn even more about one’s affections and thus gain freedom from both internal and external passions. Since affects emerge in encounters with other bodies, Spinoza argues that bodies need one another in order to understand themselves as well as other bodies and one’s relationships with them. From such a perspective, interactions with other human beings, situations and environments involve an element of confusion and misinterpretation as well as an opportunity for increased insight into the uniqueness of each individual and relationships between individuals. Bodies are always in part passive “slaves” of their own emotions or imagination and external forces while they simultaneously possess the capacity to act according to their own nature and to become increasingly self-governing.

In accordance with the new sociology of childhood (Eldén, 2012; James, 2007; Komulainen, 2007; Matthews, 2007; Spyrou, 2011), the affect theory perspective underpins an understanding of human life and thus also childhood as plural and “messy.” The meaning of context and social interactions is also important in the affect theory perspective. What is particular to the perspective is the emphasis on bodily intensities and resonances, which emerge in interactions between human as

well as non-human bodies. The perspective allows us to take a point of departure in how relationships between children, other people and environments change and vary; how a number of forces, including internal and external forces and active and passive forces, emerge in these changing relationships. In addition, how children respond and express themselves in specific situations and environments both as individuals and as part of the collectives they inhabit and form together with others. In contrast to the constructive side of children’s voices, the question is how and where children’s voices emerge and come into expression; what forms the voices take and what kind of variations and changes the voices go through.

Participants

In the beginning of the project, we send an information letter¹ to year-5 teachers at four schools. Teachers handed the letter out to children who further took it to their parents/guardians. The information letter included a form that 98 parents/guardians signed to mark that they consented their child to participate in the study. Children whose parents/guardians consented participation, returned the form to their teacher who delivered it further to us. In the beginning of the fieldwork we reminded children that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study or parts of the study at any point of time without explanation or consequences. After first visit to each school, we selected 32 of the total 98 children (between 10 and 11 years of age) for further in-depth investigation. We repeated the reminder of voluntary participation for these children in halfway of the research process. None of the children withdrew but three children neglected to participate in a single part of the study. We respected children’s choice. Children we introduce in this article participated in all parts of the study.

When selecting the children for in-depth investigation, our aim was to include a heterogenic group. We discussed possible selection criteria and chose to emphasize variation in movement preferences and interests, gender and engagement in physical education. In addition, and most importantly, each child entered the research process with their unique experiences, thoughts, ideas, desires, hopes and ways of being and acting. In this article, we will focus in particular on two children, Anna and Jon (pseudonyms).

Anna and Jon are from two different schools in the county of Sogn og Fjordane in western Norway. Both Anna and Jon’s schools participated in the ASK-interventions study (Resaland et al., 2015, 2016) during the 2014–2015 school year. Jon’s school was in the intervention group, which means that children had 60 minutes daily physical activity, including PE, physical activity and health, physically active lessons and physically active breaks.² Anna’s school was in the control group, which means that the children only had the curricular activities PE, physical activity and health and occasional extracurricular movement activities. Accordingly, examples from Jon include both sequences from PE and other forms for movement activities in school while examples from Anna involve sequences mostly from PE. PE teachers and classroom teachers led all the

movement activities in both schools. In addition to Anna and Jon's schools, we included two more schools in the study; one from the intervention group and one from the control group. On the one hand, the county, ASK-intervention and the national curriculum for PE bound the schools and children together. On the other hand, the schools were located in different municipalities and varied in size as well as in teachers' educational background and years of teaching experience. Moreover, the teachers and children were all individuals who practiced the movement activities in school in their own ways, as we will show below.

Design and Methods

We used qualitative methods involving an affect theoretical perspective. The fieldwork comprised six visits to each of the schools, started in August–September 2014 and ended in May 2015. The material we use comprised children's drawings, writings, individual and group interviews and observations. The material was part of the first author's doctoral dissertation and thus she was in charge of the fieldwork and the subsequent analysis. All three authors worked closely together and regularly discussed the process, and the themes, topics and questions that emerged from the material.

Agreeing with researchers who have suggested that drawing can provide a non-stressful way to get to know children and to introduce a research process in a way that is comfortable for most of them (MacPhail & Kinchin, 2004; Mitchell, 2006; Yuen, 2004), we decided to start with the drawing and writing task. Altogether, 91 children took part in this and turned in the task, which was:

Draw something that you like very much about PE and something that you do not like or like less about PE. Also, write a short explanation stating why you like or do not like the things you choose to draw.

