



ISSN: 2148-9955

International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)

www.ijres.net

Cultivating Images of Cultural Capital: Cultural Activities in Storybooks Featuring Young Characters with Disabilities

Monica Reichenberg
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

To cite this article:

Reichenberg, M. (2020). Cultivating images of cultural capital: Cultural activities in storybooks featuring young characters with disabilities. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 6(3), 369-380.

The International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES) is a peer-reviewed scholarly online journal. This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Authors alone are responsible for the contents of their articles. The journal owns the copyright of the articles. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of the research material. All authors are requested to disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest including any financial, personal or other relationships with other people or organizations regarding the submitted work.

Cultivating Images of Cultural Capital: Cultural Activities in Storybooks Featuring Young Characters with Disabilities

Monica Reichenberg

Article Info	Abstract
<p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Received: 28 March 2020</p> <p>Accepted: 06 June 2020</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Cultural capital Children Disabilities Storybooks Youths</p>	<p>Portrayals of children and youths with disabilities participating in various types of cultural activities during their leisure time have been understudied. The current study aims to understand how Swedish storybooks targeting youths and children with disabilities portray their cultural activities during their leisure time. A collection of 66 storybooks was strategically chosen for the analysis. Applying the grounded theory approach, the study codes for disabilities (sensory, physical, and cognitive) and dimensions of cultural capital (book reading, music, theatre, concerts, and sports). Low cultural activities are prominent leisure activities in the story books. Watching television and listening to popular music had a prominent role for the characters, whereas sports had a less prominent role. In summary, watching television dominates the cultural activities in the storybooks. With regards to music, the participants engage in karaoke. The storybooks again reinforce the impression that characters with disabilities can only appreciate lowbrow culture. The storybooks seldom portray images of highbrow cultural activities. However, exceptions exist that portray how people with disabilities create highbrow cultural activities, rather than being passive consumers. The storybooks seldom portray images of sports activities.</p>

Introduction

Few concepts have sparked as much interest and controversy in educational research as cultural capital. Cultural capital refers to cultural dispositions and activities (e.g., theatre, arts, cinema, newspaper reading, or mountain climbing; Bourdieu, 1978). Although, the scope and measurement have been criticized researchers agree that cultural capital matters in education (Archer, 1993; Goldthorpe, 2007; Rosengren, 1995; Sullivan, 2001). Furthermore, cultural capital predicts a variety of educational outcomes (e.g., test scores, grades, and curricular choice). A striking example is the Programme for International Student Assessment (=PISA), which found that, pupils show a better ability to read and learn when their parents are involved in their education and when the parents themselves value reading (OECD, 2012; Jæger Meier & Karlson, 2018).

Although, research has examined cultural capital, few studies integrate disability (Holt, Bowlby & Lea, 2013; Cottingham, 2016). Therefore, we still lack knowledge about how the transmission of cultural capital to youths with disabilities occurs (Holt, Bowlby & Lea, 2013; Cottingham, 2016). According to the theory of cultural capital, the transmission (pedagogy) occurs in the family, which in turn promotes a disposition to participate in cultural activities (Bourdieu, 1978). Although, Bourdieu did not theorize disability sociologists have proposed that it would be straightforward to integrate disability into Bourdieu’s theory (Edwards & Imrie, 2003; Purdue & Howe, 2015). Consequently, in the present study I extend upon the research on cultural capital with regards to disabilities. I will elaborate on that contribution in the theoretical section. As a way of studying the instruction of cultural capital, I suggest that we should direct our attention to storybooks targeting youths and children with disabilities as a case of popular culture. Storybooks foster images of cultural capital either by solitary reading (self-instruction) or joint reading with parents (instruction). Storybooks constitute an integral part of children’s development. Because storybooks reach many children, they influence how children conceive people with disabilities (Quinlan & Bates, 2009). Moreover, portrayals may raise awareness about the life conditions of people with disabilities and acceptance of people with disabilities (Leininger, Dyches, Prater, Heath & Bascom, 2010; Prater, Johnstun, Dyches, & Johnstun, 2006; Sigmon, Tackett, & Azano, 2016). Lastly, storybooks may instil a sense of identification. If children with disabilities encounter fictional characters with disabilities that they can relate to, then they will gain a sense of identification (Adomat, 2014). In turn, identification fulfil children’s emotional need for belongingness, i.e. “I am one of them”.

Accordingly, my aim is to understand how Swedish storybooks ($n = 66$) targeting youths and children portray the leisure-time cultural activities of characters with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. My research questions follow:

- What images do the storybooks portray regarding reading, watching television, and music activities?
- What images do the storybooks portray of participation in public or formal culture (e.g., art gallery, theatre, or concert attendance)?
- What images do the storybooks portray of the characters' participation in sports activities?

I focus on physical, cognitive (e.g., intellectual disability, autism, or dyslexia), and sensory (e.g., vision or hearing impairments) disabilities. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term (e.g., physical, cognitive, or sensory) disabilities, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2006). In other words, I use the United Nations' definition in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I have structured my text as follows: First, I discuss the study's framework (i.e., cultural activities) and the contribution of my paper. Second, I present the methods and data. Third, I present the results. Finally, I discuss the implications of my findings.

Cultural Capital as a Guiding Concept

Bourdieu (2013) saw cultural capital as familiarity with the legitimate culture within a society; that is, what we might call high culture. The cultivation of cultural capital begins as soon as a child is born. Parents foster the child's cultural capital by introducing, for instance, values (desirable vs. undesirable), taste (tasteful vs. tacky), conduct (graceful vs. clumsy), speech (eloquent vs. obnoxious), and leisure habits (avant-garde vs. popular). Bourdieu argued further that the possession of cultural capital varies with social class. Upper classes of society foster cultural capital in the family that enables upper-class students to gain higher credentials than the lower-class students because the education system assumes the possession of cultural capital in all social classes. Bourdieu saw families passing on cultural capital to their children by introducing them to dance and music, taking them to theatres, galleries, museums, and historic sites, and talking with them about literature and art over the dinner table. Consequently, upper-class parents cultivate their children's interest in cultural goods and practices such as art and opera (Bourdieu, 2013).

