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Full title: Stories as indicators of practical knowledge: analysing project workers' talk from a study of participation in a youth inclusion programme

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STORIES AS INDICATORS OF PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE: ANALYSING PROJECT WORKERS' TALK FROM A STUDY OF PARTICIPATION IN A YOUTH INCLUSION PROGRAMME

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the issue of practical knowledge for enabling participation. Participation as a strategy for change is widespread in community, health and human service contexts. Research to date has focused on the mechanisms of beneficiaries' participation (e.g. identity, empowerment, activity, gender, space). However, participation as an engagement strategy is action oriented and requires high levels of interaction between those creating the conditions for participation and those participating. These conditions need to be continuously adjusted and outcomes are often unpredictable. This process of "working with" is often dealt with as a technical issue and captured in metaphorical language. Less emphasis has been given to the type of knowledge modalities that might be necessary in order to enable participation. Drawing on an ethnographic case study of participation in a youth inclusion programme the paper explores the role of stories as potential indicators of practical knowledge. The paper argues that enabling young people's participation requires intuition and imagination, patience and perseverance, and judgement for acting under uncertainty. It concludes that stories only partially fulfil their potential as indicators of such knowledge modalities.

Key words: participation, practical knowledge, phronesis, stories, ethnography, youth inclusion

INTRODUCTION

This paper is concerned with the knowledge required in order to enable participation to happen. Participation is understood as an approach for addressing social problems that result from social exclusion and inequalities. It has a long and distinguished history in community psychology as a collaborative approach to involving collectives (groups, teams, communities, organisations) in identifying and defining shared concerns and designing and implementing context appropriate solutions to realise commonly desirable outcomes (Martín Baró, 1994 as cited in Watkins and Shulman, 2008, p. 27). Underpinned by dialogue and democratically driven processes, when successful participation can result in the inclusion of otherwise excluded members of a social setting.

Many existing analyses of participation focus on the mechanisms and methods for individual and/or group participation. In this paper I argue that such analytical knowledge, while necessary, is not in itself sufficient for engaging with communities and enabling participation. The action orientation of participation requires a high level of interaction with community members that can be uncertain and unpredictable. Bouwen (1998) has helpfully described such contexts as "emergent". In studies of community participation, as well as in theoretical writing that advocates for participation, a large amount of practitioners' experience of managing such emergent contexts and enabling participation is assumed. The dynamics of interaction tend to be dealt with as a technical issue (e.g. methodology) and are often captured in metaphorical language, such as the much used "messy" or "paradoxical" (Guareschi and Jovchelovitch, 2004; Foster, 2004). What I suggest is missing from the literature on participation, and what this paper addresses, is an understanding of the

practical knowledge necessary for enabling participation. The term "practical knowledge" refers to knowledge that emerges through practice and represents knowledge modalities most often associated with experience and expert knowledge. It is the sort of knowledge that might be elicited in response to the question: if someone were to replace a person responsible for enabling participation, what would they need to know and do in order to carry out that person's role without attracting attention to themselves (Gherardi, cited in Czarniawska, 2008)?

In this paper I analyse the potential of stories as indicators of such knowledge. I analyse practitioners' stories of change drawn from an ethnographic case study of youth inclusion in England. Workers on this youth inclusion project were, in the first instance, responsible for engaging socially excluded youngsters onto the projects. Through building relationships with the young people they were further responsible for extending youngsters' participation in the social spheres from which they had been excluded (e.g. education, training or employment). Project workers in this case study echoed the metaphors of participation when they repeatedly spoke about the "chaos" of young people's lives and their own work. At the same time project workers told a number of stories about working with young people. These stories communicate some of the complicated aspects of project workers' experiences of working with young people and are analysed here to assess their potential as indicators of the practical knowledge that workers find important for enabling participation. The discussion on practical knowledge draws on an Aristotelian typology of intellectual virtues and on Dreyfus and Dreyfus's model of human learning as both have been developed in the work of Bent Flyvbjerg (2001).

