

What if the real problem was me? An adaptive physical activity academic's narrative understanding of reflexive turn

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Abstract

I presented a set of contextual stories and reflections of my own lived experience of reflexive turn within the contexts of adaptive physical activity (APA), a field of study in relation to dis/ability and physical activity. *Reflexivity* refers to a deliberate critical self-reflection on one's own assumptions and actions, as well as their potential consequences towards others. I utilized narrative inquiry that studies one's lived experience and its meanings by identifying, composing, and representing the experience. I first unpacked my own reflexive turn by scrutinizing my own limiting perceptions and assumptions within APA contexts. I have turned to reflexivity when I recognized the potential consequences of taking my knowledge and expertise for granted within my understandings and actions in relation to APA. In this turn, I have learned about the potential danger of privileging my own unexamined opinions in my actions. I thus began to deliberately engage in reflexive practices within my own involvement in practice and learning in APA. By sharing my narratives, I hoped to inspire readers to critically reflect on reflexivity in their own involvement in practice and learning. I also hoped that readers may identify opportunities to (re)frame and (re)live their future engagements in their profession and education in new (and more ethically sound and socially responsible) ways. Finally, my narratives illustrate that reflexive practice requires (1) the "involvement of the self" as a fundamental source and site for reflexivity, (2) "socially responsible ethical becoming" by engaging continually in challenging fixed or predetermined notions, and (3) "(re)living in tensions" by actively seeking ethically framed future possibilities for practice and learning in reflexive, relational, and transformative ways.

Keywords: Reflexivity, physical education, sport, adaptive physical activity, disability, narrative inquiry.

Introduction

As a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, [we] may miss important opportunities to think about what [we are] doing. [We] may find that... [we are] drawn into patterns of error which [we] cannot correct. And if [we] learns, as often happens, to be selectively inattentive to phenomena that do not fit the categories of [our] knowing-in-action, then [we] may suffer from boredom or "burn-out" and afflict [our] clients with the consequences of [our] narrowness and rigidity. When this happens, [we] have "over-learned" what [we] know. (Schön, 1983, p. 61)

Reflexivity refers to a critical self-reflection on one's own assumptions and actions, as well as their potential consequences towards others. Pursuing reflexivity thus involves "examining critically the assumptions underlying our actions, [and] the impact of those actions...from a broader perspective" (Cunliffe, 2016, p. 748). Reflexive *turn* occurs when people recognize an "insecurity regarding the basic assumptions, discourse, and practices used in describing reality" (Pollner, 1991, p. 370) or realize a sense of differentness—that is, "an apparent incongruity that needs to be explored and understood, or both" (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016, p. 579). However, such recognitions of insecurities or differences do not prompt one's reflexive turn intuitively. Instead, the turn to reflexivity occurs with a "deliberate awareness involving both a contemplative stance (state of mind) and intentional activity" (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016, p.578). Reflexive turn, moreover, requires one's intended inquiry that involves careful reflections and interpretations on those insecurities and differences in relation to one's own personal and social contexts. By turning to reflexivity, people could thus have opportunities to (re)construct new ways of thinking and doing (Hosking & Pluut, 2010).

Reflexive turn can provide educational and professional practitioners (e.g., physical education teachers, coaches, and rehabilitation specialists) and pre-service practitioners (e.g., post-secondary students, interns, and trainees) with "important opportunities to think about what [they are] doing" and chances to avoid their "narrowness and rigidity" in their own practice or learning (Schön, 1983, p. 61). For these pre/in-service practitioners, reflexivity can occur during and after their practice or learning. *Reflection-in-action* could take place through their spontaneous self-reflections during their practice or learning as a form of problem-solving through on-the-spot critical thinking. These endeavors would be helpful for them to engage in ethically sound and socially responsible approaches in actions (Schön, 1983; Rolfe, 1997). *Reflection-on-action* could also happen through a retrospective self-reflection on their practice or learning by critically examining alternative

actions and/or solutions. Such reflexive efforts would also have potential to turn their previous experience into the future reference of ethically sound and socially responsible knowledge (Schön, 1983; Rolfe, 1997).