When introducing the task to the children, we added that the "something" could be an activity or a special occasion that had made them especially happy or sad. During the task, the children sat in a classroom and both the first author and a classroom teacher were present. If the children could not decide what to draw or write, the first author or a classroom teacher prompted them about their likes and dislikes in PE.

After the drawing and writing task, we continued with interviews and observations. In accordance with researchers who suggest that many children may find it more relaxing and comfortable to talk with an unfamiliar adult in a group setting (Horowitz et al., 2003; Koekoek et al., 2009; Parrish et al., 2012), we chose to conduct the first interviews in groups. We organized the groups according to gender. The themes and topics in the interviews covered the children's preferences, interests, experiences and understandings relating to movement, both in and outside the school. We used semi-structured interview guides (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), which means that we took our point of departure in themes and topics

prepared in advance, while we were also open to changing the order of the themes and following up interesting topics that arose during the interviews.

In the observations, the focus was initially open while it became increasingly oriented toward the myriad of variations in the children's interactions with one another, the teacher and the movement situations and environments. During the observations, we adopted the role of semi-participatory observer (Fangen, 2010). We were together with the children in PE lessons and other movement activities but did not participate in the activities. Sometimes the researchers (mostly the first author) talked with some of the children before, during or after the lesson. A typical instance occurred when children came up to ask something at the beginning of a lesson.

Analysis

The material, consisting of pictorial, verbal and bodily expressions, provides insight into several aspects of children's movements and movement experiences. As embodied expressions, observations and drawings are particularly important for analyzing bodily intensities and resonances, how children moved, responded, interacted and communicated in varying situations. Written texts and interviews, in turn, reveal thoughts and ideas. Together, these different dimensions opened for multiple alternative ways of approaching the plurality of worlds children create and the messiness of children's voices.

In working with this complex material, we adopted Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) "thinking with theory" and "purposeful reading and re-reading" approach. This involved reading and digging into the material numerous times while keeping in mind the concepts and perspectives derived from the affect theory perspective, the research questions and the school context. In accordance with Braun and Clark (2006) and Thaagard (2013), we structured the findings into themes that present patterns and similarities, as well as differences, variations and ambivalences in the material.

Furthermore, we adopted Fangen's (2004) three levels of interpretation, where the first level created closeness and the second and third levels created distance to the material. The first level described how the children expressed themselves and what occurred. Important elements were drawings, written texts, citations and field notes. The examples were mainly from Anna and Jon, whose expressions illustrated particularly well the themes we have chosen to focus on. At the same time, we considered the material as a holistic whole and highlight sequences that illuminated aspects with relevance for other individuals, situations and contexts. Due to this holistic aspect of analysis, we do also draw in few examples from other children than Anna and Jon. Further, we viewed the empirical material in relation to the affect theory perspective and the research questions, which is the second level of the analysis. We applied "something more" (Fangen, 2004, p. 208) to it and took a step away from the individual and unique toward something more general. On the third level, we have taken a critical stance on the research process and discussed the findings in