Taste was also central for Bourdieu. Taste is expressed through the lifestyles of the elite. Bourdieu's (2013) theory of taste distinguishes between three kinds of cultural taste. The first is high culture taste, which is characteristic of the upper class. The second is middlebrow taste typical of the middle class. Finally, Bourdieu referred to popular taste, which is characteristic of the lower classes. Sports activities can also be differentiated among classes. Sports such as football are for working class and lower middle-class adolescents. Bourdieu noted that team sports (e.g., cycling, football, and rugby) function as spectacles. Sports such as mountaineering, trail hiking, golf, shooting, and polo are "inaccessible to the vulgar" (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 839). The transmission (pedagogy) of cultural capital in the family shapes a person's dispositions towards culture.

For Bourdieu, it was the combination of institutional control over forms of capital together with processes of recognition and transmission (pedagogy) that is crucial to the capacity of upper classes to maintain their position. Bourdieu meant that cultural taste structures an individual's position in the social hierarchy. Research on cultural capital suggests that social class and educational attainment are strongly associated with participation in cultural activities such as reading books or attending cinemas, theatres, concerts, and museums (Jæger Meier & Karlson, 2018).

However, Bourdieu has not escaped criticism. First, the definition of cultural capital varies between studies. For instance, some studies stress participation in cultural activities (or lifestyle; e.g., art galleries, theatre, or cinema), while, Bourdieu stressed transmission (pedagogy) in the family [e.g., conversations about art and literature] (Goldthorpe, 2007; Sullivan, 2001). I contend that a cultural activity may be more useful for the purpose of this study. One can speculate that the transmission of cultural capital occurs in conversations about the storybooks read in the family. In other words, images of cultural activities may instil cultural capital, which may be a more valid indicator than participation.

Second, Bourdieu took a deterministic approach to cultural capital by ignoring people as a variable (Archer, 1993; Rosengren, 1995). For instance, the quality of transmission of cultural capital matters. However, I will be unable to account for that in my study, since this study is limited to an investigation of storybooks themselves, not how they circulate or are used. Third, social classes may not necessarily monopolize cultural capital (Archer,

1993; Goldthorpe, 2007). The association between cultural capital and class may be a French story with limited generalizability. In other contexts, age, status, or disability may matter more. Specifically, physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities may constrain participation in cultural activities as a lifestyle (Engman & Cranford, 2016). Everyone can visit a cinema, theatre, art gallery, etc., but making cultural activities a habit requires more effort for people with disabilities.

Fourth, individuals can possess cultural capital but be unable to use it successfully due to disabilities (e.g., individuals whose bodies do not allow them to experience cultural capital in the same manner as able-bodied people; Berezin, 2014). Fifth and last, Turner and Edmunds (2002) noted a neglect of the importance of generations as an explanatory variable in Bourdieu's account of fashion and cultural change in favour of an emphasis on class. However, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital theory does not only neglect generations but also disability. Nevertheless, the theory of cultural capital fits well with disability as a variable as proposed by researchers (Edwards & Imrie, 2003; Purdue & Howe, 2015).

Consequently, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital provides a general framework for understanding the nature of cultural consumption and culture practice among individuals (i.e., storybook characters) with disabilities. Specifically, I argue that scholars have neglected the importance of cultural capital as an explanatory variable of the portrayal of disability. The theory of cultural capital posits that the instruction of cultural capital fosters skills, values and aspirations to participate in highbrow leisure activities. Refining our understanding of the transmission of cultural capital matters (e.g. via storybooks) because participation in leisure activities correlates with educational inequalities (Jæger Meier & Karlson, 2018).

Research on Characters with Disabilities in Storybooks

Portrayals in storybooks of children and youths with disabilities participating in various types of cultural activities during their leisure time has been understudied (Crawford, 2016). Three tendencies have occupied previous research. First, previous researchers have tended to document how frequently textbooks mention characters' disability status, gender, socioeconomic position, or ethnicity (Hodkinson, 2007; Reichenberg, 2017). Although representation matters, scholars have a limited understanding of how storybooks cultivate images of youths and children with disabilities and their cultural activities.

A second tendency in previous research concerns the polarity of the images of individuals with disabilities in storybooks. On the one extreme, storybooks and textbooks portray people with disabilities as capable of doing anything; for example, "supercrips" - characters who overcome their disabilities in ways the public often sees as inspiring-. However, the supercrip stereotype has been criticized as portraying athletes with disabilities as overcoming or defeating their disability via heroic efforts (Martin, 2017; Silva & Howe, 2012; Yenika-Agbaw, 2011). On the other extreme, storybooks and textbooks portray people with disabilities as helpless and deprived, lacking friends, avoiding sports, and living in financial poverty (Frey, 2004; Melbøe & Ytterhus, 2017; Temple, Frey, & Stanish, 2006).

Consequently, researchers criticize textbooks and storybooks for embracing stereotypes. Stereotypes lack realism and reinforce negative attitudes towards people with disabilities and underline that book portrayals must be accurate and realistic to be acceptable (see also Biklen & Bogdan, 1977; Dyches & Prater, 2005; Leininger et al., 2010; Prater et al., 2006; Yenika-Agbaw, 2011). Researchers' third tendency is to document the inactivity of youths and children with disabilities during their leisure time (Frey, 2004; Temple et al., 2006). Children with cognitive disabilities seem to take less part in physical activities and rather more in recreational activities than children without disabilities (Melbøe & Ytterhus, 2017; Perrier et al., 2013).