Here, I present a set of contextual stories and subsequent reflections of my own lived experience of reflexive turn as an academic in the field of adaptive physical activity (APA)—that is, an area of study aimed at the advancement of scientific and empirical knowledge in relation to dis/ability and physical activity (e.g., physical education, leisure, recreation, rehabilitation, and sport). I recounted how I entered the field of APA and how my own assumptions have been shaped and transformed during both my undergraduate and graduate studies. In these narratives, I highlighted how a lack of reflexivity could have negative consequences for one's action and its impacts towards others. In so doing, I first unpacked my own reflexive turn critically by scrutinizing my own limiting perceptions and assumptions within APA contexts. I then sought new possibilities for my own growth and change by examining different ways of thinking and engaging in APA. By sharing my narratives, I aim to inspire other pre/in-service practitioners in physical activity related fields to think critically about their own involvement in practice and learning. I also hope that these practitioners may identify opportunities to (re)frame and (re)live their future engagements in practice and learning in new (and more ethically sound and socially responsible) ways.

Methods

I made use of narratives, the storied representations of my own lived experiences. These formed the basis, and the subject, of my inquiry. *Narrative inquiry* studies the storied experiences by exploring their temporality (i.e., the timeframes—past, present, or future—in which they occurred), their sociality (i.e., the ways in which they intersected with socio-cultural influences), and their place (i.e., the physical and topological locations where they took place) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provided the conceptual framework for this inquiry: *puzzling* in a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*. Like a person putting together pieces of a puzzle, I searched and re-searched for ways to connect fragments of my experience by composing *field texts* (i.e., annals and chronicles, autobiographical stories, family stories, field notes, and daily journals). I then brought these pieces together by interweaving each field text in relation to the others, while responding to questions such as: “How was my turn to reflexivity experienced in relation to particular times, places, and social contexts?” and “How would studying these experiences be socially meaningful and significant?” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000)

Stories and subsequent reflections are presented in the representational style of *essayistic personal experience narrative*, following the phases of *description*, *interpretation*, and *explanation* (Markula & Denison, 2005). I first described who was involved in the event(s), how the experience took place (e.g., what people said and how they said it, including their body actions, gestures, and facial expressions), and where the experience took place (i.e., descriptions of the place[s] the experience occurred). I then interpreted the reasons why others and I acted in a particular way, considering the interactions and relationships amongst personal and social contexts. I crafted dialogues and expositions to make such interpretations visible. Finally, I explained my lived experiences of turning to reflexivity within and against the personal and social contexts of my own life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Markula & Denison, 2005). I changed the descriptions of people in my stories and fictionalized some parts of my stories to protect the privacy of others who appeared in this article. My wife granted her verbal permission to appear in my stories within this manuscript.

Results and Discussion

My narrative findings are presented as two coherent stories and subsequent reflections on each story. The first story illustrates how I constructed my own understandings of dis/ability and how it shaped and transformed my own practice and learning as a pre-service APA practitioner. My second story illuminates how I turn to reflexivity by sharing my own acknowledgement of the danger when there is a lack of reflexivity.

Story 1: entering the field of APA

It is hard to imagine my life without soccer. Soccer was a part of my everyday life during my childhood and youth. I was the type of child who wore soccer shoes everywhere, even in shopping malls and churches. I went outside every single day, rain or shine, to play soccer with my pals until the sun had completely set. Once at home, I watched soccer games or highlights until my mom told me to go to bed. Then, I went to bed with my favorite soccer ball instead of a doll.

At the age of eighteen, I applied to a sport and leisure studies undergraduate program in Korea. I imagined myself becoming a famous professional soccer coach or an owner of the facility for training young soccer players. During my undergraduate program, my soccer life continued. I ran a small children's soccer club, and I was the captain of my department's intramural team.

During an intramural team practice, I sustained severe injuries to my ankle and spine. Medical results showed that 75% of my ankle ligaments were torn, and two of my intervertebral discs slipped out of my spine. My intramural soccer was brought to an abrupt end. I had to undergo a surgical operation and follow-up hospital treatment visits. I tried my best to recover from my injuries by attending rehabilitation programs. With complete trust in the doctor's knowledge, I strictly followed my rehabilitation regime in hope to be cured from my injuries

and to promptly return to my active lifestyles.

An unforgettable incident happened about the second week after my surgery. My repetitive homebound routine became monotonous, and boredom took over. Curious, I decided to visit a gym near my house just to have a look. I changed into my Nike training pants and T-shirts, and I wheeled outside of my home. I felt exhilarated, escaping from my tedious homebound lifestyle. I closed my eyes; at last, I could inhale the fresh air, while stretching my arms and feeling the warmth of the sunlight.