HUMAN LEARNING AND THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

Recently research in the area of participation has alluded to a gap in practical knowledge amongst those responsible for enabling participation. Campbell (2003, p. 151-182) for instance has argued that the success of local projects depends on how well those involved are able to work together and share a common vision of the problems being addressed and the solutions being proffered. Campbell argues that in order for local projects to be successful technical skills (such as management skills or conflict resolution skills) and institutional practices for project accountability (such as governance) are important, as are knowledge modalities such as trust (see also Cornish and Ghosh, 2007 and Cornish and Campbell, 2009).

At the same time, researchers' own reflections on enabling participation, in participatory action research for instance, reflect the neglected focus on practical knowledge. This literature captures both novice and expert experiences and comments on the gap between idealised, formal accounts of participation and the experiences of enabling participation (see Arieli, Friedman, and Agbaria, 2009; Grant, 2007). This indicates that while knowledge about mechanisms and methods for individual and group participation are important, they are not sufficient for action.

Instead the sort of knowledge necessary for enabling participation can be described as "a flowing, effortless performance, uninhibited by analytical deliberations" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.21). Flyvbjerg uses Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1986) phenomenological model of human learning to illustrate how people acquire knowledge and skill and develop from novice to

expert social actors (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.9). A novice is characterised by their use of explicit rules for action. An advanced beginner can be recognised by their use of personal experience through trial-and-error. As a competent performer, the learner then moves to an analytical problem-solving model, e.g. through the application of a hierarchical, prioritisation procedure for decision-making. S/he then progresses to becoming a proficient performer through the intuitive organisation of action on the basis of prior action and experiences and an interaction between "deep intuitive involvement in performance…[and] analytical decision-making" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.16). The final stage of Dreyfus and Dreyfus's model finds the learner's knowledge embodied and displays intuitive, holistic and synchronic behaviour (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.9-24).

At the same time Flyvbjerg offers a contemporary reading of Aristotle's *Ethics* and his thinking on the three intellectual virtues: episteme, techne and phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.55-57). Episteme refers to what we might today recognise as scientific knowledge. Techne refers to the art or craft of "bringing something into being". Phronesis refers to practical wisdom, the knowledge of how to act in particular circumstances that "can never be equated with or reduced to knowledge of general truths" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.57). This paper considers the knowledge indicated by the last stage of the Dreyfus and Dreyfus model that corresponds to the intellectual virtue of phronesis. Phronesis, Flyvbjerg argues, develops through human learning and the journey from novice to expert and "involves judgements and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social and political actor" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.2).

I now turn to some of the academic literature on participation and ask how existing knowledge on the topic might enable one to perform the role of a participation worker. Positivist research on participation, as Cornish (2006) has pointed out, has tried to explain participation (and the closely associated concept of empowerment) in terms of further abstractions such as variables or a participant's sense of mastery (2006, p.305). The absence of a concrete context, she argues, detracts from the understanding of participation as lived experience.

In response to such abstractions social constructionist orientations have been dedicated to enhancing our understanding of the conditions necessary for participation to take place. The social constructionist approach recognises the role of language, power and context in the construction of knowledge, positioning itself against the universal, invariable or context-independent knowledge that is characteristic of epistemic virtue (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.57). For example, in the social psychological tradition in-depth qualitative research has explored processes of identity, representation and empowerment (Campbell and Jovchelovitch, 2000; Rappaport, 2000), gender and sexuality (Campbell, 2003), gendered spaces (Ramella and de la Cruz, 2000) and mediated activity (Cornish, 2006). Such research produces a rich picture of context and especially the conditions that are necessary for participation to take place. In doing so one might draw on such studies to inform the design of a suitable project for participation. This research sensitises us to the mechanisms and conditions of participation (e.g. creating spaces for identity to be explored).

But would knowledge of these conditions, or mechanisms, of participation help us to act in "emergent contexts" like a "virtuoso social actor"? The academic origin of such studies tends to privilege an analytical problem-solving model of action. Such a model is characteristic of human learning but not of the expertise, and therefore practical knowledge that is necessary for engaging in an emergent context.