Individuals who are limited in their daily activities are more likely to allocate their time to passive leisure (e.g., reading, television, video, and radio) and less likely to spend their time in social entertainment (e.g., theatre, culture, and social events) than non-disabled individuals (Pagán-Rodríguez, 2014). Although, people with disabilities allocate less time to social entertainment (compared to people without disabilities) research has not connected the differences to the instruction of cultural capital. However, cultural capital could be an explanatory variable to these differences.

The current study makes a contribution to the theory of cultural capital. Specifically, I connect the theory of cultural capital to the portrayal of disability in storybooks. Accordingly, I extend the scope of applications of the theory of cultural capital. I argue that literature (e.g., storybooks or newspapers) has an educational function that

cultivates expectations about cultural capital. Thus, literature can teach young people about aspirations, taste, and conduct.

Method

Sampling of Storybooks

In line with Grounded Theory (GT) I selected storybooks based on my research questions. As I collected storybooks, I developed a criteria inspired by Corbin and Strauss (1990). First, each book had to address a physical, sensory, or cognitive disability explicitly in the text because I did not want to infer diagnoses onto characters. Second, each book had to include a main character with at least one of the three disabilities (cf. Dyches, Prater, & Jenson, 2006). Third, I wanted books that reflected the contemporary attitudes towards people with disabilities, i.e. published after 2000. With start in the 1990s, attitudes towards disability began to change (Armstrong, Morris, Abraham, Ukoumunne & Tarrant (2016). Meaning that the rights of people with disabilities gained support in public opinion and pop-culture (e.g. movies and comics). Attitudes continued to change during the 2000s and 2010s. Consequently, I wanted to investigate how the changed attitudes have been reflected in the literature.

Then, I contacted publishers and asked if they could send me storybooks that dealt with disabilities. Researchers have noted that storybooks with characters with disabilities are not published by large-scale publication companies (Crawford, 2016), which I found to be true. Moreover, I searched online and visited public libraries to uncover storybook titles. In all, I investigated 66 storybooks (see Appendix).

The storybooks revealed the following characteristics: (a) The majority noted characters with cognitive disabilities. (b) The majority was written by women. (c) Several of the authors had personal experiences or acquaintances with disabilities (e.g., Bergström, 2007; Byekwaso, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019; Frii, 2007, 2012; Roca Ahlgren, 2015; Slonawski, 2016; Stigsdotter Axberg, 2013; Strömberg, 2016) that I suspect shaped their authorship (Bandura & Waters, 1977). Tharian et al. (2019) lend support to my interpretation. (d) The characters portrayed were equally distributed by sex (e) Characters with diverse ethnic background were hardly represented (cf Dyches & Prater, 2005). (f) Most characters with cognitive disabilities had a mild to moderate intellectual disability. Thus, no character had a severe intellectual disability (g) In some books authentic persons are portrayed: Axel (Ahlsén, 2015), Mats (Ahlsén, 2018), Anna (Slonawski, 2016) and Michael (Frii, 2007; 2012). In some books we can follow a character from childhood to adulthood (e.g. Gomér, 2013, 2019; Frii, 2012).

Data Analysis Strategy: Theoretically Informed GT

I used GT for data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), but I also drew on the works of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). However, I approach GT informed by the cultural capital concept (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I chose GT because it allows the data to speak and thus adapt concepts to data and it systematizes qualitative inquiry. I take a realist approach to GT. Consequently, I consider disabilities and cultural capital as real as opposed to constructed (Miles et al., 2014). A storybook can portray reality (e.g., Swedish society) or simply lack realism (e.g., *supercrups*; Hammersley, 2007). Although Bourdieu committed himself to social constructivism, I argue that Bourdieu's theory of capital may be interpreted from a realist perspective. In contrast to empiricist GT, I depart from guiding concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2014; Deterding & Waters, 2018). No agreement exists about which dimensions constitute cultural capital. In the present study, I organized the data into the following dimensions of culture capital: (a) reading, television, and music (e.g. Disney), (b) participation in public or formal culture (e.g., art gallery, theatre, and concert attendance), (c) sports activities (e.g., bowling). The three dimensions were then coded as high and low status.

During the analysis, I took notes to record my reflections (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). To validate my interpretation of the storybooks, I contacted several of the authors (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). The analysis was conducted in two phases. In the first phase of coding, I read each book and I typically coded for cultural capital dimensions. The collection and analysis of the data thus occurred jointly (e.g., I started with a rather rough conception of cultural capital and refined it as I proceeded). In the second phase, I coded for a narrow selection: (a) reading, television, and music; (b) sports activities; and (c) participation in public or formal culture (e.g., art gallery, theatre, or concert attendance). As I gained a more in-depth understanding of the books, I discovered that the cultural activities were rather diverse and contained several dimensions.

Results

Results regarding the First Research Question

Popular cultural activities dominated the activities in the storybooks, suggesting that they cultivate an image of people with disabilities only engaging in lowbrow culture activities such as watching television and listening to music. The major role of television in the characters' daily lives is striking. Although some American serials are boring, the characters nevertheless continue watching, as illustrated by Nalle in Byekwaso (2016): "Nalle and his brother Niclas watch an American police movie until they become sleepy. . . . Nalle watches boring TV programmes. Just American serials" (pp. 10, 18, 40).