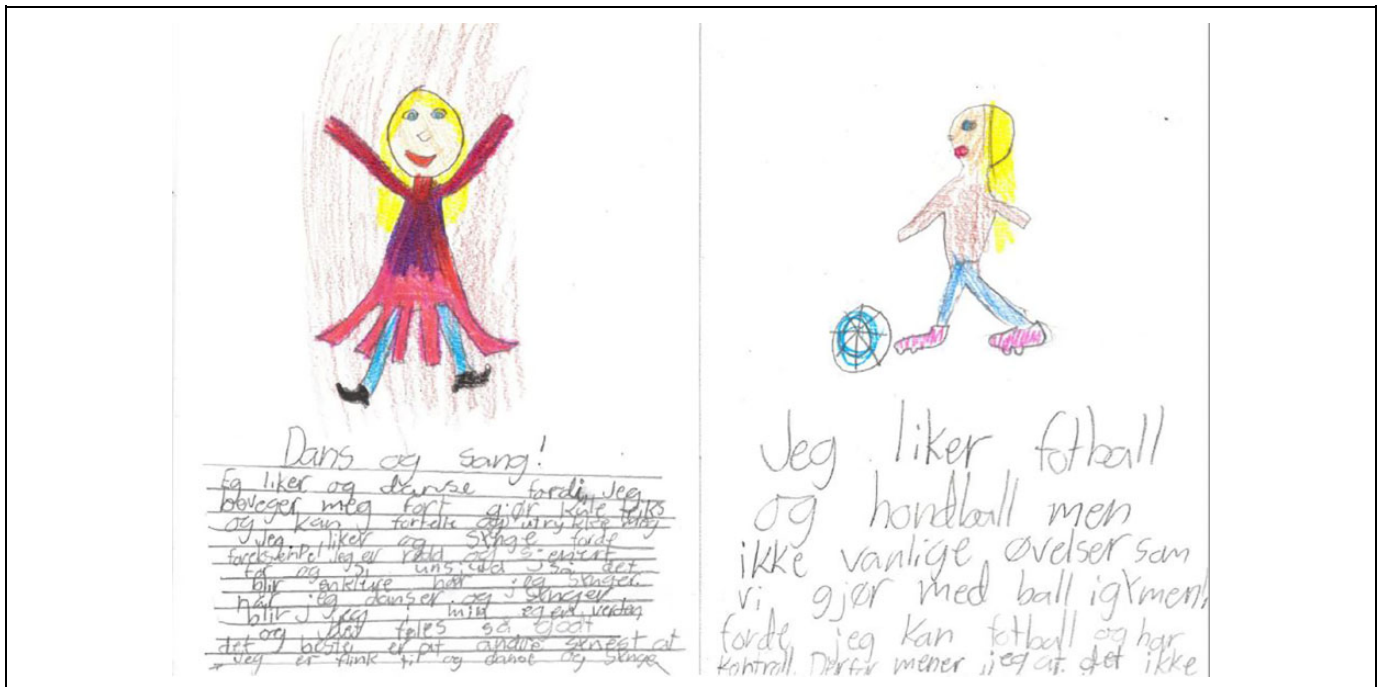


Figure 1. Anna's drawings and of what she wrote in Norwegian (translated below): "Dance and singing—I like to dance because I move fast, do cool tricks, can tell something and express myself. I like to sing because, for example, I'm afraid and shy about saying I'm sorry, and it's easier when I sing. When I dance and sing I'm in my own world and it feels so good. The best thing is that other people think I'm good at dancing and singing." "I like football and handball, but not the activities we're usually doing with a ball in PE because I know how to play football and when I do I'm in control. Therefore, I think that I don't have to like what we do."

relation to the concept of children's voices and prevailing traditions and debates within childhood research.

Findings

We have divided our findings into two themes: (a). Individuals intertwined in environments and collectives and (b). Harmonies, ambivalences and variations in children's expressions.

The Individual Intertwined in the Collective

In the initial phase of the research process, the drawings and written texts already showed how children expressed themselves in each their unique ways. The drawings and texts also displayed similarities between the children within and across the schools. In the following, we use Anna and Jon's examples with the addition of a few examples from other children/schools to illustrate how elements of individuality and similarities are intertwined in the children's expressions. Further how the composition of individuality and similarity relate both to the uniqueness of each child and to the collective children create as peer groups, school classes, participants in a research project and as inhabitants of local communities and prevailing cultures.

Anna and Jon are 10-year-olds attending year 5 in two different schools. Anna was enthusiastic about dance, as we will come back to, and liked moving and PE. However, PE was not her favorite subject. She liked Norwegian better. Her

engagement in PE varied from being actively involved in activities to sitting and watching from the sidelines. Jon, on the other hand, enjoyed football and really liked PE and other opportunities to move in school. With few exceptions, he was always active and involved in PE. Here is what Anna (Figure 1) and Jon (Figure 2) drew and wrote during the drawing and writing task:

Anna's and Jon's drawings and texts differ from one another as well as from all the other drawings in the material. One element that contributes individuality is the design of the drawings. Anna has drawn her pictures with color pens while Jon has chosen a crayon. Moreover, Anna has drawn a person in both of her pictures while Jon has chosen to draw a football pitch in one of his. Other elements of individuality are the length and content of the texts. Anna's texts are several sentences long while Jon sums up each of his explanations in one sentence. Moreover, Anna and Jon choose different words and associate the activities with different experiences and emotions. Anna writes about moving fast, doing "cool tricks" and expressing herself, while Jon writes about what is "fun," "boring" and "weird." Furthermore, the combination of activities is different. Anna likes what Jon does not like. Anna and Jon express themselves in unique ways both when experiencing PE and when expressing themselves about their likes and dislikes.