What about the literature that emerges from the practice community? Participation has been described as constituting a "collective wisdom" that emerged at a practitioner level in response to the need for better ways of addressing social issues (Zakus and Lysack, 1998). The tradition of community development has played a prominent role in developing this "collective wisdom" both in the UK and elsewhere (Ledwith, 1997/2005; Watkins and Shulman, 2009, p.211). Today numerous publications abound to offer practical advice on how to do participation appropriately (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin and Sinclair, 2003; Wilcox, 1994). These publications attempt to capture and transmit technical *know how* on participation. They sensitise us to the processes of participation, what one might or ought to do to enable participation to happen. However, the nature of having to generalise such advice so that it can be used in each and every context strips the information of any particularity that might be useful for enabling participation in a dynamic context.

Both technical and epistemic knowledge is necessary for enabling participation to take place but in itself is not sufficient and would not help us in replacing our participation workers unnoticed. This is because as a "virtuoso social actor" we are drawing on different modalities of knowing, namely intuition, experience and judgement, that elude codification

in rules and analytical typologies. In the next section I briefly look at how stories might be considered as enunciations of such modalities of knowing.

STORIES

Flyvbjerg's concern is with a phenomenological description of the world as opposed to a normative one. His advice for accessing phronesis is to work with stories (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p.375). Psychologists have long argued that stories represent an alternative to analytical, logico-scientific ways of knowing (Bruner, 1985). Accordingly, stories represent narrative ways of knowing and help us to understand and make sense of experience and everyday life. *Enacted* stories constitute the most typical form of social life (MacIntyre, 1981/1990, p.129, cited in Czarniawska, 2004, p.3) as we use them to construct and perform identity as well as to communicate with others.

Kearney (2002) argues that stories are orientated towards both past and future in terms of memory and projection. They enable us to "re-create actual worlds as possible worlds" (Kearney, 2002, p.132). As moments of release stories embody both distance and involvement and the necessary emotions that accompany each. As pieces of wisdom (and here Kearney is also drawing on Aristotle), stories respect both the general and the particular in human action. They are "the organizing principle of human action" and experience (Riessman, 1993) which allow us to inhabit a "shareable world" (Kearney, 2002, p.3 and p.151).

As such, storytelling can be understood as a personal, social, and collaborative endeavour that honours the modalities of knowing relevant to phronesis by allowing different modalities to be represented therein (e.g. emotion, "wisdom"). In telling and re-telling stories of enabling participation workers make sense of their experiences of working in emergent contexts. In this sensemaking process (Weick, 1979) elements of intuitive and experiential knowing, and the deliberative processes necessary for working in emergent contexts, are represented through language. The rest of the paper engages with the potential of stories as reliable indicators of practical knowledge by analysing project workers' stories involved in youth inclusion work.

A CASE STUDY OF PARTICIPATION IN A YOUTH INCLUSION PROGRAMME

The paper presents an ethnographic case study of a youth inclusion programme. Between 2004-2006, with colleagues at a UK University (Humphreys, Nolas and Olmos, 2006) I was involved in evaluating a government programme (Play On, pseudonym) aimed at youngsters aged 10-19 deemed to be at-risk of drug abuse and criminal behaviour by the local administrative authorities. These youngsters, living in some of the most deprived areas of England, were marginalised from mainstream educational, leisure and community activities. Project workers used leisure and cultural activities in order to engage these youngsters, build relationships with them and support them in (re)-establishing themselves in employment, education, and/or training. Our team was commissioned to research young people's views and experiences of the programme in four local areas. The local projects we evaluated ranged in set-up and organisation. Some were new and started with the help of

Play On funds, others were well-established youth or community centres that used Play On funds to continue existing work. All projects however shared the values and aspirations of the Play On programme in supporting young people in overcoming their "limit situations" (Freire, 1970). Likewise, our evaluation was inspired by the principles of the Freirean tradition and participatory research, especially participatory video (Humphreys, Lorac and Ramella, 2001).

At the same time as working on the evaluation I was also undertaking my doctoral research at the same University. The doctoral research was designed using an ethnographic approach that draws on the tradition of symbolic interactionism and grounded theory (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). Grounded theory approaches are useful for studying practice because, as Star (2007:79) puts it, they makes invisible work visible. It helps to surface the tacit and taken-for-granted aspects of practical work by asking questions about what people are doing and trying to accomplish, how exactly they are going about the 'doing', and how people understand what is going on (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). In this respect my doctoral research was designed to respond to the question of "what happens when we say we are working in a participatory way?" Theoretical sensitivity - "the researcher's ability to understand subtleties and nuances in the data" (Singh, 2003:310)- was developed through previous experience of collaborative action research and training in the social psychology of participation.