My destination approached as I wheeled rapidly to the main entrance of the gym. But I had to stop. There were stairs blocking my access. I was quite annoyed. I decided to try the left side of the building, hoping to find a wheelchair accessible entrance. But to my dismay, there were only stairs. This was very frustrating. With much effort, I wheeled to the backside of the building. I intended to turn at the corner of the building, but there was a 1.5-foot rise completely blocking my way. I became very angry when I discovered that there was not even a three-foot gap for me to sneak through.

As I wheeled back to the main entrance, I thought about whether I should try the right side of the building or give up and head home. But my struggles with finding an accessible entrance triggered my competitive nature, and I knew that giving up was not an option. Sweating a lot, I wheeled to the right side where there was a steep slope. Determined, I wheeled with all my strength upwards, not caring about the struggle. I kept on going and finally arrived at the right-side entrance as there was an accessible ramp attached to the entrance. Out of breath, I sat in front of the door. With a single slow movement, I pushed on the door.

“Oh no!” I cried.

The door was locked. I could hardly restrain my anger at this point. This was the only accessible door available, and it was locked during business hours. I wanted to yell at someone for discriminating against people who must use a wheelchair; because there was no providing means to access or signage explaining where the accessible entrance was located. I concluded that the gym operated under a discriminatory policy aimed at keeping people with mobility impairments out of the building.

I wheeled back to the main entrance for the third time. Red in the face, I arrived at the entrance huffing and puffing. I was physically exhausted. I sat there glaring at the stairs as a person approached.

“Excuse me.... Do you need help?” the person asked me carefully.

I took a few deep breaths, not wanting to direct my anger at the person wanting to help. I explained my situation and politely asked the person to go up the stairs and get a staff member to come down to talk with me. To my great relief, the person was sympathetic to my situation and went inside.

A few moments later, a staff member from the gym came outside. I thanked the stranger for the assistance. I turned to the staff member with a frown on my face, “Why is the door on the right side of the building locked?” I continued with a controlled tone. “I was not able to get inside.”

The staff member did not reply right away but seemed obviously irritated at my remark. I became infuriated with the staff member’s dismissive attitude. After a few seconds of silence, I asked again with an emphasis on each word, “Why...is...that...locked?”

“Because no one is using it. Everyone is using the front and the back door right by the parking lots,” the staff member answered with a sneer.

“But I was going to use that door. I need an accessible ramp!”

“What are you going to do inside?” he challenged instead of answering my question.

“I just wanted to have a look inside.”

With a derisive smile on his face, he asked, “Have a look for what? Are you going to come inside and actually exercise? With that chair? This facility is not a rehab centre for patients. This is a *‘fitness’* centre.”

“Hey! How come you think I cannot do anything in this gym?” though I did not intend to do any exercise on that day, I really did not like that he assumed my injury prevented me from exercising. I suddenly noticed that several people were gathering around us. The staff member did not seem to want to continue the argument with an audience. He blurted out again, “Hey, find a gym for the disabled. You know what? You can join us if you can walk up to the stairs.” Then he went back inside.

I just sat there breathing deeply. I covered my face with my hands. Then I heard exclamations from the people surrounding me. I looked around, slowly and hesitatingly. Their eyes showed me that they felt sorry for me; they pitied me.

“Excuse me!” I hollered as I wheeled very quickly through the crowd to get away from that situation as fast as possible.

Once home, I laid on my bed and covered my head with a blanket without even changing my clothes. My heart was saddened, and I could feel burning tears rolling down my face. That night, I fought to make sense of what had happened to me. I had never experienced being physically denied any sort of access because of who I was. Also, I had never experienced so much emotional frustration and embarrassment in front of strangers. I just could not believe what had happened to me.

For several days after the incident, I kept thinking about the life experiences of people experiencing disabilities, “Is this what people experiencing disabilities go through every day of their lives? Being refused...denied...excluded...ridiculed...humiliated...embarrassed.... How pitiable they are.... Being a person with an impairment must be an absolute tragedy...”