The example of Nalle confirms the stereotype of characters with disabilities as being in need of very low capital. In the example one can see how the storybooks signal that people with disabilities ought to confine their taste to popular culture. In the excerpt below, the 6-year-old character Victor watches *Tom & Jerry*. Victor watches Tom & Jerry on TV. "His mother says: Tom probably has ADHD. What is ADHD? asks Victor. His mother explains: It means that you can become very angry quickly, and maybe find it hard to sit still, like the cat Tom. Moreover, an individual with ADHD can also be very innovative and be good at building LEGO." (Stigsdotter Axberg, 2013). For explication, the author takes the opportunity to let Victor's mother note that Tom probably has ADHD. Victor's curiosity is then awakened. The author gives Victor the possibility to identify himself with the popular figure and portrays positive and negative sides of ADHD (i.e., "very innovative and good at building LEGO"). Thus, the author signals that it is possible to explain what a diagnosis such as ADHD is like to a child. In other words, the author signals faith in Victor's potential to understand complex concepts.

When it comes to various type of music, the characters' preferences differ. Almost all characters appreciate music and most of them prefer popular music (low capital). Several of them play instruments (Ahlsén, 2018; Frii, 2012; Gomér, 2015; Stigsdotter Axberg, 2015). Some play drums and guitars whereas others are satisfied with karaoke:

Linus and Moa will sing karaoke at the youth recreation centre. They generally sing karaoke almost every Friday. . . . Linus likes to sing. He feels happy when he sings. . . . Moa also wants to sing. . . . I want to sing the "—Jon King". . . . We enjoy singing with other people. (Gomér, 2015)

In the excerpt above, the characters sing karaoke. Karaoke is a typical example of popular music and thus a low capital activity. Linus and Moa sing karaoke on a regular basis, almost every Friday. The example confirms the stereotype of individuals with disabilities as being in need of very low capital such as karaoke. We may suspect that society expects them to practice only popular music. However, some authors challenge the characters' musical taste. However, the challenged characters are authentic persons (Ahlsén, 2018; Frii, 2012). One of them is Michael, who plays the drum and the guitar and is a member of a music group (Frii, 2012, Frii, 2007). From the photographs of Michael in the book one can see how happy he is when he has the opportunity to play. The second example is Mats:

Mats' father wants his sons to love music. You can hear music all day long in the home. They not only play records on the gramophone, they also have instruments. The music makes Mats and his brother feel secure. Mats plays the drums. Mats' father encourages Mats to play in public (Ahlsén, 2018, p.25)

In the excerpt above, the author signals the importance of parents encouraging their children to love music (cf. Hayley Fitzgerald & Kirk, 2009). The author also signals that parents can set an example for their children not only by playing music on a gramophone but also practicing instruments themselves and together with their children. Mats' father is not afraid of challenging his son who has Down syndrome. Thus, middle or high class capital is transmitted to Mats and his brother on equal terms. The music makes Mats not only happy but it also gives him a sense of security and a sense of belonging. Mats and his brother and father have something in common: they love music. Thus, the author signals that children with Down syndrome can enjoy middle to high class capital music.

I could only find a few examples of leisurely book reading. Four characters with cognitive disabilities and two characters with sensory disabilities (i.e., blindness and hard of hearing) read books (Ahlsén, 2018; Gomér, 2011; Liao, 2016; Lindberg, 2016; Polleryd, 2006, 2011). For example, "Mats reads newspapers and books. Mats and his father, Tage, like books about machines" (Ahlsén, 2018, pp. 24, 41). Reading indicates a high culture activity and the author communicates parents' responsibility for their children's reading. In Mats' home there are books and newspapers. Moreover, the author communicates the importance of talking about what one reads. Mats and his father share a common interest in machines and like books about machines, thus they probably talk about what they read in the books. The author signals the importance of encouraging individuals with

intellectual disabilities to read books and newspapers and talk with other persons about what they read. Moreover, the author signals that reading of books and newspapers brings joy to Mats' life. Moa, who loves books, wanted books for Christmas and received three: "Moa wishes *jewelry*, a new schoolbag and books for Christmas. Moa loves books . . . she owns a beautiful book about dogs. That book is a favourite book. . . . Moa got three books on Christmas" (Gomér, 2011).

In summary, watching television dominates the cultural activities in the storybooks. The television shows range from mature to childish. With regards to music, the participants engage in karaoke. The storybooks again reinforce the impression that characters with disabilities can only appreciate lowbrow culture. A few storybooks portray images of characters with disabilities are interested in reading.

Results regarding the Second Research Question

The storybooks scarcely portrayed images of highbrow cultural activities such as art gallery, theatre, and concert attendance. The storybooks again reinforce the impression that characters with disabilities only engage in lowbrow cultural activities. When one participate in cultural activities, one acts as an artist instead of an individual with disabilities (Høiseth, 2012). None of the characters attend theatre just to watch a play. Only in one of the storybooks do the characters attend a concert just to listen to the music. However, in this concert only youths with disabilities play to compete in a song contest with popular music (Lumholdt, 2018). Thus, no character attends a concert or theatre where people without disabilities act. However, several of the characters participate in theatre groups (Ahlsén, 2018; Gomér, 2015; Slonawski, 2016). One of them is Mats, and the theatre group he participates in is very successful with their play "Elvis" about the rock and roll star.

To film and make commercials is fun. Most of all Mats likes the theatre . . . for Mats it is fantastic when the audience cheers and applauds. Then Mats feels that he is doing something great. When working with film and TV programmes there is no audience. Consequently, no applauds or laughs. (Ahlsén, 2018, p. 77)

Mats and his friends receive the opportunity to perform the play in New York (Ahlsén, 2018, p. 60, 67). Moreover, one evening the director for the Swedish grocery chain ICA, Kenneth Bengtsson, views the play. The play impresses the director who offers Mats a role in ICA's commercials. In the commercials, Mats acts together with famous Swedish actors. The commercials broadcast via television and becomes a success. Linus is also member in a theatre group and it also has public performances. Thus, the authors signal faith in the characters to perform in public.