Three data sources were used for the case study research: observation, interpersonal communication, and participant-observation (Prus, 1996). Five different perspectives on the

youth inclusion programme and its evaluation were included in the case study (government, media, project workers, young people and researcher). I conducted a secondary analysis of the data collected during the evaluation (interviews, focus groups and audiovisual compositions) and complemented this data with policy analysis, extensive fieldnotes, and an analysis of my own experiences of working on the project.

The analysis proposed by Emerson, *et al.* (1995) gives priority to processes (instead of causes or internal psychological motives), as well as "practical concerns, conditions, and constraints that actors confront and deal with in their everyday lives and actions" (Emerson, *et al,* 1995, p.147). In their approach they allow for concepts, categories and relationships to emerge through open coding from the data whilst also acknowledging the impact that pre-existing theoretical ideas might have on the analysis. The analysis developed through constant comparison between the different perspectives represented in the data. "Negative cases" were sought out in the form of instances that challenged or contradicted dominant theories of participation (e.g. that participation is necessarily empowering) and these were used to develop the analysis and extend emerging theory. Memo-writing was used to develop theoretical ideas through the coding and categorisation stages of the analysis (Lempert, 2007).

Key categories that emerged from this process were: defining the problem of social exclusion, creating innovative solutions to the problem of youth exclusion, assessing the impact of solutions to youth inclusion, the practice of youth work and experiences of disruption, resistance and "messiness" in participation. The theory developed through this

analysis suggests that current practices of "youth inclusion" in the UK are a re-incarnation of the older practice of youth work with a number of differences, e.g. youth work was universal, meanwhile youth inclusion is targeted in nature and tends to address specific social problems. In the creation of these "new" practices it was found that stories were used in order to break from tradition and establish the innovative nature of the specific youth inclusion programme. In terms of the youth inclusion practices themselves, the analysis suggested that such practices are both inclusive as well as exclusive and that facilitating young people's participation presents a number of challenges to workers that are not always adequately accounted for in theories of participation. The emergent theories were tested through further analysis of policy documents and archival material (e.g. in the case of youth inclusion/youth work), as well as published literature that focused on workers' experiences of participation.

In this paper I focus on the project workers' experiences of enabling participation and the challenges that are presented to them in this process. Nine (9) in-depth interviews were conducted with project workers from the four local areas where the evaluation took place. Project workers were asked about their views and experiences of delivering the youth inclusion programme, including the challenges and the impact they felt the programme had on the young people participating. Project workers were asked for examples of change that illustrated the project's impact on young people. Ten stories were collected in this way and further analysed using narrative analysis (Parker, 2005; Riessman, 1993). The next section presents this analysis focusing on what project workers' stories can teach us about the practical knowledge necessary for enabling participation.

PRACTISING PARTICIPATION

One of the aims of the programme was to "widen horizons, raise aspirations and provide opportunities" through building relationships between project workers and the young people. By engaging with young people in this way, the programme aimed to support young people's constructive re-engagement with society and improve their social, psychological, educational and vocational outcomes. In the field a recurrent metaphor in project workers' talk was that of "chaos". Chaos was often used to refer to young people's lives (e.g. "hideously chaotic lives"), but it also served to describe the nature of project workers' work and especially their attempts to engage young people. For example, when project workers spoke about the difficulties of their work the frequent failure of young people to show up for activities was a recurring theme. The reasons given by project workers for young people's absence were: young people "getting into trouble", misbehaving in class, "giving teachers lip", smoking marijuana on school premises or just not bothering to show up at all to the school, youth centre or location of planned activity. These events made it difficult for project workers to "coordinate young people" in organised activities. One project worker described his area as lacking in any sort of "camaraderie" that might facilitate organised activities. His work, he told us, was geographically dispersed and he often found himself spread thin and not able to engage with all the young people in as much depth as he would like. In other words, the limiting situations characterising young people's lives often became limiting work contexts for the project workers. So how did project workers manage to "widen horizons, raise aspirations and provide opportunities'? What did this mean to the project workers and what sort of

knowledge did project workers draw on in order to overcome these challenges and to enable young people's participation in the project?