After that, I stayed home until I finished using the wheelchair, except for an outing to the hospital rehabilitation program. I assumed that I would experience another awful situation, because I “looked” disabled. I was afraid of exposing myself to the harshness of this discrimination. I never wanted to feel that way again. I used my homebound time to think deeply about how I would prevent these unacceptable exclusionary experiences for others with impairments, and how I would change discriminatory assumptions about them. While at home, I finally became interested in an APA academic career at a post-secondary institution. I imagined that if I could teach ten pre-service practitioners to challenge discriminatory assumptions about people experiencing disabilities, it would be ten times better than merely being only one practitioner myself. I also envisioned pursuing research activities aimed at promoting societal changes for people experiencing disabilities in healthy active living contexts. As a result, I applied to the APA Master’s program at a university in Korea. I thus entered the field of APA.

My own disability construction

Reflecting upon these events, I recognized that my negative experiences contributed to my own perceptions of disability. Having been denied access to the gym, I took for granted that people experiencing disabilities were vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005; Oliver, 2009). Based on my experience of being pitied by the others, I assumed that disability must be an embarrassing and tragic condition in an individual’s life (Clapton, 2003). In addition, having looked disabled due to my wheelchair use, I began perceiving disability as something to be avoided or hidden away (Titchkosky, 2003; Jaeger & Bowman, 2005; Shakespeare, 2006; Oliver, 2009).

My understandings of disability were thus strongly influenced by the so-called *medical model* of disability, which perceives disability as restrictions and/or a lack of abilities due to medical defects in one’s body (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Roush & Sharby, 2011). From this perspective, disability is amenable to medical diagnosis and therapeutic treatment designed to achieve normalization (e.g., regaining my ability to walk through medical rehabilitation) (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Roush & Sharby, 2011). My injuries presented me with a mobility impairment, albeit temporarily: I was unable to walk.

People’s *attitudes* also dramatically shaped my experience (Reel & Bucciare, 2010; Titchkosky, 2011). The staff member’s discriminatory attitude was problematic. Due to my wheelchair use, the staff member labeled me as “disabled” based on the preconceived notion of my inability and barred me from entering the gym. The attitudes of the people surrounding me further contributed to my disability experience as I internalized my new identity. I truly felt that I *was* disabled, because they pitied me for my inability and vulnerability.

However, my body’s functional limitations and such societal attitudes were not the full factors that contributed to my disability experience. The *built environment* also presented a challenge (Oliver, 2009; Shakespeare, 2006; Titchkosky, 2011). There was no accessible ramp or elevator at the main entrance of the gym; there was no accessible curb cut for the 1.5-foot rise at the corner of the building. Likewise, the *policy* for building accessibility prevented me from entering the building (Oliver, 2009; Shakespeare, 2006; Titchkosky, 2011). The accessible entrance was locked during the business hours of the gym, and there was no signage explaining where the accessible entrance was located.

In sum, the loss of physical function, societal attitudes, as well as environmental and policy barriers all shaped my disability experience. My understandings of disability were thus also influenced by the interaction of the medical and *social model of disability*. A social model of disability posits that disability is socially constructed (Shogan, 1998). From the social perspective, the disability experience occurs when policies and environments fail to take account of individual differences by not accommodating individuals’ unique needs (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Roush & Sharby, 2011). When there are negative societal attitudes that may discourage or isolate people with impairments from full participation in society, the disability experience is created and perpetuated (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Roush & Sharby, 2011). Based on these experiences and my subsequent reflections, I therefore came to understand disability as a medically oriented individual *problem*, which was intensified by disabling elements within society (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Roush & Sharby, 2011).

My own “best” practices

My disability experience strongly influenced my aspirations to enter and excel in the APA Master’s program. I decided that my main task as an APA graduate trainee would be to learn how to integrate people experiencing disabilities into physical activities. I thus sought out to learn how to promote opportunities for *equal placement* (and which, I now understand, involves an emphasis on the equality of placement rather than on choices of people experiencing disabilities) (Block, 1994; Jang et al., 1998; Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002). I tended to follow what Jang et al. (1998, p. 4) describe as a “for all and together” approach. The research activities conducted through my Master’s also focused on how to ensure that people experiencing disabilities had equal access to preferred physical activities.

During my Master’s program, I also decided to actively engage in social activism as a way of resisting and transforming the disabling elements of society. I believed this was what I could do *for* vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized people experiencing disabilities. As a member of a student group advocating for the rights of people experiencing disabilities, I protested at the university’s town hall meetings and participated in public

marches to increase awareness of the need for accessibility within the university's sports facilities. I sought to prevent discrimination against people experiencing disabilities who wished to access the campus sports facilities. I also participated in disability sport demonstrations at a disability awareness street performance. I hoped to challenge the beliefs that people experiencing disabilities are not capable of doing sports.