Linus likes to act. He is a member of a theatre group for individuals with disabilities. For the time being he acts in the play *Romeo and Juliet*. . . . Linus is Romeo and Moa is Juliet. . . . Today it will premiere . . . and afterwards there will be a party. Everyone is happy. (Gomér, 2015)

The examples illustrate that acting makes the characters happy and they feel a sense of belonging. Mats feels satisfaction when he receives applauds from the audience. No negative feelings are noted. In the two examples, the authors portray images that performing on national and international stages is possible even if one has cognitive disabilities (in this case, Down syndrome).

In summary, the storybooks seldom portray images of highbrow cultural activities. However, exceptions exist that portray how people with disabilities create highbrow cultural activities, rather than being passive consumers. The activities make them happy and make them feel appreciated, happy, and successful.

Results regarding the Third Research Question

Sporting capital can be considered a form of cultural capital that consists of skills and knowledge necessary to participate in sport and physical activity (Stuij, 2013). Various sports can have high or low capital; for example, riding is considered a high cultural activity, but football, bowling, and swimming are examples of low capital activities. Only one of the characters, Linus, practices riding: "Linus likes horses. . . . It is fun to ride says Linus. . . . Linus laughs loudly" (Gomér, 2015). Some of the characters participate in sports like swimming (Ekensten, 2016) and bowling (Gomér, 2015). Michael is the only one who plays football: "Michael loves playing football. . . . Michael is goalkeeper. He likes to catch the ball" (Frii, 2007, pp. 6, 8). What ideals do the authors signal then when portraying sport activities? Let us look at the following example: "Linus and Moa bowl together. They have fun when bowling! . . . They just laugh when they fail. 'Silly globes!' Linus shouts and laughs . . . and 'silly skittles' shouts Moa and laughs" (Gomér, 2015). The author signals that bowling is fun. Even to fail is

fun. Linus and Moa—both with Down syndrome—laughed when they failed. Although it is nice to think that people with Down syndrome are consistently happy and loving, like most people they feel angry, sad, embarrassed, or excited. However, some individuals with Down syndrome seem to possess an unusual personality aspect that calls out the best in other individuals, which should be viewed as distinct from the traditional stereotype (Robison, 2000, p. 372). This raises the question of whether one can demand from authors that they portray images true to academic conceptualisations. Tharian et al. (2019) and Michals and McTiernan (2018) noted the level of duty authors have towards their portrayals of individuals with disabilities.

A more nuanced image is the portrayal of Michael, who has Down syndrome. Michael became depressed when he could not catch the football and the opposing team scored a goal. His teammate consoles him and says: “Don’t be sad. Think instead of all the footballs you caught” (Frie, 2007, p. 22). Aspects of participation in sports can enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities (Badia et al., 2013). Parasports can also enhance life quality, but only one character participates in parasports (Hammargren, Hansson, Tollstern, & Johannesson, 2018): “At the school for pupils sitting in wheelchairs . . . the pupils learn how to manage hindrances . . . how to travel fast with the wheelchair. Isak . . . feels like a real racer —(Hammargren et al., 2018). The authors portray the possibilities connected to parasports. Isak is very happy and identifies himself as a real race car driver. No negative feelings are noted. Thus, the authors signal that participating in sports can help to increase the quality of life for persons with disabilities.

In summary, the storybooks seldom portray images of sports activities. If portrayed, lowbrow sports (cultural) activities dominate, such as bowling, swimming, and football. However, exceptions exist that portray how people with disabilities create highbrow sports activities, such as riding. Sports, whether high- or lowbrow, make them happy and they even laugh when they fail.

Discussion and Conclusions

Researchers have understudied how storybooks portray children and youths with disabilities participating in various types of cultural activities during their leisure time (Crawford, 2016). The current study extends our knowledge by interpreting how storybooks portray children with disabilities using GT. Thus, the study aimed to understand how Swedish storybooks targeting children portray their cultural activities (cultural capital) during leisure time. I found that storybooks portray low capital activities as prominent for the characters who feel happiness during their activities. The storybooks cultivate the impression that people with disabilities only engage in lowbrow culture activities because it makes them happy.

The storybooks’ portrayals of participation in public or formal culture were not prominent. The storybooks cultivate the impression that people with disabilities can only engage in lowbrow culture activities because it makes them happy. At best, the storybooks suggest that people with disabilities can become creators rather than consumers of highbrow culture. Portrayals of participation in sports activities were not prominent in the storybooks. Consequently, the storybooks cultivate the impression that people with disability do not practice sports.

I will now discuss my findings in a broader context. Thereafter, I discuss the limitations. Overall, the characters in the storybooks enjoy low capital activities such as watching cartoons on television, karaoke, or football (Bourdieu, 1978). Few characters read books, and none attend the theatre or concerts to enjoy music other than popular music. Furthermore, few of the characters participated in sports, and if they did, then they played football, bowled, or swam. Thus, the authors miss an opportunity to promote sports. Stories act on people by motivating specific behaviours by “*hiling*” an individual to act in accordance with the stories’ characters. Consequently, if characters in storybooks with disabilities practice sports, then they may motivate such behaviour in readers with disabilities. Moreover, aspects of participation in sports activities can contribute to enhancing the quality of life with disabilities (Badia et al., 2013).

Although the majority of the characters only participate in low cultural activities, they are portrayed as living a happy life, and not demanding high cultural activities. Thus, the portrayals promote stereotypes (Martin, 2017; Silva & Howe, 2012; Yenika-Agbaw, 2011). Authentic individuals were portrayed in some of the storybooks. They participated in middle- to high-class cultural activities such as reading, talking about books, listening to all sorts of music, and playing instruments. One cannot but wonder why the authors miss the opportunity to also portray the fictional characters as participating in high cultural activities such as talking about books and newspapers, listening to various kinds of music, and playing certain sports. By not portraying such activities, the authors miss an opportunity to transfer the joy of talking about books, listening to various sorts of music, and

playing instruments rather than low cultural karaoke to individuals with disabilities. Moreover, the authors transfer the message that high or middle cultural activities are only available for individuals without disabilities. One should not underestimate the importance that children's and youth's storybooks have. If storybooks indeed have the power to shape attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, then it is important to avoid stereotypes and instead portray characters with high cultural activities (Prater et al., 2006; Yenika-Agbaw, 2011). Because storybooks reach many children, they influence how children conceive characters with disabilities (Quinlan & Bates, 2009).