"Because that is not what you do in football": stories of change

When we asked project workers for examples of the impact the project had on the lives of participating young people they responded with a number of well-structured stories. These stories, as well as narrating success, also provided an insight into project workers' experiences of working with young people. Given the "success" story genre that they belong to, these stories often refer to challenges and how these were overcome. As such, they serve to partially contextualise and elaborate on the meaning of "chaos" in project workers' attempts to enable young people's participation. Analysing the complicated aspects of project workers' experiences goes some way towards thinking about the practical knowledge necessary for enabling participation.

Ten stories similar to the one below were collected. The topics of the ten stories included anger management, anti-social behaviour, overcoming shyness, developing group cohesion, building relationships, taking responsibility for one's actions, achieving goals, developing hygiene skills and the improvement of a speech impediment. The stories varied in length and detail and the one below is presented here as the most comprehensive of the ten:

> One example I can give - there is this lad I work with and the first time I met him I was down on the estate and this estate we just started work on and I didn't really know many of the kids, I knew maybe like two of kids. So I come on and I was just walking around really getting a feel for it. I mean it's rough, right. I was down there, and little, this lad came shooting out on one of those electric scooters and he came over and he was like 'what the effing 'ell are you doing on our estate' and all this gobbing off. I just said to him, I said 'listen mate d'you like football?' He was like 'yeah'. I said 'look the only reason I'm down here is cause I'm thinking of doing some football training two nights a week'. I said 'I'd like

you to come along'. So I asked his name, told him my name, and he was like 'alright I'll come down'. So first week he came down, good footballer, said to him 'you playing for a team?' and he said 'no, I'm banned from all the teams in the South West'. I said 'what for?' and he's like 'fighting'. Every match he plays in has a fire up, really bad anger problem. So I spent about four months, working with him and training him about how to control your temper and walking away from situations and how to respond...Long story short, we went to Y at the beginning of the summer holidays took my group away for a week to this international tournament in Y. First time they played together and they got through to semi-finals and in the semi-finals we played this team from X. They were dirty like really, really, really dirty. So, this lad he gets kicked like two or three times in the first half. He comes off at half time and says 'I am going to kill him, I am going to kill that lad', you know. I said 'relax remember what we said'. And by the end of the game - one all - get into extra time they win 3-1 with that five minutes, a minute to go actually one of our players just totally takes his lad out and gets sent off and loads of fighting and pushing starts and this lad right, whose been suspended from all teams in [the region], runs over and I am thinking 'oh, no, he's going to head butt someone', breaks it up, pulls our players away, end of the game, goes over, shakes hands with everyone all their team and their manager and the referee, comes over and he is swearing about them, he's complaining about them and one of the lad goes 'if you're so annoyed with him why did you shake hands? Why didn't you smack him?' He says 'because that's not what you do in football', you know. And I just thought that lad, he's still in [our area] can't play in any team but over the last three to six months his whole attitude of how to be on a pitch changed. Now what I've done is implemented that into his school life, when you're in a classroom and a teacher has a go at you if you explode you are out of that classroom. If you can learn to control your response you can have a more positive outcome, so for me that's like, that's awesome. You know, the kid has taken stuff onboard and through the sport he's learnt how to control himself and we can now relate that to other situations his home life, his life on the street. You know the times he's in school and you know. So yeah. (John, project worker Thames Group, August 17th, 2005)

"Getting a feel for the place" and other knowledge modalities

The story indicates a number of knowledge modalities that are valued by the worker and which, from his perspective, enable him to carry out his work. The first of these are discerned by analysing the story's events. The worker chooses to focus on the events that drive the plot. There are two main events that the story deals with: the visit to the estate and the tournament. We find out that part of the worker's role is to reach out to kids on different estates. This involves "getting a feel" for the place and negotiating his outsider status with the kids. He describes both processes with slight trepidation ("I mean its rough, right" and "I just said to him […] Look, the only reason I'm down here is cause I'm thinking of doing

some football training two nights a week") suggesting that getting such moments "right" is a crucial first step in establishing a non-alienating relationship with the kids. He needs to establish trust between himself and the boys, in order to apprentice himself to their "hideously chaotic lives" and begin to build a relationship with them. Building trust however is initially uncertain ("I didn't really know many of the kids"). He is confronted by the lad and reprimanded for invading the lad's space. This is the first in a number of crucial moments in the story where the narrator has to transform himself from intruder to project worker and eventually role model as per the aspirations of the Play On programme. The narrator's establishment of himself as a project worker happens by the narrator circumventing the lad's challenge and appealing to what he imagines, though at that point can not be sure, are the lad's interests.