During that time, my beliefs about best practices in APA were founded in providing "help" for people experiencing disabilities to participate in mainstream physical activities (Block, 1994; Jang et al., 1998; Lieberman & Houston-Wilson, 2002). I truly wanted to help people experiencing disabilities who were going through their "personal tragedy" because of their vulnerability and marginalization (Clapton, 2003, p. 540).

During the two years following the completion of my Master's program, there was a huge transition in my life. I came to Canada as a visitor to a university-based research and exercise facility for people experiencing disabilities. I worked there daily for specialized adult fitness programs and volunteered for several adapted programs for children experiencing disabilities.

At my work, I pledged to be the best "caregiver" I could be by providing as much help I could to satisfy my strong beliefs about best practices in APA. However, my daily encounters with the people at the facility caused me to think differently about APA practice. Participants of the programs became frustrated when I assumed that they were always in need of help. For example, I changed a machine setting for one of the members of the facility without asking, because I thought I knew the appropriate setting. I truly wanted to help the client for better fitness outcomes and experiences. I expected the member to say, "Thank you very much for your kind help," but the person said, "Please don't do that again." My charitable approach was troubling, both towards the participant and towards me. I became terribly confused about my own beliefs about best practices in APA.

Story 2: a troubling assignment

After finishing my time at the facility, I became a PhD student in the field of APA. I began my PhD program with the aspiration of studying the experiences and perspectives of people experiencing disabilities who participated in physical activities. I wanted to further study what constitutes best practice in APA from their perspectives. However, during the first term of my PhD program, I faced a shift in my research interest. The turning point began one day during dinner with my wife.

"Hey, how is your first PhD assignment writing going?" she asked while mixing her salad with dressing.

"It seems all right.... Well...at least, I'm enjoying it. I'm writing about Oscar Pistorius, the guy...the fastest guy with no legs."

"Oh, the guy on YouTube you showed me?"

"Yeah," I said. "Some people are really mad about him running at the Beijing Olympics. I cannot understand those people, so I am going to write about it."

"Oh, really?" she responded cautiously. "But...I think...he shouldn't be allowed to compete at the Olympics."

"How come?" I replied with a frown.

"Nobody is running with artificial legs in the Olympics...." she said carefully.

"Oh, excuse me, honey!" I said, almost yelling. "No matter whether he uses the prosthetics or not, he has a right to compete at the Olympics! Having no legs shouldn't be the reason for kicking him out of the Games!"

"Whoa-whoa.... calm down. I actually agree with you that he has the right to be included in the Games, but I think his participation might cause lots of problems...."

Calming down, I let her know there were people who thought in a similar way. "Okay, what you were talking about was the way people talked about his eligibility for the Olympics. Some people are saying that Oscar Pistorius has an unfair advantage over other athletes by using the advanced technological artificial legs instead of using 'normal' human legs. Others say that his running cannot be counted as normal human running, because his prosthetics perform differently than normal human legs do. Some even say that letting him run will cause future chaos in able-bodied sporting events. They say people might use artificial lungs to compete at the marathons to avoid fatigue...or manufactured super-power arms for javelin..., and so on. They even say that we won't be able to stop future Olympics from becoming competitions for people with cutting-edge artificial body parts. I couldn't tolerate that people called Oscar Pistorius a 'cyborg' or 'Six Million Dollar Man.' I am hoping you are not one of them."

I expected her to acknowledge that her ideas were wrong. However, she quickly shot back, "See? Don't you think it's problematic? Are you thinking he should be eligible, even with all of these issues?"

"Yes, absolutely I do!" Then I continued, "You know what? I will make sure to write my assignment arguing his rightful participation in any sporting event for people experiencing disabilities! There shouldn't be any kind of exclusion for people experiencing disabilities because they have impairments!" I stood up from my chair and left the dinner table, shouting, "Thanks for the dinner!"

"Oh, then, good luck with that!" she yelled at my back.

Thereafter, the assignment became a very important project for me as a way of defending my strong beliefs about integration and equal placement opportunities in sport. For several days after the conversation at the dinner table, I began gathering information related to the Oscar Pistorius eligibility controversy. I gathered media reports, academic journal articles, pictures, and video clips of him. I used them to support my argument for the assignment. A few days before the submission deadline, I watched a recently released YouTube video clip, showing Oscar Pistorius sprinting with athletes without impairments at the South African qualification competition for the Beijing Olympics.