In conclusion, storybooks portray characters with disabilities as possessing low cultural capital and living a happy life. Consequently, my study lends support to the theory of cultural capital and extends upon previous research on disability in storybooks (Dyches, Prater & Cramer, 2001; Dyches & Prater, 2005; Dyches, Prater & Jenson, 2006; Leininger et al., 2010). The characters described have a wealth of low capital activities, such as watching television, karaoke, and bowling. Very few of the characters participate in sports. In contrast to research on people with disabilities, the images of storybooks thus cultivate the expectations of people with disabilities (e.g., role models) as only capable of participating in low cultural activities. People with disabilities need positive images to identify with. Images set an example and encourage participation in middle- and high-class cultural activities, including sport. Such examples may allow readers with disabilities to shape identity. Being underrepresented in middle- to high-class cultural activities in storybooks may signal that such activities are not even considered for individual with disabilities. Hypothetically, stereotypes may reinforce negative attitudes towards people with disabilities and underline that book portrayals must be accurate and realistic to be acceptable (Bandura & Waters, 1977; Dewey, 2013; Dyches & Prater, 2005; Leininger et al., 2010; Prater et al., 2006; Yenika-Agbaw, 2011).

Limitations

To understand my findings better, I review the limitations of the study. First, I limited the sample to Swedish storybooks. Second, I recovered the patterns using qualitative data analysis, whereas machine-learning analysis might uncover additional patterns. Third, I cannot rule out alternative interpretations of the data. Fourth, I lack data on how readers react to storybooks targeting disabilities. Surveys or interviews with readers (or authors) would be a topic of future research. Fifth, I have not dealt with the issue of social class since the storybooks offered insufficient data on the characters' wealth, parental education, or parental occupation. Sixth, I have omitted an analysis of authors' and publishers' effects. The storybooks in the present study are mostly published by small scale publication companies with limited capacities (different budget, marketing, and readership) (cf Crawford, 2016). A full analysis would require a survey on background, budget, publicist autonomy, and motives for publishing. Consequently, we cannot rule out the influence from the authors or publishers. Finally and most importantly, I lack a proper comparison group portraying how frequently children without disabilities are participating in high and popular culture. However, identifying a proper comparison group would be difficult. One complication concerns ruling out the influences of publishers. We cannot compare the books published by small scale publication companies with established large publication companies since that would be a biased comparison (different budget, marketing, readership etc.). Ideally, we would like a comparison with similar publishing conditions and readership. Doing such a comparison would be an important part of future studies.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses her gratitude for very helpful suggestions for revision provided by the anonymous reviewers. In addition, the author would like to thank Ernst Thoutenhoofd for valuable criticism on previous drafts.

References

- Adomat, D. S. (2014). Exploring issues of disability in children's literature discussions. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 34(3).
- Archer, M. (1993). Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction: French or universal? *French Cultural Studies*, 4(12), 225–240.

- Armstrong, M., Morris, C., Abraham, C., Ukoumunne, O. C., & Tarrant, M. (2016). Children's contact with people with disabilities and their attitudes towards disability: a cross-sectional study. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 38(9), 879-888.
- Badia, M., Orgaz, M. B., Verdugo, M. A., Ullán, A., & Martínez, M. (2013). Relationships between leisure participation and quality of life of people with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 26(6), 533-545.
- Bandura, A., & Walters, R. H. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Vol. 1). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Berezin, J. D. (2014). Disabled capital: A narrative of attention deficit disorder in the classroom through the lens of Bourdieu's capital. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 34(4).
- Biklen, D., & Bogdan, R. (1977). Media portrayals of disabled people: A study in stereotypes. *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 8(6 & 7), 4-9.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and social class. *Information (International Social Science Council)*, 17(6), 819-840. <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847801700603>
- Bourdieu, P. (2013). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cottingham, M. D. (2016). Theorizing emotional capital. *Theory and Society*, 45(5), 451-470.
- Crawford, S. C. (2016). More than a wheelchair in the background: A study of portrayals of disabilities in children's picture books. (Honour's theses). University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Deterding, N. M., & Waters, M. C. (2018). Flexible coding of in-depth interviews: A twenty-first-century approach. *Sociological Methods & Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004912411879937>
- Dewey, J. (2013). My pedagogic creed. In *Curriculum studies reader E2* (pp. 29-35). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Dyches, T. T., & Prater, M. A. (2005). Characterization of developmental disability in children's fiction. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities*, 202-216.
- Dyches, T. T., Prater, M. A., & Cramer, S. F. (2001). Characterization of mental retardation and autism in children's books. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 230-243.
- Dyches, T. T., Prater, M. A., & Jenson, J. (2006). Portrayal of disabilities in Caldecott books. *TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus*, 2(5) Article 2. Retrieved from <http://escholarship.bc.edu/education/tecpus/vol2/iss5/art2>
- Edwards, C., & Imrie, R. (2003). Disability and bodies as bearers of value. *Sociology*, 37(2), 239-256.
- Engman, A., & Cranford, C. (2016). Habit and the body: Lessons for social theories of habit from the experiences of people with physical disabilities. *Sociological Theory*, 34(1), 27-44.
- Frey, G. C. (2004). Comparison of physical activity levels between adults with and without mental retardation. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 1(3), 235-245.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. (2007). -Cultural capital?: Some critical observations. *Sociologica*, 1(2), 1-23.
- Hammersley, M. (2007). The issue of quality in qualitative research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 30(3), 287-305.
- Hayley Fitzgerald, H., & Kirk, D. (2009). Identity work: Young disabled people, family and sport. *Leisure Studies*, 28(4), 469-488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614360903078659>
- Hodkinson, A. (2007). Constructing impairment and disability in school reading schemes. *Education 3-13*, 45(5), 572-585.
- Holt, L., Bowlby, S., & Lea, J. (2013). Emotions and the habitus: Young people with socio-emotional differences (re) producing social, emotional and cultural capital in family and leisure space-times. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 9, 33-41.
- Høiseth, J. (2012). Verdifull fritid for alle? En kvalitativ studie av fritidstilbud for utviklingshemmede [A qualitative study of opportunities for leisure activities for individuals with intellectual disabilities]. Masteroppgave, Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, Oslo: Oslo University.
- Jæger Meier, M., & Karlson, K. (2018). Cultural capital and educational in-equality: A counterfactual analysis. *Sociological Science*, 5, 775-795.
- Leininger, M., Dyches, T. T., Prater, M. A., Heath, M. A., & Bascom, S. (2010). Books portraying characters with obsessive-compulsive disorder: Top 10 list for children and young adults. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 42(4), 22-28.
- Martin, J. J. (2017). Supercrip identity. *Handbook of Disability Sport and Exercise Psychology*. Oxford University Press