Other crucial moments include the interaction at the football match. The worker uses suspense in the telling of the story. While this is a narrative device that is intended to hold his audience's attention and serves to demonstrate the impact of his work even more, it also suggests that the lived experience of the event he describes was characterised by elements of uncertainty, of not knowing which way things are going to go.

As well as demonstrating the impact of his work with the young person, the analysis of the events indicates other knowledge modalities that are important to the worker. From the worker's perspective it would appear that events represent pivotal make-or-break moments in his work and his relationship with the young person. The ability to skilfully manage the uncertainty that these pivotal moments create is necessary for their work to continue. It

requires using imagination (e.g. the lad will probably like football) and judging how to respond to young people's challenges (e.g. evading). These crucial moments where the action could go either way are instructive. When connecting this story to other project workers' stories of change we find that there is a good deal of nimble footwork that is involved in navigating such crucial moments. Project workers are responsible for setting a tone that will enable them to strike up and maintain relationships with the young people on these projects:

> **David**: …The young people nowadays are a bit more difficult cause they don't like the way you talk to them sometimes, like you can't, you have to talk to them in a certain way, otherwise you're 'boying' them or something like that it's called.
> **SMN**: Is that like annoying them?
> **David**: No, it's like you're talking down to them…
> (interview, Haven Youth Centre, March 3rd 2005)

Some of the strategies referred to by the youth workers I spoke with involved "being straight with them" and not moralising (interview with David, Haven Youth Centre, March 3rd 2005). Other strategies involved reading non-verbal cues and using basic verbal exchanges to build up trust before engaging in more in-depth conversation and dialogue with young people:

> **Ben**: [What] I would always aim for is a simple [change] […] that is actually about striking up a relationship and the easy way to strike up a relationship is to actually have some verbal communication. So the basic thing is that quite often what we will do is just make sure that when young people are coming into the projects a simple good morning, good afternoon, good evening, how are you, just a simple greeting and then I sound a little bit pedantic but quite often what happens is that we get young people that coming in their faces quite tough you know, and you know sometimes just stand in front of them and look at them and they are looking at you and you can see they are sort of looking quite annoyed and so forth and you say 'have you forgotten something' and often when they realise that we're coming at such a simplistic level is something, you know that actually makes them then relax.
> (interview with Ben, Gym group, August 6th 2005)

In this respect project workers' stories function to construct and share the complicated aspects of their experiences of enabling young people's participation and in doing so indicate some of the practical knowledge (judgement, intuition and experience) that project workers deploy in order to enable participation.

What stories won't tell us

An important element of stories and storytelling is time, which is notably condensed in this worker's story. John's story is strongly sequential (Riessman, 1993) focusing on the sequence of events, which in narrative terms serves to condense the time period referred to by the story. But there is enough information in the story to work out that the real time being covered is six months and thus indicating that any changes that might take place for young people need time to be realised. This condensing of time ("long story short") suggests that the work that takes place with the young person contains elements of the mundane (repetition, lack of excitement, and potentially boredom) which would compromise the narrative quality of the worker's story if included. Both the passage of time and the lack of detail of the work with the young person indicate that from a worker's perspective patience and perseverance are a further two knowledge modalities relevant to working with young people in difficult circumstances. However, the explicit absence of these modalities from the story suggests that there are elements of practical knowledge that resist representation (de Certeau, 1984). As such, the extent to which stories can be deemed to be reliable indicators of the use of such knowledge modalities is called into question.