Nevertheless, there were also similarities in Jon and Anna's expressions. Both draw activities as something they like in PE and something they do not like. They associated the subject with activities and their enjoyment of the subject with their

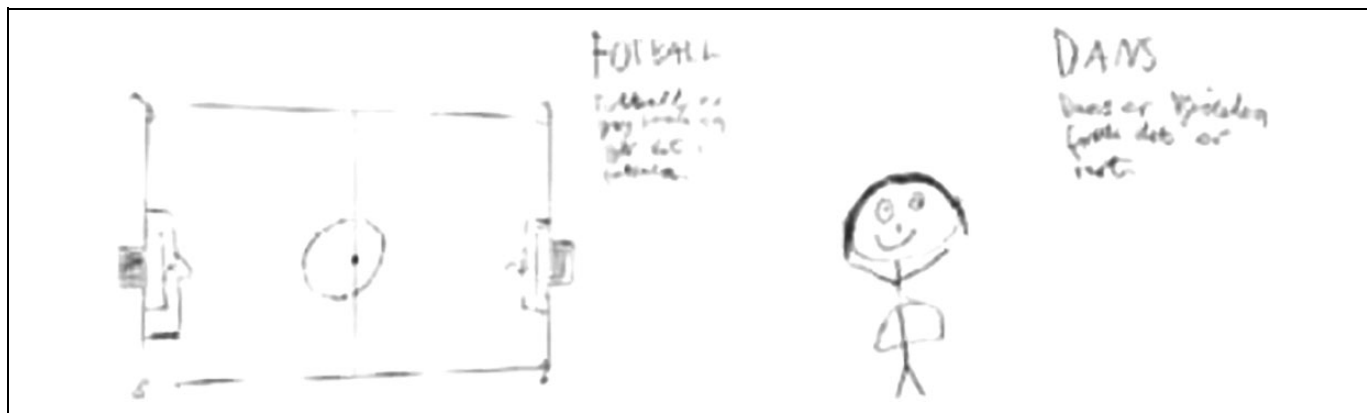


Figure 2. Jon's drawings and what he wrote in Norwegian (translation below): "Football is fun because I play it in my spare time." "Dance is boring because it's weird."

activity preferences. The same applied to all the other children in the material. Accordingly, Annerstedt (2008) and Kirk (2010) notice that PE usually means *doing* a wide variety of activities. Thus, children's responses to the drawing and writing task cohere with a cultural understanding and traditional way of organizing PE. When moving in PE, children become part of a culturally shaped environment. Their ideas of what PE is about and their experiences of what they like and dislike about it, take on elements of an environment and its prevailing cultures (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011).

Moreover, the children's choice of activities harmonized with the additional instruction at the beginning of the drawing task: "the 'something' you like or do not like in PE can be *an activity* or an occasion that made you especially happy or sad." The specification was the same for each class and thus the idea was available to all the children to use. The idea of associating one's likes and dislikes in PE with activities might have been passed from us to the children. Alternatively, perhaps the instructions simply reinforced an idea that the children already had. As adults and researchers, we had a certain amount of power in the situation (Matthews, 2007; Spyrou, 2011). Hearing an adult authority associating dis/liking something in PE with activities might have confirmed for the children that the idea was acceptable or even preferable. The children may have simply followed the instructions passively while we have passively followed a cultural assumption when forming the instructions (Spinoza, 2011).

Furthermore, the children's drawings indicate that when experiencing PE and negotiating their likes and dislikes, the children relate to one another. They share environments and sometimes also ideas and likes. One example of collective preferences is football, which is what Jon chose to present as what he likes best in PE. In addition to Jon, a number of children both in his school and in the other three schools made the same choice. Football was the most liked activity across the whole material. The idea of drawing football might have passed between the children in the classroom. They sat close to one another and could possibly see what their closest neighbors drew. However, a more likely explanation is that football was

a popular activity among the children both in and outside school. In three of the four schools, almost all the boys and many of the girls played football in their spare time. In addition, a majority of the boys at all four schools used most of their school recess time on playing football. Children, again mostly boys, also talked about getting together to play football in unorganized forms with friends after school. Accordingly, several teachers suggested that boys who did not like football risked being socially excluded. Thus, playing and dis/liking football is not only an individual issue, but also has cultural and collective aspects. For some of the children, playing and liking football may thus be intertwined with being drawn toward other children and social norms and expectations (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011).