After watching the video clip, I thought, “Oh, it was so close. He almost made the qualification! It was so unfortunate for him to miss the Olympic qualification by just 0.02 seconds. He could have showcased his ability to compete against athletes without impairments. It is going to take another four years to make history: a Paralympic sprinter’s debut in the Olympics.”

Then, I clicked the video clip again to enjoy watching it one more time. However, I unexpectedly observed that something was not “correct” at the end of his race: he was involuntarily bouncing. I watched the video again. I then clearly noticed that his prosthetics were making him bounce uncontrollably even after the race was over. Suddenly a thought floated through my mind. “Hang on...he couldn’t stop himself.... He should be able to stop after running. Oh, the spring effects of his prosthetics must be strongly influencing his running abilities. The effects enabled him to compete against other athletes without impairments...?” I began wondering whether the race really was unfair for the other athletes. After that, my writing plan for the assignment became undone.

What if the real problem was me?

Based on my disability experience during my undergraduate program, I held a firm belief: excluding people experiencing disabilities from mainstream society was an obvious form of discrimination. While preparing my writing assignment, I had no doubt that people experiencing disabilities had the right to participate in mainstream physical activities. I strongly believed that there should be no reason for excluding them. Accordingly, I could not accept the notion of others arguing for Pistorius’ ineligibility based on his body looking “abnormal” and his running form and body functioning “abnormally.” At that time, I was also strongly opposed to the idea that he should be banned from mainstream sporting events—an idea based on the belief that, on one hand, he was not *able-bodied*, and on the other that his impaired body was enhanced by advanced technology (Edwards, 2008).

On the day that I recognized Pistorius’ involuntary bouncing at the end of his race, I became extremely frustrated. I was so disappointed, not just in his inability to stop bouncing, but also because I realized that his prosthetics could be providing an unfair advantage (Burkett et al., 2011; Chockalingam et al., 2011; Jones & Wilson, 2009; Kram et al., 2010; Norman & Moola, 2011). I also began doubting that his achievements in sprinting events were purely the results of his endeavors as an athlete (Camporesi, 2008; Corrigan et al., 2010; Swartz & Watermeyer, 2008; van Hilvoorde & Landeweerd, 2010; Weyand et al., 2009). I was worried about the ramification of his inclusion in *able-bodied* sporting events (e.g., making boundaries blurred for the legitimate performance enhancers) (Cole, 2009; Sherrill, 2009; Wasserman, 2008; Wolbring, 2008a). However, what frustrated me the most was the recognition of my own unsettled attitudes about “disability” and “ability.” I found myself thinking that he was too-abled (van Hilvoorde & Landeweerd, 2008).

All of this caused me to rethink my own perceptions and assumptions about people experiencing disabilities. Initially, I had presumed that they were people with impaired bodies that lacked physical function; and that left them incapable, weak, vulnerable, and in need of help (Clapton, 2003). I had assumed that “such people” always require help from professionals to participate in mainstream society (Goodwin, 2001, 2008). Upon careful consideration of Oscar Pistorius’ running ability, however, I realized that I might have been devaluing or overlooking the ability of people experiencing disabilities (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Reel & Bucciare, 2010). I also recognized that I might have felt superior to people experiencing disabilities based on being *able-bodied* (Oliver, 2009; Shakespeare, 2006). I was worried and uncomfortable. “Would I become an APA academic with unexamined attitudes toward the people I care about?” I began to ask myself what it meant to be disabled or abled.

This questioning prompted me to consider new possibilities. “What if my own best practices were based on my unexamined meanings of dis/ability and the role that I played in them (Patey et al., 2019; Smith, 2009)?” “What if my own assumptions about dis/ability influence my practices in APA negatively, as it happened when I provided help without asking a member at the adapted fitness program (DePauw, 2000)?” “What if I was unwittingly contributing to other’s disability experiences due to this lack of critical thinking about my own assumptions (Northway, 2000)?” “What if I was ascribing and re-ascribing negative beliefs about identity onto people experiencing disabilities without being aware of it (Reel & Bucciare, 2010)?” “What if I was unconsciously contributing to a discriminatory society against people experiencing disabilities (Wolbring, 2008b)?” In conclusion, “What if the real problem was me?”