- Melbøe, L., & Ytterhus, B. (2017). Disability leisure: In what kind of activities, and when and how do youths with intellectual disabilities participate? *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 19(3), 245–255.
- Michals, T., & McTiernan, C. (2018). “Oh, why can’t you remain like this forever!?”: Children’s literature, growth, and disability. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 38(2).
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- OECD. (2012). Let’s read them a story! The parent factor in education. Pisa: OECD. <http://doi.org/10.1787/9789264176232-en>
- Pagán-Rodríguez, R. (2014). How do disabled individuals spend their leisure time? *Disability and Health Journal*, 7(2), 196–205.
- Perrier, M. J., Smith, B. M., & Latimer-Cheung, A. E. (2013). Narrative environments and the capacity of disability narratives to motivate leisure-time physical activity among individuals with spinal cord injury. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 35(24), 2089–2096.
- Prater, M. A., Johnstun, M. L., Dyches, T. T., & Johnstun, M. R. (2006). Using children’s books as bibliotherapy for at-risk students: A guide for teachers. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 50(4), 5–10.
- Purdue, D. E., & Howe, P. D. (2015). Plotting a Paralympic field: An elite disability sport competition viewed through Bourdieu’s sociological lens. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 50(1), 83–97.
- Quinlan, M. M., & Bates, B. R. (2009). Bionic woman (2007): Gender, disability and cyborgs. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 9(1), 48–58.
- Reichenberg, M. (2017). The Representations of Type of Disability, Ethnicity and Age and How These Are Associated with Participation in Textbooks. *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 18(3-4), 72–90.
- Robison, R. J. (2000). Learning about happiness from persons with Down syndrome: Feeling the sense of joy and contentment. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 105(5), 372–376.
- Rosengren, K. E. (1995). Substantive theories and formal models—Bourdieu confronted. *European Journal of Communication*, 10(1), 7–39.
- Sigmon, M. L., Tackett, M. E., & Azano, A. P. (2016). Using children’s picture books about autism as resources in inclusive classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(1), 111–117
- Silva, C. F., & Howe, P. D. (2012). The (in)validity of supercrip representation of Paralympian athletes. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 36(2), 174–194.
- Stuij, M. (2015). Habitus and social class: A case study on socialisation into sports and exercise. *Sport, Education and Society*, 20(6), 780–798.
- Sullivan, A. (2001). Cultural capital and educational attainment. *Sociology*, 35(4), 893–912.
- Temple, V. A., Frey, G. C., & Stanish, H. I. (2006). Physical activity of adults with mental retardation: Review and research needs. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 21(1), 2–12.
- Tharian, P. R., Henderson, S., Wathanasin, N., Hayden, N., Chester, V., & Tromans, S. (2019). Characters with autism spectrum disorder in fiction: Where are the women and girls? *Advances in Autism*. Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 50–63, <https://doi.org/10.1108/AIA-09-2018-003>
- Turner, B. S., & Edmunds, J. (2002). The distaste of taste: Bourdieu, cultural capital and the Australian postwar elite. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 2(2), 219–239.
- United Nations. (2006). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. United Nations General Assembly A/61/611 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Dec 2006. Retrieved March 7, 2020, from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=61>
- Yenika-Agbaw, V. (2011). Reading disability in children’s literature: Hans Christian Andersen’s tales. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 5(1), 91–108.

Author Information

Monica Reichenberg

University of Gothenburg
 Department of Education and Special Education
 Sweden
 Contact e-mail: monica.reichenberg@ped.gu.se