Another example of collective likes is from school 1 where the majority of the children chose either capturing the flag or paintball³ as their favorite activity. Neither of these activities appeared in drawings from other schools. Unlike the other three schools, the teacher chose to regularly include the capturing the flag and paintball activities in PE, often at the end of the lesson. He knew that children liked these activities and reasoned that they had become increasingly proficient players. Accordingly, a group of boys from school 1 explained how capturing the flag had become more fun as they had learned how to play it and what they could do within the game. The children's preference, or like, for the activity emerged and developed over time as they played it together repeated times. They created a collective world, where they were both drawn toward one another and toward an activity (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). The experience was pleasant for many of them. By choosing to include the activity in PE and letting children play it regularly, the teacher gave room for the collective like to emerge.

In addition to illustrating the emergence of a collective like, capturing the flag and paintball is an example of the children drawing something they regularly did in PE. The choice of activity was coherent with the subject content the children encountered in their everyday lives. However, such coherence did not concern all the children such as Anna's example shows. Although Anna chose dance to express what she likes best in

PE, her class did not have this activity in PE. Instead, the teachers decided to include dance in the music subject. Thus, Anna's choice of dance did not relate to the content of PE lessons at her school. However, she danced during her spare time. We also observed one occasion where Anna's class danced together with several other classes in an additional movement lesson. In her drawing and writing, Anna created her *own world* of PE that draws on her personal interests and where her spare time and PE are mixed. In comparison to PE where she had to adopt the teacher's choices and the prevailing activity culture, in the drawing and writing task Anna let her imagination guide her. An internal passion mixed with the external experience (Spinoza, 2011).

Seen in relation to the example of capturing the flag and paintball in school 1, Anna's example shows how the composition of the individual and collective elements vary in the children's expressions. Sometimes similarities or collectivity and other times differences and uniqueness become the dominating aspect. Yet, as we have shown, both aspects are present at all times and are thus inseparably connected, such as Spindler (2009) and Seigworth and Gregg (2010) suggest. Over time, the varying compositions of individuality and collectivity create patterns as well as ambivalences.

Patterns, Variations and Ambivalences in the Children's Expressions

When considering the drawings and written texts in relation to what the children said in the interviews throughout the school year and how they moved in PE, it appears that the drawings and texts were one expression of the many. In one situation, the children expressed similar ideas, intensities or actions while in other situations different ideas, intensities or actions emerged.

In accordance with the ease and flow that Anna expressed in her drawing and writing about dance, she moved around lightly and swiftly on her toes, echoing the rhythm when she danced in the gymnastic hall during the additional movement lesson. In the interviews, Anna talked about dancing all the time—"even in my bed." She described also how she simply gets ideas and comes up with new moves when she dances and added that it is difficult for her to explain or show what she does during a dance afterward. The ease and rhythm of Anna's steps correspond with the openness and joy in her drawing, as well as with the words "moving fast" and "doing cool tricks," that she wrote about. Similarly, simply getting ideas and coming up with new movements corresponds with an ease in expressing oneself, for example when feeling sorry for something and "being in my own world." Anna's expressions harmonize and create patterns over time and between different situations. Her expressions also indicate a deep connectedness between her and dance. Dance opens Anna to the world and in creating the dance Anna makes it available to the world.

However, other aspects in interviews with Anna contrasted the joy and openness in her drawings and texts. She had little to say during the group interviews, often drawing back in her chair and seeming cautious with her words. Anna also hesitated

to talk about expressing herself through movement or "being in one's own world." When we addressed these themes in one of the group interviews, Anna looked at us, wriggled a bit in her chair and said that she did not know. We wondered if Anna did not recognize her own written words when spoken out loud or if she was uncomfortable talking openly about such a personal topic. Furthermore, several times Anna criticized the boys for speaking rudely and being competitive in PE classes. When she said this, her voice was a bit shrill, infused with despair or dismay. On the one hand, these expressions from Anna are in line with her words about being shy, as she wrote under the first drawing. On the other hand, they differ from the openness, joy and the "world of ease" that Anna created in her drawings and texts. The variations and contrasts in Anna's expressions show that she is affected differently in various environments and situations (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011). As her relationships to others and otherness change, Anna takes on different forms or modes which we observe as ambivalent and contextual expressions (Spinoza, 2011).