DISCUSSION

This paper has been concerned with the knowledge required in order to enable participation to happen. I started by asking what we would need to know in order to carry out the role of someone responsible for enabling participation. I argued that the expertise necessary for achieving this is based on intuition, experience and judgement and I analysed the potential of stories as indicators for such modalities of knowing. Workers' stories provided some indication of the knowledge modalities valued by workers and deemed necessary for creating successful relationships with young people.

The existence of such stories and their ready availability tells us something about the project workers' roles and nature of their work. Workers' stories of enabling participation construct a vivid picture of youth inclusion work. Stories play an important role in helping people make sense of their work and emerge especially in response to ambiguous and problematic situations (Weick, 1979). Project workers' stories provide some indication of the complexities of their work. Through these stories workers communicate important aspects of the ways in which they enable young people to overcome their difficulties, and especially how they manage their own interactions with the young person.

At the same time, the analysis presented previously also demonstrated that stories, as narrative devices, serve to obscure the actual practice of enabling participation by omitting information that does not enhance the worker's story. In this respect the promise of stories as enunciations of phronetic knowledge is only partially fulfilled. The clear entrance and

exit points (Riessman, 1993) of the stories collected, and the lack of pause by workers to collect their thoughts before their telling, indicates expertise in both the telling of these stories and the practices they embody. Given that stories are performative, we cannot forget the context in which the story was told: a project worker talking to an evaluator about their work. There is a risk that given this context the story becomes part of a passive culture of persuasion (Highmore, 2006, p.128). Project workers were asked about stories of change and they spoke about successful change. On this level these stories obscure the actual everyday practice of participation, with its less well-defined, often uncertain outcomes and sometimes dull moments. Practical knowledge appears to be resistant to strategic forms of representation such as templates and plans (de Certeau, 1984), or in this case the well-developed and conventionality plotted narrative. What we are left with then are "discourses" (Parker, 2005) of youth inclusion, which may more reliably suggest how to "pass" as a project worker[1] without embodying expert knowledge or displaying intuitive, holistic or synchronic behaviour (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.24).

Would hearing these stories enable somebody to carry out a project worker's role without drawing attention to themselves? However these stories are not without consequence. Rooted as they are in practice and everyday life, such stories afford us glimpses into the deliberative processes the project workers engage during their efforts to enable participation. Given the analysis presented in this paper it may be more modest to propose that rather than being enunciations of practical knowledge, stories instead act to sensitise a listener to the repeated and eventually sustained moments of identification between workers

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[1] With thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

and the young people. This is done through the presentations of joint meaning making between project workers and young people (e.g. how they build relationships and work together).

My own encounters with these stories provide illustrative material to the potential of stories to sensitise. At the time, as someone with much less experience of working with young people in difficult circumstances, I found these stories insightful and empowering as I recognised similarities between the experiences and judgements in the story and my own experience during the evaluation. During the evaluation I experienced feelings of uncertainty and unfamiliarity, and was presented with situations in which I was forced to think on my feet. John's story demonstrates that this is not an unusual experience but part of the process. Also, as a newcomer to the field I was initially surprised (and often frustrated) by how slowly things happened. Again John and other project workers' stories demonstrate that working with young people, especially in establishing trust and building relationships, requires a certain pace. Their stories convey this pace. These stories helped me to reorganise my new experiences and to extend my initially limited repertoire of responses in my new circumstances

CONCLUSION

Stories however cannot replace experience and whether or not something becomes a resource for future action depends on having the opportunity to share these stories with others. In practice this means developing a questioning stance and a competence in eliciting, interpreting and transmitting such stories (and not just producing them for

evaluators). Asking a number of targeted questions, such as Flyvbjerg's continuous "how" or Gherardi's replacement question, can do this. Comparative questions are also useful: "how does this compare to other things you have worked on?" It may also be useful to think about the sort of talk that emerges and actively unpack its metaphors: "What does that actually mean? What does it look like in practice? How did it feel?" Finally, asking about the omissions created through narrative devices ("to cut a long story short") and a story's missing voices and perspectives can also contribute towards sharing and discussing the challenges and complicated aspects of enabling participation. While stories cannot help us replace our project worker unnoticed they might just help us to approach his/her work with a little more nous, perhaps as advanced beginners or maybe even in some cases competent performers instead of complete novices.

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