Appendix. List of 66 Storybooks

1. Ahlsén, M. (2015). *Axel var idiot*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget.
2. Ahlsén, M. (2018). *Mats Melin-från Hudik med kärlek*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget.
3. Bell, C. (2017). *Superdövis*. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren.
4. Berge, S. (2004). *Tigermamman och Lytte*. Bromma: Bokförlaget Opal
5. Bergström, G. (2007). *Stora boken om Bill & Bolla: ... han så klok och hon en stolla*. Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren.
6. Bross, H. & Lepp, (2019). M. *Bråkiga bokstäver*. Stockholm: Bonnier Carlsen
7. Buregren, S. & Mangold, M. (2014). *Flingan*. Trollhättan: Kikkuli Förlag
8. Burgvall S. (2015) *Den blinda floristen*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag.
9. Byekwaso, M. (2016). *Bästa brorsorna*. Stockholm: LL.förlaget
10. Byekwaso, M. (2017). *Brorsor med brudar*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget.
11. Byekwaso, M. (2018). *Två smarta brorsor*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget.
12. Byekwaso, M. (2019). *Moa och Miranda*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget.
13. Drewsen, A. (2017). *Brev från kungen*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag.
14. Ekensten, A-C. (2015). *Emmas liv. Kär i kärleken*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag
15. Ekensten, A-C. (2015). *Emmas liv. Egen nyckel*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag.
16. Ekensten, A-C. (2016). *Emmas liv. Våga hoppa*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag.
17. Ekensten, A-C. (2016). *Emmas liv. Första dansen*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag
18. Ekensten, A-C. (2017). *Emmas liv. Kär på riktigt*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag.
19. Ekensten, A-C. (2018). *Emmas liv. Middag för två*. Helsingborg: Vilja förlag.
20. Frii, K. (2007). *Nu är det fest*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
21. Frii, K. (2010). *Den nya klänningen* Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
22. Frii, K. (2007). *Trumma på trumman*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
23. Frii, K. (2007). *Passa bollen*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
24. Frii, K. (2010). *Ska vi bo ihop?* Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
25. Frii, K. (2010). *En dag på jobbet*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
26. Frii, K. (2012). *Studentmössan*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
27. Frii, K. (2012). *Börja jobba*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag.
28. Frii, K. (2012). *Flytta hemifrån*. Kungsbacka: Lilla TL förlag
29. Gomer, A. (2011). *Moas jul*. Malmö: Bona signum.
30. Gomer, A. (2013). *Moa får en ny vän*. Malmö: Bona signum.
31. Gomer, A. (2013). *Moa går på bio*. Malmö: Bona signum.
32. Gomer, A. (2013). *Moa går på disco*. Malmö: Bona signum.
33. Gomer, A. (2013). *Moa åker på läger*. Malmö: Bona signum.
34. Gomer, A. (2015). *Linus börjar rida*. Malmö: Bona signum
35. Gomer, A. (2015). *Linus bowlar*. Malmö: Bona signum.
36. Gomer, A. (2015). *Linus spelar teater*. Malmö: Bona signum.
37. Gomer, A. (2015). *Linus sjunger karaoke*. Malmö: Bona signum.
38. Gomer, A. (2015). *Linus går på fotboll*. Malmö: Bona signum
39. Gomer, A. (2019). *Ska vi ha sex?* Malmö: Bona signum.
40. Gomer, A. (2019). *Linus är ledsen*. Malmö: Bona signum.
41. Gomer, A. (2019). *Är du arg, Moa?* Malmö: Bona signum.
42. Gomer, A. (2019). *Molly är död*. Malmö: Bona signum.
43. Gomér, A. (2019). *Moa & Leo*. Malmö: Bona Signum
44. Hammargren, P., Hansson, S., & Tollstern, J. (2018). *Rullstolsskolan*. Växjö: Funkibator förlag.
45. Han Xu. (2018). *Blinda Rödluvan och vargen*. Färjestaden: Vombat Förlag, Jieli Publishing House
46. Lagerqvist, T. (2013). *Tove vava. Och hörapparaterna*. Trollhättan: Kikkuli förlag.
47. Lannerberth, L. (2015) . *Lea lejonvärdare och översövningen*. Trollhättan: Kikkuli förlag.
48. Lannerberth, L. (2016) . *Lea lejonvärdare på prinsesskalas*. Trollhättan: Kikkuli förlag.
49. Lannerberth, L. (2017) . *Lea lejonvärdare på badhuset*. Trollhättan: Kikkuli förlag.
50. Liao, J. (2016). *Färgernas ljud*. Stockholm: Bokförlaget Mirando.
51. Lindberg, M-M. (2016). *Dylan Grönöga och jag*. Malmö: Venaröd förlag.
52. Linskens, H. (2018). *Henke och bokstäverna som hoppar*. Helsingborg: Nypon förlag.
53. Lumholdt, H. (2018). *Funkisfestivalen. En tävling för vinnare*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget
54. Medin, L. (2015). *Malte i skolan*. Hestra: Isaberg förlag.
55. Pella, A., (2018). *Operation slutstirrat*. Stockholm: Libris förlag
56. Persson, V. (2012) *Rababertjuven*. Hässelby: Magic Wonders.
57. Polleryd, K. (2006). *Rut och Randi*. Kristinehamn: Bokförlaget Norlén & Slottner

58. Polleryd, K, (2011). *Abbe 8 år och 43 dagar*. Tyresö: Sivart Förlag.
59. Roca Ahlgren, M. & Israelsson Stenberg, S. (2015). *Jag har ADHD*. Trollhättan: Kikkuli förlag.
60. Slonawski, A. (2016). *Anna på Brännö*. Stockholm: LL-förlaget.
61. Stigsdotter Axberg, J. (2013). *Jippie. Jag har ADHD*. Stockholm: Upnose förlag
62. Stigsdotter Axberg, J. (2016). *Jag har Tourette! Rätt! Rätt! Och lite ADHD*. Stockholm: Upnose förlag.
63. Storck, Å (2019). *Simon Vänner och Facebook*. Helsingborg: Vilja Förlag.
64. Strömberg, A. (2016). *Sofia med knuff-inte ett dugg annorlunda*. Lerum: IDUS förlag
65. Strömberg, A. (2017). *Sofia med knuff- Det här är jag*. Lerum: IDUS förlag
66. Toivonen, A., & Avellan, A.(2019). *Greta börjar skolan. En bok om Downs syndrom*. Stockholm: Lumenos.