Like Anna, Jon's expressions also sometimes created patterns and other times contrasts. In the interviews, he affirmed that he did not like dance. He explained that dance was "something girls do" and that he was not good at it. One day in the classroom, he hid behind a classmate during a dance break and made his moves as unobtrusively as possible. In contrast, when his class played football, Jon was focused and intense. Moreover, he often wore a football uniform in PE, regardless of the activity. Thus, our observations and interviews with Jon affirmed his own assertion that he liked football and did not like dance.

However, on another occasion Jon contrasted his own expressions. During a circuit-training lesson, Jon noticed a teaching assistant jamming in the background. He turned toward the assistant, stepped smoothly toward her to the rhythm of the music and then "showed off" some dance moves. Given the resistance he had expressed previously, Jon surprised us with this sudden smoothness and rhythm in his dance moves. Like Anna, Jon was affected and expressed himself differently from situation to situation (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Spinoza, 2011).

Corresponding with Jon's repeated expressions of not liking dance, Watkins (2010) has suggested that affects and sensations can accumulate over time and create concepts that are more permanent. Conceivably, Jon's dislike of dance may have intensified over time. However, such affects pass and evolve in unpredictable ways (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010), Jon responded differently in the classroom and during the circuit-training lesson. His relationship to dance was contextual and mutable—not static as his words indicated. Accordingly, Seigworth and Gregg (2010) argue that due to the changing character of the world and individuals' relationships to it, there is always a possibility of something new or something different arising.

Another topic that arises from Jon's example is the contrast between confidence and insecurity that further corresponds with the contrast between openness and caution in Anna's example. When playing or talking about football, Jon's

movements and expressions glow with confidence and the same ease that Anna expresses when dancing, writing or talking about dance. The same confidence is also visible when Jon gives into jamming in the gymnastic hall. On the other hand, when dancing in the classroom or writing and talking about dance, Jon's expressions become insecure. He has an undefinable "weird" feeling that is not good. His bodily expressions, especially his dance moves, are noncommittal. The bodily intensity and resonance that Jon senses and which we observe in his movements and his being in two situations, in the gymnastic hall and in the classroom, are different. The same is true for Anna's openness in her drawings and texts, and when dancing, compared to her cautious approach and reluctance in the interviews. The intensity and resonance are different. Moments of confidence and security, both in Jon and Anna's examples, correspond further with moments of being drawn toward oneself, others, the environment and/or the situation, whereas moments of insecurity and caution correspond with moments of being pushed away or kept at a distance (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). The variations of confidence and insecurity, or openness and caution, indicate that experiencing and interacting with the world alone and together with others is "a bumpy road" which prompts children to go through a variety of bodily intensities and emotions. As Hurley (in Deleuze, 1988), notes "[T]he environment is not just a reservoir of information whose circuits await mapping, but also a field of forces whose actions await experiencing" (p. ii). Children's experiences and expressions emerge from their relationships with others and with environments, but even more accurately, from the *interactions between* themselves, other people, environments and situations.

Discussion of the Findings

Based on analyses of data from Jon, Anna and other children, we have shown how their expressions include both elements of individuality and collectivity that are intertwined and how their expressions create patterns, variations and ambivalences over time. These findings agree with Eldén's (2012) notion that children speak from changing and varying positions and add insight into the phenomenon of children's voices as multiple and messy. We emphasize the meaning of relationships and interactions on deep, bodily levels. The findings show how a multitude of affective forces that the children sense in bodily intensities and resonances emerge in encounters between children, adults, such as teachers and researchers, the school institution and its practices and cultures, and the communities in which the children live. These affective forces, which involve both internal and external and active and passive forces, move children further toward varying thoughts, ideas and actions that we see as their expressions (Spinoza, 2011) or *voice*. Sometimes their own interests, desires or imagination; and other times adults' instructions or social and cultural norms and expectations draw children. Simultaneously, the children retain their individuality and uniqueness when expressing themselves in and about movement and PE in varying situations and settings.