I came to realize that I had never reflected deeply upon how I had come to understand the meanings of dis/ability (Macbeth, 2010; Northway, 2000). I thus became desperate to understand how I constructed the ideas of dis/ability (i.e., my own disability construction) and how it was expressed and enacted within my APA

education and academic practices (e.g., learning, research, teaching, and professional service). This was the beginning of my turning to reflexivity—a journey of engaging in reflexive ways of thinking, living, and perhaps, re-living as an APA academic. My reflexive turn then would help me to possibly avoid being the “real problem.”

Conclusion

My stories and reflections are presented as snapshots of my own lived experiences of reflexive turn. I have turned to reflexivity when I recognized the potential consequences of taking my knowledge and expertise for granted within my understandings and actions in related to APA. In this turn, I have learned about the potential danger of privileging my own unexamined opinions in my actions. I thus began to deliberately engage in reflexive practices in my own involvement in APA to refrain from becoming the “real problem” and to avoid experiencing “over-learning.” As Schön (1983, p. 61) notes, reflexive practice

can serve as a corrective to over-learning. Through reflection, [we] can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which [we] may allow [ourselves] to experience.

Engaging in my new beginnings of reflexive pursuits within my APA involvement, I came to realize a few important concepts that guide my reflexive (re)living.

Involvement of the self

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), experience is *relational* because people are always in relationships with each other within social contexts. Experience is also *temporal* because it is constantly changing as it unfolds through time. Finally, experience is *continuous* because it grows “out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Understanding this notion of experience within the contexts of my own reflexive turn, I recognized that I was the *lived embodiments* of my own experience. I realized that I was the one who was “experiencing the experience” and “a part of the experience itself” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). Such recognition prompted me to embrace my “subjective understandings of reality” (Pollner, 1991, p. 370) within my own reflexive practice. I thus began to consider the “involvement of the self” within my own experience as a fundamental “source” and “site” for my reflexivity (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 50).

Socially responsible ethical becoming

I realized that my reflexive practice involves not merely living out theory-driven professional knowledge according to a certain perspective, model, ideology, paradigm, or philosophy. Instead, it also involves examining how my own assumptions and perceptions are “constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” within and against such grand narratives. As I understood that engaging reflexivity would not be “to generate an exclusively faithful representation of a reality independent of the knower” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39), I began to intentionally engage in generating socially interactive and relational knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). I also became continually attentive to challenging my fixed or predetermined notions when I explore “new directions and new ways of doing things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189) within my academic practice and learning in APA. My ongoing reflexive (re)living thus began to aim at my own socially responsible ethical becoming as an APA learner and academic practitioner.

(Re)living in tensions

Turning to reflexivity involves new ways of thinking and doing within APA engagements. I recognized that these new ways often prompted me to (re)live in a *tension-filled midst*, including tensions between ideas of mine and others in relation to APA practice and learning (Clandinin et al., 2010). However, I acknowledged that the term referred to understanding “tensions in a more relational way, that is, tensions that live between people, events, or things, and are a way of creating a between space, a space which can exist in educative ways” (Clandinin et al., 2010, p. 82). My reliving in a tension-filled midst thus involved opening ethically framed future possibilities for APA practice and learning in reflexive, relational, and transformative ways (Clandinin, 2013). As Clandinin and Caine (2012) note, “Our retold and relived stories are composed in the tensions of telling, living, and retelling, tensions that hold the fabric of our lives together, that allow us to recompose and restore our experiences in new ways” (p. 176).

An invitation to reflexive (re)living

My ambition in writing this narrative piece was to offer pre/in-service practitioners in physical education and sport studies and other related disciplines to reflect critically on their own reflexivity in and on actions. I also hoped to invite other researchers and practitioners to participate in further dialogues to share their own lived experiences of reflexive turn, as well as their own ways of engaging in day-to-day reflexive learning and practice. These dialogues may increase our experiential knowledge for the future engagements in practice

and learning, and more importantly, make such knowledge more ethically sound and socially responsible. As Sarris (1993, p. 6) notes, this process would be “ongoing, an endeavor not aimed at a final and transparent understanding of the Other or of the Self, but of continued communication, at an ever-widening understanding of both.”

Conflict of interest

No potential competing interest was reported by the author.

Human participant protection statement

The institutional ethics review board confirmed that there was no need for ethics approval for this research, because there was no human participant component, apart from information about author’s own experiences and the people integral to those experiences.

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