The intertwining of the individual and collective agrees further with the perspectives of the new sociology of childhood, which places emphasis on the variations, and contextuality of children's voices (Matthews, 2007; Spyrou, 2011). The differences, variations and ambivalences show that individual children experience and express themselves in and about movement in different ways; "how" it comes to the child, the situation and most of all the relationships and interactions between the child, other persons and elements in the situation. We agree with the perspectives of the new sociology of childhood in that the social interactions and prevailing cultures are important for how children are affected and further how children come to experience and express movement in a particular environment. We also agree that children do not simply adopt cultures but also create their own (Matthews, 2007). Furthermore, we point out that the social and cultural elements of children's voices need to be understood in relation to the uniqueness of each child. We argue that children's encounters with other people and cultures is not only a question of who forms whom, but also a matter of being drawn toward or pushed apart from one another or particular situations that make children feel comfortable, uncomfortable or something in between on deep, bodily levels. As such, children, other people and cultures interact within particular environments and situations, and children's voices emerge, fade and fluctuate in contrast to being constructed or produced.

Being drawn toward or pushed apart, emerging, fading and fluctuating place emphasis on the passive aspects of human life. Accordingly, the findings show that the variations of children's expressions have an element of unpredictability. However, we have underlined that children's expressions also create patterns and concepts that are more permanent. Moreover, children retain their uniqueness in encounters with others and otherness. Neither in PE nor in Western societies in general is there a tradition for reflecting over movement and movement experiences, thus many of the choices children make about how to move and how to draw, write or talk about movement are probably more passive than active or reflected. However, the children's expressions indicate that they are capable of thinking and acting in their unique ways and that they have a multitude of varying experiences about themselves and others in different environments and situations. From the affect theory perspective, variation of experiences is important for children because each experience involves an opportunity to understand more about oneself, others and the world, and to become increasingly capable to act (Spinoza, 2011). For a researcher, the ways children express themselves opens for the opportunity to get to know the uniqueness of each child and children's relationships and interactions with others and otherness. Related to perspectives of new sociology of childhood (James, 2007; Matthews, 2007; Spyrou, 2011), the individuality and uniqueness in children's expressions show that they are competent at expressing themselves (Einarsdottir, 2007) and contributing to the societies in which they live (Moore et al., 2008). However, variations, ambivalences, misinterpretations and confusion are an inseparable part of their voices. If we are to

understand children's voices, such intertwining of active and passive aspects indicates that it is important to be involved in relationships and interactions with children in varying situations and over time, as well as critically considering the multitude of internal and external forces that might affect children (as well as the researcher) at each moment.

Quality of the Research Process

Using Anna and Jon's examples, we have been able to illustrate patterns, similarities and differences, variations and ambivalences in the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Thaagard, 2013). However, we agree with Spyrou (2011) and Eldén (2012) that children's expressions and researchers' interpretations and representations are always selective and positioned. Our data material contains a variety of other illustrative examples that we have not highlighted in this article. Similarly, the data from multiple methods and repeated visits provide a solid ground for exploring children's voices, without providing a "complete picture" of the children we worked with. In each phase of the research process, we have made several choices that have shaped the children's voices. We have defined the purpose and frames of the study and asked children to express themselves about certain themes and topics. We have also interpreted the data material and chosen what to include and exclude in the themes and findings. Thus, the findings and the research process are related. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, we have strived for transparency with respect to our methodological and analytical choices and discussed several possible alternatives and interpretations throughout the research process (Ravenek & Rudman, 2013).

Conclusions

In this article, we have explored how children's experiences and expressions take form and vary in a school context. With the example of movement and PE, we have shown that the way children express themselves involves both individual and collective elements that are intertwined. Over time, children's relationships and interactions with others, environments and situations change. Children become affected differently and their experiences and expressions take different forms; sometimes creating patterns and other times variations and ambivalences. The individual elements in children's experiences and expressions, demonstrate further the uniqueness of each child while the collective elements show that the uniqueness of each child is bound to and expressed in her/his relationships and interactions with other children, adults, such as teachers and researchers, and the local communities and culturally shaped environments they inhabit. Thus, the processes in which children's experiences and expressions or voices are formed are complex. Both internal and external forces, such as emotions, imagination, norms and instructions, draw in children. However, they are always in part active and retain their uniqueness in encounters with others and otherness.

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Supplemental Material

The supplemental material for this article is available online

Notes

1. See Online Appendix; informed consent was translated from Norwegian by the authors.
2. See Ingulfsvann (2018) for descriptions and examples of these activities.
3. Instead of paintball guns, the children used soft balls to hit one another.

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